

# Towards the National Care Service

**LABOUR'S VISION**



# Foreword

Social care is a vital public service. Much like the NHS, social care's contribution to our society should be a source of national pride. The current social care system is in crisis and not fit for purpose. Too many people are going without the care they need. Failures in the system are putting great pressure on unpaid carers and on the people who need to receive care.

Labour has committed to build a National Care Service that works for everyone who needs it. It will be founded on Labour's enduring belief in fairness and responsibility. We will ensure everyone has the dignity and security they need in their old age. We will ensure that people with disabilities are supported to live independently. We are committed to reforming the care provider system. We will end the postcode lottery of eligibility for care and we will provide the support people need with their personal care.

Our National Care Service will ensure that social care is a universally-available service, with personal care provided free at the point of use, and that all who need it can access it.

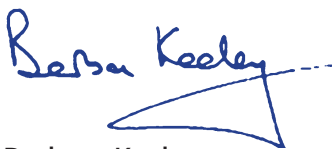
This vision sets out the immediate actions we will take, the first steps in our journey towards this goal.

'Labour has committed to build a National Care Service that works for everyone who needs it. It will be founded on Labour's enduring belief in fairness and responsibility.'

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# The Case for Change

Social care is in crisis. It is a system where support is only provided by the state to those on lower incomes or with low levels of savings, leaving many people to pay for their own care.

Local authorities have less money to spend on social care than they did in 2010. Nine years of cuts to council budgets have seen £7.7 billion taken out of social care budgets<sup>1</sup>. Hundreds of thousands fewer people are receiving the care they need now than were in 2010, despite local authorities receiving 5,000 requests for social care every day<sup>2</sup>.

This is having a profound impact on the millions of unpaid carers in this country, as 2.6 million people have quit their jobs to care for a family member or friend since 2017<sup>3</sup>, an increase of 12 per cent on 2013.

According to Age UK, 1.4 million older people go without the care they need for essential everyday tasks such as getting washed or dressed. Taken together with the fact that there is expected to be a significant rise in the number of people over-65 living with high care needs over the next 20 years, there is an urgent need for a solution that addresses the needs of older people.

But there is a misconception that social care is just for older people. The reality is that the number of working age adults approaching local authorities for support from social care is increasing<sup>4</sup>. Whilst working age adults make up one third of the people receiving social care, they currently account for approximately half of expenditure on long term care<sup>5</sup>. Any solution to the social care crisis will need to work for both working age adults as well as older people.

Addressing the crisis in social care will need reform of the sector. 400 care home providers have collapsed in the last five years<sup>6</sup> and councils are increasingly having care contracts handed back<sup>7</sup>. The quality of care is inconsistent, and often poor. One in five care facilities receive the lowest quality ratings from the Care Quality Commission<sup>8</sup>, and complaints about social care providers have almost trebled since 2010<sup>9</sup>.

The move towards private provision of social care began in the 1980s and continued throughout the early 1990s, with local authorities moving care contracts to voluntary sector or private providers<sup>10</sup>. This has created the current system in social care, where private providers are able to profit from providing poor quality care services.

Since the Royal Commission chaired by Sir Stewart Sutherland in 1999 there have been 12 White Papers, Green Papers and other consultations about social care in England, but very little progress. It's clear that social care cannot continue to be delivered in its current form. Radical change is needed to address unmet need, ensuring that both older people and working age adults get the care they need.

In 2010, Labour pledged to establish the National Care Service, and we reiterated this commitment in our 2017 manifesto.

It is on this foundation that our current vision for social care is built. Through building the National Care Service we will rebuild social care, addressing the decades of neglect of the care system.

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# Labour's Vision

The next Labour Government will establish a comprehensive National Care Service which will provide community-based, person-centred support, underpinned by the principles of ethical care and independent living.

Our vision is for a social care system that meets people's social care needs, minimises financial uncertainty and treats people needing care with dignity and respect.

Social care has been neglected by Government and has now become a service based on a person's ability to pay, rather than their needs. This means that right now, too many people are going without vital social care support as they fall outside narrow eligibility criteria or are unable to pay. We need to reverse this trend urgently. Labour's National Care Service will form part of our universal public services, funded through general taxation, removing the burden of cost from individuals.

Social care is a service that has the potential to be used by every family in the country. As both the number of people with complex care needs and the number of older people continue to rise, a care system is needed that is simple, sustainable and provides a fair system for all those who need it. It is vital that social care is a universal public service that provides the dignity, security and compassionate care that people need to live their lives.

## Providing comprehensive personal care

At the centre of Labour's National Care Service will be the provision of free personal care, as introduced by Labour in Scotland. Our belief is that providing a universal, basic level of social care support to those who need it is a vital pillar of the welfare state.

