Home Care in Ireland: A Cautionary Tale of Policy-Making in the Absence of Implementation Strategies

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BASED ON A PAPER BY SAME TITLE (TIMONEN, DOYLE AND O'DWYER 2010)
Overview

Expansion of formal home care

...in the absence of a national plan / framework / legislation to guide this expansion

...in tandem with significant policy formulation and implementation in residential care

= inconsistent implementation, uneven provision and missed opportunity to lift home care into the realm of public policy alongside residential care
Home care in 2000

- ‘Implicit familialism’: Reliance on informal carers who remained largely unsupported by State

- Funding prioritised residential care

- Public expenditure on home care 0.19% of GDP

- 3.7% of 65+ received home help
Apparent prioritisation of home care

- National Health Strategy (2001): *Access...should be fair. The system must respond to people’s needs rather than have access dependent on geographic location or ability to pay.*

- Annual expenditure for homecare increased: €102.3 m in 2001 to €331 m in 2008

- National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013: €4.7 billion allocated to older people’s services

- Establishment of the Home Care Support Scheme in 2006 (individually tailored cash-for-care packages of domestic and personal care)
Outcomes

- Unevenness of provision across country
- Shifting balance between providers, growth of private sector
- Sector currently unregulated
Why these outcomes?

- Liberal welfare state
  - No room for universal entitlements, rights
  - Openness to private provision

- Further reinforced by:
  - Clientelistic nature of Irish politics: discretionary system rather than formal means-based assessments
  - Policy documents merely administrative guidelines, local administrative units not obliged to provide home care.

- Absence of media attention
- Absence of large, organised provider constituency
Conclusion

- The process of home care formalisation has highlighted serious deficiencies in the State’s ability to implement policy.

- State is still struggling to shed its subsidiary role and adopt a stronger, more directive role in financing, co-ordinating and regulating home care.

- Policy *per se* is not a sufficient condition for achieving key outcomes such as fairness & equity. In the Irish context, legislation and clarification of lines of responsibility are required.