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Dear Editor,

Few in local government would argue against the better integration of Adult Care services into all areas of neighbourhoods and communities. What strikes me as odd is that the Department of Health have chosen to step into this particular row without seemingly so much as a passing glance to local government.

Local authorities have proven they are capable of both self improvement and modernisation of service delivery. Most now have integrated street scene and neighbourhood services, reducing the fear of crime and creating useable open spaces. These help achieve health improvements such as increased physical activity amongst young and old alike. Councils also already work collaboratively with a range of external partners such as PCTs.

However, such partnerships have been brought about without the need for wide scale intervention in council structures, political or otherwise. For DoH to clumsily attempt to dictate the future organisation of local authority services could risk skewing the debate, about how councils can better serve older people, into a debate about inward looking organisational issues. What local authorities really need to do is look at how they are able to arrange services to ensure that the needs of all people are met. Many older adults may simply need low level preventative care or support in order to be able to remain in their own homes. These issues are not restricted to Adult Social Care Services. They ought to be central to service planning across all services from street scene to leisure.

To engage in a debate on structure, when we should be looking at service improvement planning, will potentially risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Paul O'Brien

Chief Executive