We will begin by ensuring that all older people have their personal care needs met, with the ambition to extend this to all working-age adults who need it. By providing free personal care, more people will have help with everyday activities such as getting in and out of bed, going to the toilet, having a bath or shower, getting dressed or preparing a meal.

The benefits of free personal care are wide-ranging. It will enable more people to stay in their own homes and take pressure off unpaid carers<sup>11</sup>. For people in residential care, it will mean the most vulnerable in society have more protection from the very high costs associated with this type of care.

## Securing the future of the care system

Labour's vision is of the National Care Service in which the public sector plays the majority role in delivering care again. As a priority, we will increase local authority capacity to deliver care so that after years of cuts to council budgets, we are able to rebuild a sustainable care service. Central to this will be care staff employed by local authorities, with the pay, working conditions and training to provide high quality care.

There is consensus that the current social care system is not fit for purpose. The failure of private sector care providers such as Southern Cross shows how a care system dependent on private providers is vulnerable to crisis and failure to deliver the care required. With some large social care providers, accountability to shareholders rather than those who use services has led to the pursuit of high profit margins and savings to pay shareholders. A move to greater public provision will increase local accountability for care and ensure that services are delivered in the public interest.

As we move towards greater public provision and the establishment of the National Care Service, we will ensure that care providers work for people, not for profit. Our focus on the ethical commissioning of care and a commitment to ensure that all providers meet ethical standards of care will mean that care providers meet standards of transparency, compliance and profit capping.

The National Care Service cannot work in isolation. Once established, it will work in partnership with the NHS, third sector organisations, and communities to ensure the provision of effective, high quality services. We will consider how we can work across Government to offer the right support for people to live independently, for example, through building more homes that meet the higher standards of accessibility.

## Rebuilding the social care workforce

Addressing the crisis in the social care workforce and investing in care staff properly, are crucial to delivering the National Care Service. Providing care is a highly skilled, vital role and developing the care workforce is a key mission in Labour's Industrial Strategy.

It's clear that poor working conditions in the social care sector aren't just bad for care staff, they're bad for the quality of care. With high vacancy rates, understaffing, and time-limited visits for home care, care needs are left unmet and care staff are unable to provide the high-quality care that people need.

Key to delivering high quality social care is a well-paid, highly trained and motivated workforce. Through our National Education Service we will ensure that staff receive high quality training and upskilling throughout their careers, so that people who use care services get support from trained staff who have the time and skills needed to care.

Labour is committed to ensuring that care staff are treated with the professional respect they deserve, with the pay, working conditions and access to professional development that any working professional would expect.

### **Lifetime costs for care**

The cost of residential care, sometimes called 'hotel costs', can be prohibitively expensive for many people. For people with dementia, who can often spend many years living in residential care, the costs can be catastrophic.

We remain committed to reducing the number of people facing catastrophic care costs and will bring forward legislation to ensure no one has to sell their home to pay for care. To achieve this, we will set a lifetime cap on care costs.

'By committing to the development of the workforce we will ensure that people who use care services get support from trained staff who have the time and skills needed to care.'

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# Ensure more people get support from the social care system through free personal care

Personal care is the support a person may need for everyday activities. These activities may include getting in and out of bed, using the toilet, having a bath or shower, getting dressed or preparing a meal. Personal care is provided to people in their own homes, or in care homes. Free personal care is already available to adults in Scotland who need these services.

Labour will legislate to guarantee free personal care for older people over the age of 65 who need it. We will set out the eligibility criteria for free personal care, to ensure that everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, is entitled to the same level of support. Providing free personal care will be the foundation of the National Care Service.

## Why free personal care?

By introducing free personal care, Labour will apply the principles of the NHS to social care – providing services free at the point of use to those who need them. Providing free personal care to older people will ensure they will be able to live in their own homes for longer, providing them with the dignity and support needed to lead independent lives for as long as possible. Free personal care will remove the distinction between health and care needs which has been particularly devastating for people with dementia and their families, and will do more to move care into communities and away from hospital.

There is wide support for introducing free personal care. The IPPR think tank recommends the introduction of free personal care as a way to ensure people with dementia receive the same care as other conditions, and to reduce the burden on unpaid carers. The charity Independent Age calls for the introduction of free personal care to reduce the number of people who face catastrophic costs of over £100,000 for their care by over 60,000<sup>12</sup>.

The introduction of free personal care will more than double the number of people receiving state-funded social care<sup>13</sup>.

Free personal care will also benefit the NHS. By providing free personal care, delayed transfers of care from hospital will be reduced as has been seen in Scotland. It is also likely to reduce admissions to care homes and hospitals by ensuring that people have support in their own homes<sup>14</sup>.

