

The Big Care Debate (England)

Public engagement in LTC funding

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Main features of the example (description)

- National consultation exercise in England to inform a ‘Green’ and ‘White Paper’ on the future funding of long-term care
- Over 28,000 individuals and organisations took part via local events, public roadshows, questionnaire, website, Facebook etc
- Main aim was to seek views on different funding options – but also helped to raise awareness about how the current system operates
- May also have helped to generate evidence to inform the 3 year government spending review (in which social care received a degree of protection – rhetorically if not in practice)

Strengths and limitations

- No independent evaluation or data on costs/benefits
- Informed a government Green/White Paper – but not implemented due to change of government
- However, the new government has set up a national commission and so the ‘Big Care Debate’ will also inform this
- Hard to judge motives, but seemed in part a genuine attempt to engage the public in a complex and poorly understood area of policy
- Largest and most significant initiative of its kind to date in England

Conclusions

- Long-term care funding is poorly understood and so meaningful debate about future options is difficult
- Genuine public debate may help to raise awareness and to move beyond 'technical' discussions of the options
- Hard to judge impact but important anyway?