

The Road We Walk

(A citizen's reflection for Pillar 4: Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently)

Most of life is lived in ease. We walk the road without thinking about it, moving through the ordinary hours. Yet when crisis comes — sickness, frailty, loss — the road vanishes. The familiar path is swallowed by fog, and time itself seems to stumble.

In those moments, care is everything. A hand to steady us, a signpost to guide us, a lantern to make the path visible again. Some are lucky enough to have family who step forward. But not all families are able, and not all are present. Then the village must expand — care must be civic as well as private, shared as well as personal.

To deliver care efficiently is not to ration it, nor to count minutes like coins. It is to recognise that time in crisis is not ordinary time. A day in a hospital bed is not the same as a day at work; an hour waiting for help in pain stretches longer than a week of health. Efficiency means meeting people where they are in those altered hours, and restoring them to the everyday time of living.

The road of life is long, and its crises rare. Yet precisely because they are rare, when they come we need to feel supported, not abandoned. Systems of care should be designed like waystations along the road: dependable, humane, present when called upon. Not cluttered with broken lanterns, not scattered with confusing signs, but clear and steady.

Care is not wasted time. It is what allows life to continue. To measure its efficiency is not to shrink it, but to ask: how well do we help people back onto the road? How well do we use society's time to ease those moments when time seems unbearable?

— Submitted as a personal reflection