

When I Get Older

What people want from social care services and inspections as they get older

A report by the new Commission for Social Care Inspection, based on research by MORI

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Executive summary

The research

This report is based on a MORI Omnibus survey of a nationally representative quota sample of 1,049 respondents interviewed face-to-face and in homes between January 26 and March 2, 2004. The study was commissioned by the new Commission for Social Care Inspection for its launch on April 1.

The new social care Commission

The new Commission for Social Care Inspection will be the single social care inspectorate in England. Its primary function is to promote improvement in social care and it aims to do this by putting the adults and children who use social care services at the centre of all its work. For its launch, the Commission wished to explore what people want and expect from the social care services they might receive as they grow older or less able to look after themselves, and what they think about inspection of those services.

What is social care?

Social care covers all the different types of support that people of all ages may need to live as independently, safely and fully as possible. It is provided by local councils, private companies and charitable organisations. It covers a huge range of services, including care homes, meals on wheels, fostering services, drop-in centres and boarding schools; and often operates alongside other services, such as health or education.

Every year more than 1.6 million people receive social services – that's around one person in every 50. And around one in 25 of the national working population works in the sector.

Key findings

- People want to choose their social care - three-quarters (73%) say a person requiring social care should be able to choose their services and be given money by the government or council to pay for them, rather than have the government or local council decide.
- People strongly support rigorous inspection. Eight in ten people (79%) think services should be inspected at least twice a year – over a third (38%) saying it should be monthly. Only two per cent believe services should be inspected less than once a year.

- Most people would like to see ‘surprise’ inspections. Three quarters (74%) say service providers should receive no notice (this rises to 81% of people who receive or know someone who receives social care) and one in five (19%) say there should be no more than a week’s notice. No-one believes there should be more than a month’s notice.
- Most people under 60 want to stay independent for as long as possible and would prefer to receive care in their own homes from family and friends (62%) or from professional carers (54%), rather than in either sheltered housing or residential care homes.
- In terms of quality of life, people rate a room of their own (56%), independence (25%) and friendship (22%) as their top three requirements for the social care they might receive.
- People feel that the best ways inspectors can judge the quality of social care are to speak privately to the person receiving care (74%), to talk to their families (59%) and to spend time observing what goes on (55%). More people who receive or know someone who receives social care opt for talking to the user of the service (85%) and their family (62%). People rate each of these three options more highly than talking to the owners of the service or checking paperwork.

The social care challenge

Our report shows that people today looking ahead to older age have high expectations of the social care services they might receive. They strongly value independence and choice. They would choose to receive care in their own homes rather than move into a care environment. And they want services that suit their needs and respect their rights.

People clearly want rigorous inspection of social care services, too. They want frequent inspections, with little or no notice given to those responsible for the service. However, they also want inspections to be carried out differently – they want the balance to shift more towards talking to the people using the service and their families, and spending time simply observing what goes on, and away from checking paperwork.

Britain’s population is ageing and people are living longer than ever before. The largest group of adult users of social care is people aged 65 or over – an age group that is predicted to increase by 43 per cent by 2026. Demographic trends and people’s expectations pose an urgent challenge to everyone involved in developing social care policy, in planning and delivering services, and in inspecting and regulating those services.

Introduction

This report presents and analyses the findings from a survey conducted by MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the new Commission for Care Inspection, which launches on April 1.

The new Commission replaces three different inspection and regulation organisations and will be the only body inspecting and regulating social care in England. Its remit is broader than anything seen before in social care, allowing a more rational, integrated system of social care inspection, regulation and review.

The Commission's primary function, as set out in the legislation that created it - the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 - is to promote improvement in social care. It aims to do this by putting the people who use social care services at the centre of all its work. For its launch, the Commission wished to explore what people want and expect from the social care services they might receive as they grow older or less able to look after themselves, and what they think about inspection of those services.

