Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Bill

Stage 2 Amendment on the provision of voice equipment: Call for Views

Stirling and Clackmannanshire Shared Social Services

We are aware that money, which was allocated across Scotland over a three-year period to fund the supply of specialist communications equipment, came to an end in 2015.

We are supportive of the introduction of a statutory duty to supplying communications equipment and are in agreement that individuals, particularly those with a terminal neurological condition should not have to wait indefinitely for this provision. Difficulties with social communication reduce access to recreation, education, employment, social integration, forming relationships and can have a major impact on an individual’s quality of life. Each of the above may result in additional problems i.e. social isolation, deteriorating mental health and ultimately a requirement for additional support and services and as a consequence increased costs. Communications equipment can therefore be a lifeline and allow people to continue to work, keep in touch with family and friends and lead a more normal life.

In addition to the provision of equipment, we believe that complementary work is required to ensure that the quality of equipment and the assistance provided is timely and appropriate to the individual and suitable support and training is provided in how to use the equipment.

Feedback from stakeholders suggests that funding for voice equipment and associated support tends to be secured on a slow and inefficient case-by-case basis, if this service is to be improved organisations will require to be adequately managed and resourced.

Whilst the legislation places a statutory duty on the NHS, this service is multi-agency in its nature. With regards to the Integration of Health and Social Care and the role of Local Authorities in the provision of care and support we believe the amendments will impact on Councils who will also be involved in the provision and support of equipment.

Timely access to appropriate communication support and equipment is essential. People with communication difficulties should qualify for a specialised assessment by a professional who understands their illness and the range of communication supports available. Whilst it is difficult to anticipate demand we would therefore expect additional costs; in terms of staffing, training and equipment and would ask that the Scottish Government ensures the Bill is adequately resourced to meet its requirements.

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