Labour believes that personal care should form part of society's universal public services, funded free at the point of use through general taxation rather than through levies or insurance schemes that put the onus on individuals.

## WORKING AGE ADULTS

Since 2015/16 there has been a 4 per cent increase in the proportion of working age adults approaching local authorities for support from social care. Whilst working age adults make up one third of the people receiving social care, they currently account for half of the expenditure on long term care.

In the 2019 ADASS budget survey, 39 per cent of Directors of Adult Social Services said they felt care for working age adults was the greatest area of concern when thinking about their budgetary pressures.

Taking just one condition, Multiple Sclerosis, there is evidence to show that there is unmet need for social care amongst working age adults with MS. A MS Society survey found only 32 per cent of people with MS aged 18 – 29 received the social care support they needed. With 39 per cent of people with MS paying for their own care, it's clear more can be done to ensure working age adults get the support they need with their care.

To enable us to introduce free personal care for working age-adults, we will collect data on the level of unmet need for care among this group. This will enable us to reduce this unmet need and work towards our ambition to extend free personal care to all working age adults.<sup>15, 16, 17</sup>

# Addressing the funding crisis in social care and increasing capacity

£7.7 billion has been cut from social care budgets<sup>18</sup>, and local authority budgets have been cut by 50 per cent on average, since 2010<sup>19</sup>. Hundreds of thousands fewer people now receive publicly-funded care, despite local authorities now receiving 5,000 requests for care every day<sup>20</sup>, and the number of older people who are not receiving the care they need stands at 1.4 million. It is clear that there is an urgent need for these cuts to social care budgets to be reversed.

In our 2017 manifesto, Labour committed an additional £8 billion to social care funding across a Parliament. We remain committed to addressing the funding gap in social care and ensuring that care services have the funding required.

Through Labour's commitment to additional funding, we will increase the number of publicly-funded care packages. This will begin the process of rebuilding care services after years of Tory austerity.

## **We will rebuild local authority capacity to deliver social care**

Labour's National Care service will move towards greater public provision of social care. Local authorities will become responsible for planning, designing, delivering and evaluating care services within national frameworks.

The market across both residential and home care is fragmented, with over 20,000 providers<sup>21</sup>, and in many cases providers are reliant on a low-paid and exploited care workforce.

Labour believes that local authorities are best placed to put people before profit, protect care staff, and ensure services are accountable to local people. Rebuilding local authority capacity to deliver care will enable councils to focus on delivering public services, rather than negotiating contracts.

In addition to our move to publicly-provided personal care, high-quality public sector residential care service capacity will be gradually built up. We will also be prepared to support local councils, ensuring they have sufficient capacity, to take over existing homes where they are failing or where it would benefit efficient and effective operation of the services.

We will encourage small scale, tailored local provision to be the preferred option where public provision of care isn't possible. In commissioning services, local

authorities will assess adherence to ethical codes of conduct and workplace practices; and reinforce nationally-set care sector regulations.

## **Ethical Care**

As we move towards greater public provision of care, we will ensure that existing care services commissioned by local authorities meet our ethical standards of care. This will put public interest and a public service ethos at the heart of decision-making.

We will ensure all social care providers meet our requirements on openness and transparency, tax compliance, and profit-capping. Research has found that private providers expect a return on investment of 12 per cent for delivering a service<sup>22</sup>. We will address these high profit margins through new standards of ethical care. UNISON and GMB unions have tirelessly campaigned against a profit-driven care service and Labour is committed to ensuring social care funding is used to benefit the people who need it<sup>23</sup>.

We remain committed to ensuring that commissioners purchase care from providers with certain workforce terms and conditions as a minimum requirement, and from providers who have effective training, development and supervision for their staff. In both local authority and independent provision, we will prioritise increasing the quality of care.

## **WORKING IN THE NATIONAL CARE SERVICE**

As a care worker, you can expect to be on a contract that guarantees the hours you work. We will bring an end to job insecurity in social care by ending the use of zero-hour contracts in the sector. You will be paid a real living wage, including for your travel time.

We will end 15-minute care visits and ensure that you have the time you need to deliver care properly, spending time with the people you care for.

Caring for vulnerable and elderly people is one of the most difficult and rewarding roles in the country. We will ensure care workers have access to improved training and development. This will ensure that, as a care worker, you can grow and progress in your career.



