

Report of Pensioners Committee of SERTUC held at Congress House on December 2nd 2008

Guest Speaker Amanda Sherlock, SE Regional Director of CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection)

The first part of the meeting was devoted to an address by Amanda Sherlock a representative of the body responsible for the inspection of care homes. This is an independent body set up by Government to 'improve social care and stamp out bad practice'.

CSCI look at the whole picture of the quality and availability of adult social care in England. This includes social services teams at councils, care homes and care agencies. They regulate, inspect and review all adult social care services in the public, private and voluntary sectors in England. They give a star rating to councils (see below) and, from 2008, a quality rating to care services.

The inspection of care homes is undertaken on a 99% unannounced basis. The inspectors have a right to inspect and to caution owners and inform the police if anything untoward is discovered. They speak to relatives and carers to get their experiences of their family's treatment. There is priority given to dignity and privacy. Accessibility, ramps etc is important as is fire safety. Staff are checked for suitability and CRB status. Most inspections are conducted in an eight hour on-site visit with a possible follow-up if there are complaints to be investigated or interviews conducted.

Finally a report is issued to the Home itself with a copy issued through the CSCI website. There is a star rating given to each Home:

Zero star. Poor

*One star. Adequate, national minimum

** Two star. Good all round

***Three star. Excellent

For further information, visit <http://www.csci.org.uk/> This is a very informative and useful site, well worth a look. One can check Cambridgeshire's care policy as well as the ratings of individual local care homes.

There followed questions and accounts of experiences of care homes by delegates and their families. One member said that his wife was a nurse in a care home who said that managers always seemed to get wind of an impending inspection and put on a show for the inspectors. This was usually cosmetic, chocolate biscuits for the 'clients' etc.

The star rating system came in for criticism for being imprecise. One member stressed the responsibility of visiting relatives keeping an eye open for signs of bad practice and being prepared to take action.

For the most part there was a welcoming attitude for an inspection system that attempts to look after the interests of the most vulnerable in our society. My own concerns centre on a care system which seems largely set up to provide a profit as much as looking after the elderly. In my innocence, I had no idea of the fees charged by private care homes until I came to write this report.....

There wasn't time for the 'Heat or Eat' DVD, however a TUC technician has produced an edited version which will be shown at our next meeting.

There was a report from Frank Cooper, Pensioners Convention, on October's lobby of Parliament that was blighted by the delay many people experienced waiting to see their MP which resulted in some missing their appointment.

Under AOB, one delegate raised the dismay caused amongst pensioners of the rising costs of continuing education with many courses priced at a level where only those on benefits can attend. This is of particular concern to retired teachers who have always enjoyed carrying on learning into retirement. (Some even continue to teach, U3A and WEA courses in particular)

Report by Tony Dutton (Sec. Ret. Mems.)