

# Response to the Social Care Green Paper

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for the

## Green Party of England & Wales

13 November 2009

With thanks to

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The number of disabled people in the UK ranges from 8 to 11 million people and this does not include those living with 'invisible disabilities' [3]. The number of carers in England is approximately 5.2 million people [4]. It has been widely reported that unpaid family carers save the NHS an estimated £87 billion a year [5].

1.2 The Social Care Green Paper ([http://www.dh.gov.uk/dr\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_102732.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/dr_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_102732.pdf)) is regarded as one of the most radical shakeups in the welfare state for years. It affects primarily people over 65 but also potentially impacts on the care needs of disabled people of working age.

1.3 In preparing our response we have consulted Inclusion, the Pan London Deaf and Disabled Peoples organisation, and also other disability groups run by disabled people. We also took note of responses from Carer Watch, a campaigning group of family carers. A fundamental guiding principle in our approach was to emphasise input from disabled people and carers as the people most intimately affected by issues regarding social care. We were more concerned with the input of groups of

disabled people and carers rather than government-funded groups **for** disabled people and carers. We believe the latter often have conflicts of interest regarding receipt of government funds, and poor track records with reference to employing disabled people professionally.

1.4 Our response is also inspired by the Green Party's strong principles of social justice, including support for the social model of disability and opposition to the marginalisation, both financial and psychological, of vulnerable groups in society.

1.5 We note that the consultation process has been extremely short, in the last stages of a parliamentary term, and focused only upon England. We believe this is inappropriate because the changes mooted affect UK-wide state benefits. (UK-wide figures for the NHS are also easier to obtain than England-only figures.) We are also concerned about a lack of financial modelling in the Green Paper[1] and an uncosted prime ministerial pledge pre-empting the outcome [2].

## 2. Benefits

2.1 We would support proposals for the 'right to control' and the emphasis on the 'personalised approach' in the Green Paper. We would oppose the disempowerment of disabled people via the withdrawal or reallocation of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance Allowance (AA). In terms of the 'prevention' theme of the Green Paper, these benefits allow disabled people to self-direct their independent living options.

2.2 DLA and AA are easy to claim – provided that the claimant has suitable help interpreting and completing the forms. Making AA means-tested would discourage claims [6]. We believe the DWP has invested more in stigmatising claimants of means-tested benefits than in promoting benefits entitlement [7]. The argument that the benefit is complicated to apply for should not be used to replace it with an even more complicated means tested benefit. AA is to meet **additional** disability-related costs, therefore the argument that 'some older people receive it and others do not' does not hold water. DLA for three-quarters of a million claimants aged 65 and over is still under threat despite placating ministerial statements [8]. The vast majority of disabled people and disability organisations have made clear their opposition to the removal of DLA and we support them in that.

2.3 We also believe that £53 per week Carer's Allowance is inadequate. Indeed, many consider it a cruel indictment of the government's disregard for family carers [9].

## **3. Assessment**

3.1 We are opposed to the means-testing of benefits. We support universalisation and the introduction of the notion of parity of entitlement – the end of the postcode lottery. Any attempt to ‘fix’ criteria at upper thresholds and thereby reduce entitlement to those with lower or medium care needs must be condemned. Fair, equal and uniform access to care must be explicit. Investing in people's wellbeing helps keep them from deteriorating.

3.2 Entitlement should be based on need, so as well as opposing means-testing we oppose care-charging. We oppose the denial of access through the implementation of high level eligibility criteria [10]. The principle of inclusion should be central. Funding independent living options must be given higher priority. Assessment of entitlement, whether at national or local level, should not be driven by a bonus culture which often accompanies the involvement of the private companies or pseudo charities.

## **4. Funding**

4.1 A larger share of the funding should come from the state than is outlined in the Green Paper. Disabled people should not bear the brunt of ‘difficult choices’. Where spending cuts are seen to be necessary they should be in other areas of state spending, not in services provided to older and disabled people. Care and support must be available free at the point of use. The Green Paper has ruled out taxation as the principal means of funding these services. We do not accept this hypothesis. We would regard the Comprehensive Insurance Scheme as the next best system but we believe that direct state funding is the best option.

4.2 We believe that leaving the provision of services chiefly in the remit of Local Authorities increases the real risk of such funding being spent in other budgetary areas when no real provision for ring-fencing is provided. This has proven to be the case in many situations, such as the funding for LINKs from the Department of Health, much of which has been siphoned off into other areas of spending. This is why a national and universal system of funding is vitally necessary [11].

## **5. Access to services**

5.1 Information and advice are crucial, but must include advice provided by disabled people. Joined-up services will require legislation to support individual rights, enforcement and funding. A major concern is that the outcome of providing joined-up

services is regarded as reducing costs. We would agree that re-ablement schemes should be extended to more people, leading to a significant reduction in health costs and improvement in health.

