



Gateway reference number 14557

28 July 2010

Dear Colleague

Refreshing the national Carers Strategy – call for evidence (20 September 2010 deadline)

The previous Government's Carers Strategy – *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities* – set out a vision that by 2018:

‘carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals’ needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, while enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.’

I believe that this ambition holds good. The Coalition Agreement sets out a number of priority areas, which includes supporting carers, and I am keen to maintain a cross-Government approach to implementing the Strategy and to work with local and national partners, and carers, to deliver a clear plan of action.

The Government must prioritise its actions for the next four years to ensure maximum value for money in the context of the current economic climate and in line with our top priority of reducing the national deficit.

I have announced the Government's intention to ‘refresh’ the Carers Strategy with a view to producing, before the end of this year, a clear plan of action for 2011 to 2015. This does not mean re-writing the Carers Strategy, but rather that we will develop a plan setting out the key activities upon which the Government – working in partnership with carers, Local Authorities, the NHS, employers, the voluntary sector and local communities – can focus from April 2011 onwards.

In developing the Carers Strategy, the previous Government undertook extensive consultation with carers. Over 4,000 carers provided views through

a website and a series of local and regional events. I believe that we have a clear picture of the sort of support that carers want.

But I am keen to seek your views now on the **key priorities, supported by evidence of good practice, on what will have the greatest impact on improving carers' lives in the next four years. The attached template is for you to use to give your views.**

It will be helpful to have your responses by 20 September 2010. I appreciate that this is a tight timescale, but it is a necessary one if we are to help inform decisions in the light of the Government's Spending Review and planning by Local Authorities, the NHS and others for April 2011 onwards. We can then move collectively at a swift pace to make a tangible difference to carers' lives.

I encourage all organisations responding to this call for evidence to involve carers in formulating your response. As well as submitting a response on behalf of your own organisation, I am also particularly keen to hear directly from carers themselves and any others who may wish to respond. I would therefore be grateful if you could disseminate this letter, through your existing networks and contacts, to any individual or other organisations who you feel may wish to respond to this call for evidence.

A copy of this letter and the template for responses can also be found on the Department of Health website:
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_117249

Please email responses to carersevidence@dh.gsi.gov.uk or send to:

Carers Evidence
Carers Strategy Team, Department of Health
Area 116, First Floor
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

As I stated during a recent Parliamentary debate on 'supporting carers', the value of carers will grow as our society ages and people with disabilities live longer. I hope that a refreshed Carers Strategy, centred on clear, affordable priorities, will bring renewed focus on action for carers.



PAUL BURSTOW