



## NEWS RELEASE

Paul Burstow MP  
Member of Parliament for Sutton & Cheam  
Shadow Minister for Older People

Contact: Richard Stokoe  
Telephone 0207 219 1196  
Fax 0207 219 0974  
e-mail [stokoer@parliament.uk](mailto:stokoer@parliament.uk)

Website [www.paulburstow.com](http://www.paulburstow.com)

Contact: Richard Stokoe 0207 219 1196  
Embargo: 00:01hrs 1<sup>st</sup> August 2001

### THE OLDER YOU ARE THE LONGER YOU WAIT IN A&E

Shocking new nationwide CHC Casualty Watch figures that show that an older person is on average likely to wait almost two and a half times longer than a younger person in Accident and Emergency. Paul Burstow MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Minister for Older People, showed the figures proved that ageism is still rife within the NHS.

The new figures show a person over 80 waited on average for 4 ½ hours compared to just under 3 hours for a person aged between 16 and 39 years old, and 1 hour 40 minutes for a person under 16 years old.

Commenting on the findings, Paul Burstow MP, said:

**“These figures show the true reality behind the rhetoric that there is a caste system in operation in the NHS. It is not based on class. It is based on a person’s age. Age rather than individual need determines clinical priorities.**

“Not a week goes by without yet another case coming to light of treatments refused, basic care and compassion overlooked and dignity denied.

“The Tory NHS reforms of the 1980s and 90s created a breeding ground where ageism flourishes. More and more older people admitted to fewer and fewer beds for shorter and shorter stays.

**“There can be no place for ageist assumptions in the NHS. These figures demonstrate that there is still a long way to go. There must be zero tolerance of age discrimination in the NHS.”**

ENDS

Notes to editor follows....

## NOTES TO EDITORS

The figures are taken from the Nationwide CHC Casulty Watch Report 26 March 2001. The survey covers 187 A&E Departments and recorded the length of wait in A&E departments of 3,893 people.

Waiting times in hours:

| age             | average | not known | 80+  | 70-79 | 60-69 | 40-59 | 16-39 | <16  |
|-----------------|---------|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Count           | 3893    | 45        | 603  | 546   | 383   | 747   | 1063  | 506  |
| ave wait in hrs | 3.35    | 3.33      | 4.34 | 4.22  | 4.53  | 3.41  | 2.50  | 1.40 |

### Other examples of Discrimination

Approximately 20% of people over the age of 85 attend A&E Departments each year. half of those attendances are the result of trauma (e.g. a fall). In total, attendances for falls account for 5% of the workload of A&E Departments

One of the common assumptions about older people's use of A&E Departments is that they often attend unnecessarily. This is a myth. In a study conducted in 1995, researchers found that 60% of A&E attendances by older people were clinically justified, (a similar proportion as for other groups of patients).

A&E Departments are often not equipped to provide anything more than immediate trauma care. Staff working in the Departments may not have the skills and experience necessary to most effectively meet the needs of older patients, especially for patients with special needs, such as those with dementia. There is often a belief that patients in A&E require the same 'type' of care, and a failure to recognise the needs that older people may have.

Forty per cent of coronary care units apply age restrictions to clot-busting drug therapy after heart attacks.

Kidney dialysis is rationed on the basis of age. According to the Department of Health two thirds of kidney patients over 70 have been refused dialysis or transplants.