

# NHS Continuing Healthcare

**If a person's medical condition is unstable and/or unpredictable and necessitates the need for constant 24-hour specialist/acute nursing care, they may be eligible to receive NHS Continuing Healthcare.**

Sadly, during recent years the system has been slightly flawed with many families complaining to the Health Service Ombudsman. In an attempt to end the perceived postcode disparity, a new National Framework was implemented in October 2007 (revised in November 2012) which established a much clearer national eligibility criteria.

The National Framework document sets out the processes for establishing eligibility for Continuing Healthcare and should be read in conjunction with the support tools that assist with the decision making. These include the Checklist, Decision Support Tool and the Fast Track (used when the person is considered to have a rapidly deteriorating condition which may be entering a terminal phase). All of these documents can be downloaded from the Department of Health website.

The National Framework sets out to make the assessment process more person centred and transparent.

Opportunities for assessing as to whether someone may qualify for Continuing Healthcare are often missed, for example when a person is placed in a care home setting having been discharged from hospital. A social worker may be appointed and an appropriate placement found,

but if the person has assets in excess of the capital threshold, social services will deem them as self funding residents and will then close their files. No further assessments will be carried out until the resident's assets fall under the capital threshold.

This should not happen as under "Section 47 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990", the Local Authority should, through Social Services, continue to monitor a person who has been brought to their attention as being in need and the person should therefore be visited on at least a yearly basis and a care needs assessment carried out.

At each assessment there would then be an opportunity to review the needs of that person and to refer them over to the local Clinical Commissioning Group if a healthcare need is identified so that a full healthcare needs assessment can be carried out.

There are literally thousands of cases where NHS Continuing Healthcare would have been awarded if only it had been considered in the first instance.

Anyone can ask for a healthcare needs assessment so that their individual needs can be considered for NHS Continuing Healthcare.

If you know someone who you think should have been awarded NHS Continuing Healthcare and would benefit from some expert advice please speak to your Symponia member.