This survey provides information about people's preferences regarding the provision and inspection of the social care services they might need as they become older or less able to look after themselves. It examines the public's views on:

- Where they would like to receive care and support as they get older, if they need it
- Who should decide and pay for the services an individual receives
- The quality of life priorities they expect from social care
- How inspectors should make judgements about services
- How much notice of inspections should service providers receive
- How often social care services should be inspected

MORI Social Research Institute carried out 1,049 interviews with respondents aged 16 and above across Great Britain on social care, as part of a MORI Omnibus Survey. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and in homes between February 26 and March 2, 2004. Data have been weighted by gender, age, work status and region to match the overall population profile of Great Britain. Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know/not stated' response categories, or multiple answers.

Staying at home, not in a home

Above all else, people under 60 would prefer to stay in their own homes as they get older and require social care. The survey shows that people would choose to receive social care in their own homes, or move to a smaller house, before considering other options, such as moving into sheltered housing or residential care or moving in with their children. The findings also suggest that people are more concerned with retaining their independence than necessarily who cares for them.

When asked to select three from a list of nine options, the preferred option for three in five (62%) of respondents under 60 is to **stay in their own home** and receive care from family or friends. Men who want to remain in their own home are significantly more likely than women to expect friends or family to support them as they get older (68% compared to 55%).

There is also strong support (54%) for receiving professional care and support while remaining in their own home.

Two in five (39%) of respondents under 60 (and 35% of all respondents) say they would **consider moving to a smaller home** to make it easier to retain their independence. This option is also preferred to living with children, in sheltered housing or residential care. People on higher incomes are also more likely to select this option (49%).

A quarter of respondents aged under 60 would consider some kind of **sheltered accommodation** – either just with a warden (25%) or with a warden and other social care services, such as organised social outings (also 25%). Women are more likely than men to prefer sheltered accommodation with other social care services (30% compared with 19%).

Only one in seven respondents (14%) and one in six (16%) of those aged under 60 would consider **moving in with their son or daughter**. It is an option also favoured by 15-24 year olds (21%), people living in council housing (20%) and people who already have children (20%). And twice as many tabloid than broadsheet readers would choose to move in with their children (19% and 10% respectively).

Few people would choose to live in a **residential care home** when they are older, reflecting the desire for independence and choice. Those who do, prefer a privately-run home (12%) to council-run (8%) or charity-run homes (3%).

Table 1: preferences for receiving social care

Q. Which of the following would you prefer to happen when you are older, if you needed care and support looking after yourself? [people aged under 60]

Q. Which of the following would you prefer to happen if you need care and support looking after yourself? [people aged over 60]

Preference	Percentage
Stay in my own home with care and support from friends and family	62
Stay in my own home but with care and support from trained care workers	56
Move to a smaller home of my own	35
Move to sheltered housing with a warden	27
Move to sheltered housing with a warden and other social care services like hairdressing and organised social outings	25
Move in with my son or daughter	14
Move to a private residential home	11
Move to a local council residential home	7
Move to a residential home provided by a charitable organisation	3
None	1
Don't know	2

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

These findings show public backing for policies which offer a range of choices in social care services. People clearly prefer to receive care at home or move into sheltered housing with other social care services, rather than choose to live in residential care homes. This offers a challenge to the people responsible for planning and providing services. They need to take early action to develop a range of care services which reflect the diversity of needs and preferences among people using social care.

Choosing and paying for social care services

There is very strong support for the view that individuals requiring social care should be able to **make decisions about the services** they receive.

Almost three-quarters (73%) feel that the person receiving social care should be able to choose the care services they use and be given money by the government or council to pay for them. Women are more likely than men to think this (76% and 69% respectively) and people who either receive social care themselves or know people who do so are more likely to support this view (79%).

Table 2: choosing and paying for social care

Q. In terms of paying for social care and help for older people, which of these statements is closest to your own views?

Statement	Percentage
The person needing the social care and help should receive money from the government/council which they use to choose which care services they receive	73
The government/council should choose which social care services are provided to the person needing care, and pay for them directly	20
Don't know	7

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

The Commission wanted to test public attitudes to this issue because a scheme called Direct Payments already exists. When an individual's social care needs are assessed by their local council's social services, that person can be offered money rather than a specific service, to enable them to choose and pay for their own care – for example, they could employ a home help or a personal assistant.

