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Evidence of ageism and age discrimination in health and social care in the UK

Four reviews¹ examining ageism and age discrimination in health and social care in the UK carried out by the Centre for Policy on Ageing found widespread evidence of the unjustified differential treatment of older people as a group in both health and social care services. The discrimination is mainly covert and results from the cumulative effect of ageist attitudes by individual practitioners and commissioners of services. It is manifested through inadequate provision of services mainly used by older people or the equal application of policies to the disadvantage of older people with greater needs.

Gillian Crosby, the Centre's Director said 'It is time to tackle head on issues of ageism in the provision of services. Current efforts to provide personalised care and support, joined-up services, and national assessment will not succeed unless barriers arising from covert discrimination are fully recognised and addressed. Ageist attitudes and a culture of care leading to unjustified differential treatment of older people have to be addressed through education and training across the social and health care workforce so that appropriate support and care is delivered to people of all ages.'

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Contd with Notes/

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Notes

1. The four reviews from the literature collate a wealth of evidence of some direct but mostly indirect, covert discrimination affecting the quality and range of services available to older people:

- Ageism and age discrimination in secondary health care in the United Kingdom
- Ageism and age discrimination in primary and community health care in the United Kingdom
- Ageism and age discrimination in mental health care in the United Kingdom
- Ageism and age discrimination in social care in the United Kingdom

The four reviews are available to download from the CPA website

<http://www.cpa.org.uk/information/reviews/reviews.html>

2. Age discrimination was banned in the workplace in 2006 and the Equality Bill will make it unlawful to discriminate against someone aged 18 or over because of age when providing services or carrying out public functions. It will not affect products or services for older people where age-based treatment is justified or beneficial. The law will only stop age discrimination where it has negative or harmful consequences. Access the Equality Bill, accompanying documents and impact assessments via the Government Equalities Office website

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx or the CPA Policies on Ageing web page

http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa/policies_on_ageing

3. 'Achieving age equality in health and social care: A report to the Secretary of State for Health', October 2009 details recommendations arising from a national review to challenge age discrimination in health and social care led by Jan Ormondroyd, Chief Executive of Bristol City Council and Sir Ian Carruthers, Chief Executive of the South West Strategic Health Authority.

http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa/achieving_age_equality_in_health_and_social_care.pdf

4. CPA produced a review (2007) from the literature on 'The likely costs and benefits of legislation to prohibit age discrimination in health, social care and mental health services and definitions of age discrimination that might be operationalised for measurement', commissioned by the Department of Health. Access the review via the CPA website <http://www.cpa.org.uk/information/reviews/reviews.html>