# Appendix: Building blocks for the National Care Service

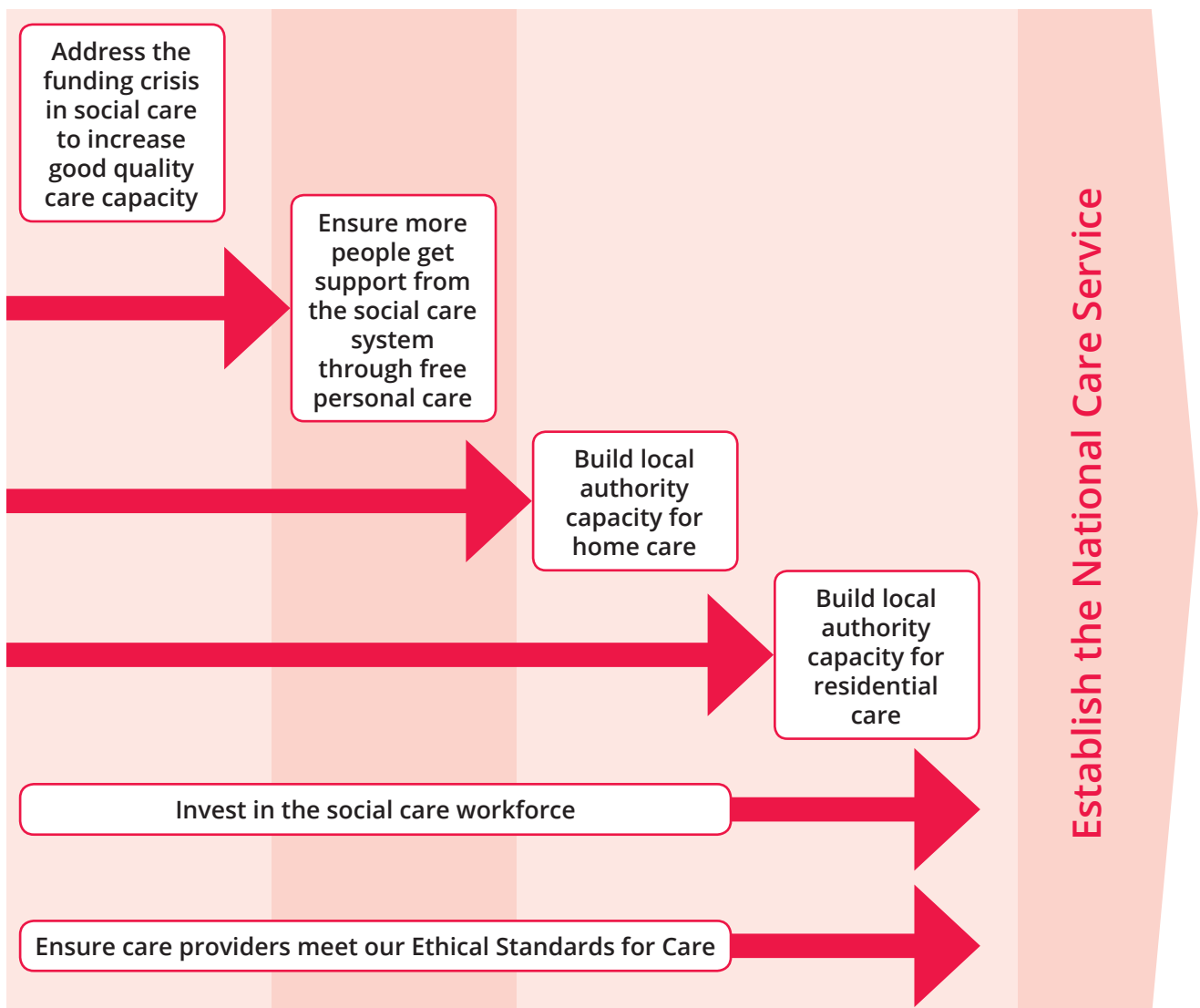
With the social care system in crisis, Labour's first priorities remain to ensure that more people get the care they need through ending the current crisis in social care, and through bringing forward legislation to provide free personal care to older people.

To ensure the long-term stability of the social care sector, we will ensure care is delivered ethically, and start to build in-house capacity in home care, working towards a system where the public sector plays the majority role in delivering care.

We will invest in the social care workforce; ensuring that care workers are valued and provided with the training they need.

## Within a Parliament, Labour will:

- Address the funding crisis in social care, to ensure that more care is of higher quality and reduce levels of unmet need
- Provide free personal care to older people, with the ambition to extend this to working-age adults
- Build local authority capacity to deliver care, so that more care is delivered in-house.
- Ensure that all providers of care meet our ethical standards for care
- Invest in the social care workforce, so that care staff are valued and supported
- Establish the National Care Service, which will provide person-centred, universal care and minimise the financial uncertainty for people who need care.



# Endnotes

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- 21 NHS Digital, Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report 2017/18 <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/35/6A192B/Activity%20and%20Finance%20Report%20201718.pdf>
- 22 Burns D et al. (2016) Where does the money go? Financialised chains and the crisis in residential care Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESP) University of Manchester
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