

# Continuing Healthcare (CHC) Adjournalment Debate

## Marie Curie briefing on the state of the Fast Track CHC pathway in advance of the adjournalment debate on Monday 27 November

21 November 2017

### What is the purpose of this briefing?

To provide you with a summary of [Making Every Moment Count](#), Marie Curie's report into the state of the Fast Track Continuing Healthcare pathway, ahead of the CHC debate in the Commons on Monday 27 November 2017.

### What is Marie Curie's position?

As a provider of care, support and advice to people with a terminal illness, we frequently see people in their final days, weeks or months stuck in hospital when they have no desire to be there and their health needs can be met elsewhere, such as at home.

**It is completely unacceptable that people with terminal illnesses and their families are having to deal with the stress and uncertainty of being stuck in hospital during an already traumatic period.**

Fast Track Continuing Healthcare (CHC) is of particular interest to Marie Curie as it ensures that people nearing the end of their lives can have a care package in place **within 48 hours**, allowing them the support they need in a setting of their choosing.

Given the importance of Fast Track CHC to the wellbeing of its recipients, Marie Curie believes it to be essential that a package of care is deployed within the 48 hour time frame as set out in the Fast Track CHC guidance which providers must adhere to.

**With 4 in 5 people being supported through CHC currently on the Fast Track pathway, it is critical that the system is working for everyone.**

### The key findings

Through a series of Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) Marie Curie built a picture of how well Fast Track is being delivered across England.

Very concerning were the significant variation and gaps in the information being gathered by many CCGs. **Two thirds of the CCGs who responded to our FOIs were unable to tell us how long it took them to get Fast Track CHC packages in place.** This makes it impossible to monitor the performance of CCGs in meeting the 48 hour time frame to which they are obliged.

No less concerning were the disparities between the average times taken to implement Fast Track care packages. **We estimate that in 2015/16 as many as 57,000 people waited longer than two days for a package of**



Care and support  
through terminal illness

**care.** Of the CCGs who could provide relevant data in response to our FOIs (46% of all CCGs in England), less than a third (28%) were found to be meeting the 48 hour guideline. **Furthermore, 32% of those CCGs who provided the relevant data had average waiting times which exceeded a week.**

CCGs were able to provide us with a number of reasons for why delays were occurring, namely difficulties finding suitable beds in care homes, rapid deterioration of patients preventing discharge and CHC services working on a Monday to Friday basis, causing delays over the weekend.

### **Key points we would like to see highlighted:**

The unacceptable delays uncovered by Marie Curie leave people and their loved ones stranded in hospital, causing significant distress. The charity is keen for you to raise these issues in the debate on Monday:

- **In 2015/16 as many as 57,000 people waited longer than two days for a package of care. This is simply not good enough for people at the end of their lives, dependant on a system which is currently failing to get them in to a place of their choice for their final days and hours.**
- **In order for Fast Track CHC to work effectively, there must be a significant improvement in consistency and quality of data collection. We would suggest that central government and NHS England should develop a set of standards for gathering data on Fast Track to ensure uniformity across the UK. Alarmingly, we currently cannot accurately say exactly how many people are being failed by this system, or why these failures are occurring.**
- **Marie Curie would like to see a full examination of how NHS Trusts are supporting their staff to understand and use the Fast Track CHC pathway in order to identify best practice for disseminating to those Trusts which are underperforming.**

### **About Marie Curie**

Marie Curie is the leading charity for people with a terminal illness and their families. We:

- Provide direct care to people in our nine hospices across the UK and in their own homes;
- Offer a dedicated information and support service to people affected by terminal illness;
- Run the UK's largest research programme into improving care for people with a terminal illness and their families;
- Campaign to ensure that everyone living with a terminal illness and their families and carers get access to the care and support they need.
- Work as part of the end of life care coalition to ensure everyone can get high quality care at the end of life.

