

OLD GREY MATTER ARTICLE
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Dignity Action 2016

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) marked its Dignity Action Day this week with a series of events around the country focusing on the theme 'Better Care Now'. It commented in its leaflet: every week, we come across examples of how older people have been let down by the care system. In the last five years £4.6 billion has been cut from social care budgets, 1.8 million people no longer get services at home, and half of all care homes are experiencing financial problems. It's clear we need a new model for social care – one that shares the cost across society as a whole, and which can improve access to services, as well as standards of care. We need a National Health and Care Service (NCHS) funded through taxation. The full leaflet text can be viewed on our website www.anglianpc.com

The NPC Dignity Code is based on simple respect and reasonableness and calls for:

- Respect for individuals to make up their own minds, and for their personal wishes as expressed in 'living wills', for implementation when they can no longer express themselves clearly.
- Respect for an individual's habits, values, particular cultural background and any needs, linguistic or otherwise.
- The use of formal spoken terms of address, unless invited to do otherwise.
- Comfort, consideration, inclusion, participation, stimulation and a sense of purpose in all aspects of care.
- Care to be adapted to the needs of the individual.
- Support for the individual to maintain their hygiene and personal appearance.
- Respect for people's homes, living space and privacy.
- Concerns to be dealt with thoroughly and the right to complain without fear of retribution.
- The provision of advocacy services where appropriate.

The NPC's Dignity Action Day 2016 was celebrated in two ways. First, there was an email letter writing campaign requesting chief officers of Norfolk local authorities, CCGs and Hospital Trusts and letters to managers of all nursing and residential homes in Norwich to pledge their support for the NPC Dignity Code. Second, Anglia Region members ran an information stall outside in a busy Norwich shopping precinct last Saturday handing out hundreds of leaflets mentioned above drawing attention to the urgent need for government to fully resource an integrated health and care system for all who needs it in this country. While there is good practice in many places once you are in the system, it is becoming common knowledge there are still too many gaps and failings in home and residential care provision and also in their running as highlighted by CQC inspection findings in the region.

In the past two years, important signatories from Suffolk pledging support for the code were representatives of Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council, HealthEast CCG, James Paget University Director of Nursing and Hospital Board of Governors and Managers of some Waveney residential care homes and the MP for Waveney. This year we hope for Norfolk's support in the same vein – at least they know of our concern!

Christopher J. Brooks, Chair,
Suffolk, and Anglia Region,
Pensioners Assns. (NPC)