



## NCT Document Summary: Working Together – Public services on your side

The Government has set out its vision for the future shape of public services. The White Paper, *Working Together – Public Services on your Side*,<sup>1</sup> published on 10th March 2009 details the steps the Government in England is taking to give people, communities and frontline staff the information and real power they need to personalise public services. The Government makes a number of commitments which are relevant to the work of the NCT, which will be discussed in this document summary<sup>1</sup>. An NCT comment can be found at the end of the document.

### Empowering service users

A key theme of the Government's plans is to empower service users, which they plan to do in a number of ways. Firstly they want to offer patients greater choice and control by giving them **personal care plans**. It is anticipated that these will allow patients much greater involvement in their care and extended choice of the most appropriate type of treatment as well as when and where they are treated. Legislation which is currently before parliament will allow pilots of personal health budgets to include direct payments to those patients who would benefit from such approaches to meeting their care needs.

Secondly, the Government wants to give service users more control via **self-directed support and personal budgets**. People will be made aware of how much funding is available to them and they will be better able to choose the care and support that best suits them. The Government is increasing funding from £85 million in 2008/09 to £195 million in 2009/10, to help English councils transform their adult social care systems and enable citizens who are eligible, and who want one, to have a personal budget, and the Government expects local councils in England to have made 'significant progress' in ensuring that people will be able to access adult social care personal budgets by March 2011. There will be a number of early adopter sites to pilot this scheme, which the Government wants to be up and running by summer 2009. And by the end of 2010 up to 15 million people with long term health conditions will have been offered a personalised care plan – giving them a greater say in the right care for them and how their care is delivered.

More widely, the Government wants care across the whole of the NHS to be more **personalized** to improve service users' experiences, ensure care is appropriately targeted and that the best outcomes are achieved. Services will be personalized while core values of **dignity and respect** are reinforced through the Dignity in Care Campaign where a network of 5,500 Dignity Champions

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<sup>1</sup> NCT document summaries present a précis of the content or main messages in documents published by government, research organisations, parliament, etc with relevance to maternity care, the transition to parenthood and life with a baby or toddler. The language is usually taken directly from the source document so it is not the view or policy of the NCT. Comment from the NCT is provided labelled clearly in a separate section or sections.

will work towards improvements in the dignity of care offered to people using the NHS and social care services.

Part of being treated with dignity is having your opinions listened to, and the government wants to **enable service users to have their say**. Patients have already been able to view comparative information about a range of healthcare services online at the NHS Choices website. Patients can make their own comments, observations and suggestions about hospital services and allow these to be visible to other patients. The Government believes that the best way for people to understand whether a service is right for them is to see what other similar users thought of that service. Since NHS Choices was launched in 2007, around 10,000 comments have been posted about health and social care services. During 2009 the ability to make this kind of comment will be extended from hospitals to include GP practices, and over time the Government expects patients to be able to make comments on and review all NHS services through the NHS Choices website.

The Government believes that **payment to hospitals for services is being linked to patient-reported experiences** and outcomes is one way of driving improved quality and patient-focus across the NHS.

The Government also wants high-performing hospitals to have more autonomy through the **expansion of NHS Foundation Trusts (FTs)**, with around 25 new FTs in 2009, subject to Monitor approval - this would mean more than half of all Trusts will be FTs. All foundation trusts are built on significant community membership, there are now more than 1.2 million members of foundation trusts, and they are governed by elected community governors. People are being empowered to represent their local community by helping to run their local Foundation Trust.

### **Improvements in childcare**

As well as improving services for patients, the Government also want to improve services for children, and the commitments to improvements in childcare provision are particularly relevant to the work of the NCT. Continuing with the themes of empowerment, choice and transparency, the Government's aims to provide a dedicated website in 2010 for parents to compare and share information about childcare settings, similar to the NHS Choices model. As well as containing information on prices and from Ofsted on quality, the site will contain parents' views, for example by providing a message board that allows parents to feedback on any childcare provider.