The high level of public support for this approach contrasts sharply with the low level of take-up of Direct Payments. At the end of March 2003, only 9,600 people were receiving Direct Payments. Since April last year, all local councils have had a duty to make Direct Payments available to all people who are eligible (people over 18 with a disability or those qualifying under the Carers and Disabled Children Act) and want them, but take-up remains low.

The strength of public support should send a clear message to local councils and others that they should step up the promotion of Direct Payments. And when the Commission assesses the performance of local councils' social services, this will be one of the factors it checks.

Quality of life priorities

MORI asked people to consider what things would be most important to them if they needed social care and allowed them to choose as many or as few options as they liked from the list below.

The **desire for independence** is reflected in the top choices: 'my own room' (56%), independence to come and go as I please' (25%) and 'friendship and company' (22%). However, for people over 55, 'my own shower, bath or toilet' (22%) and 'having visitors whenever I like' (19%) were placed above 'friendship and company' (17%).

People who receive or know people who receive social care value more than those who do not being able to have ‘visitors whenever I like’ (24% and 17% respectively) and having the same carer rather than many (17% and 10% respectively). Having the same carer is more important to older people – fewer than one in ten 15-25 year olds (8%) chose this, compared to twice as many (15%) of those aged over 55.

Table 3: quality of life priorities

Q. And which of the following would be most important to you, if you needed care where you were living? (people aged 60 and over) **or** if you needed care when you are older, wherever you were living? (people aged under 60)

Option	All %	Men %	Women %
My own room	56	53	58
Being allowed the independence to come/go as I please	25	25	26
Friendship and company	22	25	26
Having visitors whenever I like	19	18	19
My own shower, bath or toilet	19	17	20
Access to transport that I can use independently	18	18	19
Being taken to places I need to go eg shops, church	13	11	14
Feeling safe eg having 24-hr alarm system	13	11	16
The same carer, rather than a series of different ones	11	9	13
A garden	10	9	10
Deciding what I want to eat when I want to eat it	9	10	9
Someone who understands me & what I want out of life	9	8	11
A TV or stereo in my room	8	9	8
Access to other care services	8	8	9
Having pets	7	6	8
Access to exercise facilities	7	9	5
My own phone	6	6	7
Being taken out for social events	5	7	3
Access to complementary health and relaxation services	4	4	4
Access to the internet and emails	3	4	2
Being allowed to enjoy a sex life	3	5	1
Being taken on holiday	3	3	2
Having a quiet place to sit	3	3	3
My own furniture	3	5	2
Access to a hairdresser	1	0	1
None	0	1	0
Don't know	3	4	2

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

Inspections – notice, frequency and how inspectors should judge services

There is powerful **public support for rigorous inspection** controls for social care services. Most people believe that inspectors should turn up out of the blue and that inspections should take place frequently.

People also strongly believe that inspectors should judge services by listening to the views of the service user and their families and by observing what goes on in a service.

These views of inspections reflect those of looked after children and children in residential schools and colleges, who also think inspections should be unannounced and that inspectors should talk to them more. Their views were gathered during the regular consultations with children carried out by the Children's Rights Director, a post which will be hosted by the new Commission, and published in 2003 in a report entitled '*What Inspectors Should Do*'.

Notice of inspections

People very much like the idea of 'surprise' inspections of services so that inspectors see the normal standards of care and support provided, rather than allowing those responsible for services to prepare for them.

Three-quarters (74%) feel that **inspectors should arrive unannounced**, and one in five (19%) would give up to one week's notice. No-one thought that more than a month's notice should be given.

