

Commissioning of hospice care in England, 2015/16

Summary of findings

Introduction

This paper summarises the findings of a survey of hospices in England undertaken by Hospice UK and Together for Short Lives between April and May 2015. The survey examined the commissioning and funding context for English hospices in the 2015/16 financial year.

Key findings

Commissioning and contracting is too complex:

- On average, every hospice in England has to work with four different local CCG commissioners. Children's hospices have to work with an average of seven different local CCG commissioners each.
- To secure funding from CCGs – and manage the various different commissioning and contracting agreements that this requires – hospices are having to commit resources which are disproportionate to the limited funding contributions they are receiving in return.
- Over half (53%) of hospices surveyed had at least one NHS standard contract in place in 2014/15. And a quarter of hospices that have a standard contract have three or more contracts in place.
- Twenty-two per cent of hospices surveyed reported being involved in competitive tendering in the previous 12 months. This figure is up from 16% of hospices in 2014.

Funding for hospices is fragile

- More than two thirds of hospices have had their statutory funding frozen or cut by NHS commissioners for 2014/15:
- Nearly a fifth of hospices surveyed (17%) – both children's and adult hospices – had their funding reduced.
- Funding has remained static for more than half of hospices surveyed (52%); for many hospices this comes after several years of freezes or cuts in statutory funding.

Funding is unfair

- More than eight in ten hospices surveyed (85%) do not think their hospice is being funded fairly and sustainably by the NHS.
- CCGs contribute on average just 10% to the cost of the care that children's hospices provide – compared to an average of around 30% for adult hospices.

- CCG funding for adult hospices varies widely; across England, CCGs make contributions to hospice care costs which range from less than 1% to more than 50%.
- Over a third of total CCG funding for children's hospices in England supports just two children's hospices; one children's hospice receives nothing at all from their CCGs.
- In spite of providing a range of social care services, less than a quarter (23%) of hospices surveyed reported receiving funding from local authorities to fund this care.

Funding is unsustainable

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of hospices in England surveyed expect their funding to be either cut or frozen again during this financial year (2015/16), with 59% expecting a funding freeze and 15% anticipating a cut in funding.
- Some hospices have warned they are likely to have to review the services they offer and may not be able to continue to provide the same level of care in the near future.
- Services that have been identified by some hospices as being at risk from inadequate levels of NHS funding include community nursing specialist teams and hospice at home care.
- Some hospices are subsidising shortfalls in statutory funding through their reserves, freezing staff recruitment or putting service development on hold as demand for hospice care increases and statutory funding fails to keep pace with the cost of providing care.

Hospices should be regarded as integral to local palliative care provision – yet only in some local areas are they seen as key partners:

- Almost a third of hospices surveyed (29%) reported an increase in funding from NHS commissioners last year. And some hospices report very close joint working with the NHS and other local partners in developing and delivering integrated care pathways. Nevertheless, only 37% of hospices surveyed are currently involved with their local health and wellbeing boards – and under half (49%) have any relationship with local authority

For more information

The full report, *Commissioning & Statutory Funding Arrangements for hospices in England: Survey results 2015* can be downloaded at <http://www.hospiceuk.org/what-we-offer/commissioning-support>.

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