The Government also wants to increase provision for all; they expect to open the 3,000th Children's Centre by summer 2009 and expect to have 3,500 centres open by 2010, one in every local community, to serve up to 2.8 million young children and their families – which is 500,000 more than today.

As well as making services more widely available, the Government wants to target services appropriately. Free childcare places are already offered to three and four year olds, which will be extend to disadvantaged two year olds. This will reach 23,000 children in 2009 – with all Local Authorities delivering free places by this September.

The Government plans to raise childcare standards by up-skilling the workforce. They want every full day care setting to have a graduate leader, and all childcare workers to be qualified to A-level standard.

### **Prime Minister's Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery**

As well as empowering service users the Government also wants to support the professional workforce by establishing a **Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery**. The Government believes that change is most effective and beneficial to users when it is developed, driven, and owned by front-line staff. The Government recognises that nursing has been at the

centre of recent achievements in the NHS, from the shortest waiting times on record to improvements in hygiene and dramatic falls in infection rates. The Government wants to involve professionals in defining the way forward. The Commission will consult widely within the profession and with allied professionals on the best way for the NHS to make the most of its talented nursing professionals in delivering a world-class 21st century health service.

### *NCT Comment*

The NCT welcomes the publication of *Working Together – Public Services on your Side*. We fully support the principle of putting responsibility for planning in the hands of the individual. Empowerment of service users is a key theme throughout the white paper, which the NCT feels is crucial to the development of responsive services that meet the needs of local communities. The White Paper also gives service users greater choice, which we welcome. Choice should be reflected across maternity services, including the choice of how to access maternity care, type of antenatal care, place of birth – home, midwife-led unit or consultant-led unit – and choice of place of postnatal care. We would like to see the government hold PCTs to account if they fail to meet these choice guarantees laid out in *Maternity Matters*<sup>2</sup> by the 2009 deadline.

The NCT is aware that the White Paper was an overview of public services, but we would like to see some follow up on the Government's specific plans for maternity services. This is the delivery year for *Maternity Matters* and the NCT would like to see the new health and adult social care regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conduct regular reviews of maternity services, similar to the Healthcare Commission's review last year.

As well as empowering services users and offering them more choice, *Working Together* also calls for services to be personalised, which the NCT supports. We believe that maternity services should be tailored to the needs of the parents-to-be. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups, who often have complex needs that require a range of health professional need. The NCT particularly welcomes the emphasis on dignity and respect – we expect health professionals to always have a high regard for women and their families' wishes.

The NCT supports the aim to upskill workforces such as midwives, nurses and childminders. Increasing the skill set of a workforce is an efficacious way of improving recruitment and retention rates for the professions. The research review, *Health-led parenting interventions*,<sup>3</sup> that informed the *Child Health Strategy*<sup>4</sup> concluded that many primary care practitioners need additional training to provide the kind of parenting interventions and services identified as part of the review. Midwives and health visitors are particularly well placed to deliver universal services to parents, and to identify communities that may benefit from targeted and more intensive support. The recent report to the Nursing and Midwifery Council from the Local Supervising Authorities<sup>5</sup> identified a shortage of midwives due to an increasing birth rate and a high proportion being eligible for retirement in the next five years. Parents also need to be confident in the ability of professionals that guide them through the transition to parenthood, which can be achieved by guaranteeing a high standard of qualifications for staff.

The NCT believes that the proposed Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery will be another way to retain and recruit nursing and midwifery staff and this will make them feel more valued in their role. We feel that the workforce will have valuable contributions to make about how the NHS can improve and deliver a world-class 21<sup>st</sup> century health service and we welcome the wide consultation that the Commission will undertake.

### **References and further sources of information:**

*Working Together – Public Services on your Side* can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.hmg.gov.uk/workingtogether.aspx>

1. Cabinet Office. *Working together: public services on your side*. London: Cabinet Office; 2009.  
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5. Nursing and Midwifery Council. *Report to Council on the analysis of the 2007-08 Local Supervising Authority Annual Reports to the Nursing and Midwifery Council*. NMC; 2008.

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The NCT wants all parents to have an experience of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood that enriches their lives and gives them confidence in being a parent.

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