Table 4: notice of inspections

Q. How much notice of an inspection do you think that local councils and other service providers should be given?

Amount of notice	Percentage
None – inspectors should arrive unannounced	74
Two days' notice	12
One week's notice	7
One month's notice	3
Two months' notice	0
Three months' notice	0
Don't know	4

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

Frequency of inspections

Eight in ten people (79%) think inspections should be **made at least twice a year** – with over one third (38%) saying that services should be inspected monthly, and four in ten (41%) saying they should happen twice a year. Only two per cent of the people surveyed believe that services should be inspected less frequently than once a year.

Table 5: frequency of inspections

Q. How often do you think that local council and other social services should be inspected?

Frequency	Percentage
Every month	38
Twice a year	41
Annually	14
Every three years	2
Other	1
Don't know	5

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

How inspectors should judge services

There is general agreement across the board that the three best ways inspectors should spend their time inspecting social care services are by speaking to the person receiving the social care, talking to their families and observing what goes on.

Most people (74%) feel that inspectors should spend time **speaking privately to the person receiving care**. This feeling is stronger amongst those who receive or know people who receive social care (85%).

Six in ten people (59%) also think it is important **to talk to the family of the person using the service**. This fits with other MORI research which has found that family members and carers are often more critical of services than the people receiving them.

The third most popular response, which is supported by more than half (55%) the respondents, is to inspect the service **through direct observation**, watching and listening to what goes on.

There is much less support for inspectors spending time speaking to the owner of the service (21%) or checking paperwork (10%).

Table 6: how inspectors should judge services

Q. Social care services for people at home and in residential homes are now officially inspected. What do you think that inspectors should spend most time doing in order to judge how good the social care being provided is?

Activity	Percentage
Talking privately to the person using the service	74
Talking to the families of the people living there	59
Watching and listening to what goes on in the service	55
Talking to the carers working there	38
Talking to the staff/owner of the care service	21
Checking the paper work	10
Other	1
None of the above	2
Don't know	3

Base: all respondents aged 15+ (1049)

Source: MORI

The new Commission and inspection

The new Commission is planning to inspect services and make sure that services are meeting the needs of the people who use them.

In its first year, the Commission will not change the way inspections are carried out because it does not want to disrupt services. However, during that year, it will take a considered view of how inspections support improvements in social care services and how they help people to be more independent and able to make the most of their lives. As it reviews how inspections are carried out, the Commission will take the messages from this poll and the views of people who use services and their families into account. And from 2005, the Commission will change inspection methodologies where they are not supporting improvements.

However, the Commission has already announced its intention to recognise and promote good practice above the National Minimum Standards or where services are delivering excellence, and inspections will play an important part in this. And where inspections reveal that services are not meeting minimum standards or are performing badly, the Commission will make sure that those responsible for them know what they have to do to make their services better. If services do not improve, the Commission has the power to take action.

Currently, services that have to be registered and judged against the National Minimum Standards receive two inspections a year - one announced and one unannounced. Inspectors do not have to give notice of the announced inspection but in practice usually do, giving six weeks' notice. If there is a problem with a service, inspectors can and do go in more often to ensure that steps are being taken to improve.

The frequency of inspections of local councils' social services - how they plan and assess services and the social care needs of their populations – depends on the annual rating awarded for the performance of those services (the star ratings). Councils which are rated excellent currently receive a three-year inspection holiday.

Conclusion

Social care services are hugely important. They can, and do, make an enormous difference to thousands of lives every day.

This survey clearly shows that people looking ahead to their older age want independence and choice, and have high expectations of the social care services they might receive. They would choose to receive care in their homes rather than move into a care environment and would prefer services that suit their needs and respect their rights.

People would rather have the money to decide what services they can buy in for themselves, rather than have someone else decide what services they should receive.

Wherever and however they receive services, people expect those services to be subject to rigorous inspection. They want inspections to be frequent and unannounced. And they want inspections which shift the balance away from checking paperwork, which is of course very important, and talking to the staff, managers or owners of services towards letting the people who use them, and their families, have more of a say.

These expectations present a serious challenge to all involved in social care – the people who plan and deliver services and those who inspect and regulate them. The starting point and the end point for everyone involved must be 'what is in the best interests of the person using the service?'