## 6. Gaps in the consultation

6.1 There are serious omissions from the consultation which need to be seen in the context of the Welfare Reform Bill currently progressing through parliament and its impact on the benefits system for many disabled people [12]. Our proposals therefore include:

- More resources for carers and respite care for both carers and those cared for by them. Given that Department of Health figures recognise that family-based carers save the NHS £87 bn per year UK-wide, we consider such an omission a serious lack of consideration of the needs of family-based carers, as if the Green Paper's authors were surrendering the welfare state to the market [13].
- Security of funding – firmer enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and a full rights-based system to support independence.
- A guarantee that disability benefits will not be reduced. The proposals cannot be taken in isolation but must be regarded in tandem with the Welfare Reform Bill, where there is, for example, diminishing financial provision for carers [14]. This again shows no consideration for the prospect of increased sustainability that family-based carers – with greater specialised knowledge and commitment to the care and support of loved ones than an army of paid care workers on cover shifts and with limited in-service training – could offer disabled people in their care. It does seem also from this omission, that considerations of the requirements of people with invisible disabilities such as mental health problems, learning disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions have been ignored. Such service-users are more sensitive to changes regarding the identity of the carer, while market-driven ideas of 'accountability' lead to excess time being devoted to bureaucracy rather than actually attending to helping vulnerable adults [15].

6.2 We also note that the splitting of adults and children's social services since 1997 and lack of lifelong access to, for example, speech and language therapy, do not recognise the prospect of investing in people's independence from cradle to grave as a means of furthering sustainability of funding [16].

6.3 At the time of writing, a coalition of disability and carers' charities is considering a Freedom of Information Act request to bring up the financial modelling for the consultation, which has not been forthcoming in the months since the paper was published [17].

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# Notes

1. See <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2009/11/04/113056/adult-green-paper-campaigners-slam-delay-to-financial-model.html> accessed 6 November 2009.
2. <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2009/11/05/113082/experts-free-care-plan-has-made-green-paper-incoherent.html>, accessed 6 November 2009, and <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/social-work-blog/2009/11/its-time-for-politicians-to-st.html>, accessed 6 November 2009.
3. See <http://www.adhd.org.uk/> for more information.
4. DH\_102732 (2009: 31) *Shaping the Future of Care Together*.
5. [http://uk.search.yahoo.com/search;\\_ylt=A03uv8atKvRKNXcBtEpLBQx.?p=carers+and+NHS+and+%22%C2%A387+billion%22+and+UK&fr2=sb-top&fr=yfp-t-702&rd=r2&sao=1](http://uk.search.yahoo.com/search;_ylt=A03uv8atKvRKNXcBtEpLBQx.?p=carers+and+NHS+and+%22%C2%A387+billion%22+and+UK&fr2=sb-top&fr=yfp-t-702&rd=r2&sao=1), accessed 6 November 2009. Against such a background, we believe the coercive Welfare Reform Bill is a disaster for the health of a nation in time of market recession.
6. <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2006/08/30/55531/underclaiming-of-benefits.html>, accessed 6 November 2009
7. <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2009/10/02/112767/welfare-rights-keep-claimants-up-to-date-with-changes.html>, accessed 6 November 2009.
8. <http://carerwatch.com/cuts/?p=109>, accessed 6 November 2009.
9. A report from National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence says that poor management in the UK costs the economy billions of pounds per year. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6502074/Managers-one-of-the-biggest-threats-to-workers-mental-health.html>. In the domestic 'workplace', many less affluent married couples with a disabled child become single parent families under the stresses and strains of an unsupportive society that flouts Disability Discrimination Act legislation. See One Parent Families Gingerbread *Lone Parents Factsheet* for statistical support to this statement: <http://www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk/1/lx3x1opx20x1oix1591x1/0/0/011009/0/0/lone-parents-facts.htm>, accessed 6 November 2009.] See also *From the Cradle to the Grave: The Reality for Carers* <http://carerwatch.com/news/?p=123>, accessed 6 November 2009.
10. Extensive coverage of the harmful effects of eligibility thresholds can be found at <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/SearchServices/Search.aspx?searchType=site&Content=site&sKeywords=%22eligibility%22%20%22thresholds%22>, accessed 6 November 2009.
11. Report by National Association of LINKs Members covering the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 to August 8<sup>th</sup> 2008, the period when LINKs were first established under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. For copies of report contact [NALM2008@aol.com](mailto:NALM2008@aol.com).
12. See 'Welfare Reform Bill is blot on social care landscape' by Brunel University Social Policy Professor Peter Beresford, accessed 6 November 2009: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/social-care-experts-blog/2009/10/welfare-reform-bill-is-blot-on.html>.
13. See note 12.

14. See <http://www.carersuk.org/Forums/viewtopic.php?t=10195>, accessed 6 November 2009. Although this item is about a minor concessions victory for family-based carers of disabled children under the age of 16, it reveals how much people have been suffering in recent years with the creeping encroachment of the privatisation of the welfare state that the Green Party opposes.
15. See <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/social-care-experts-blog/2009/10/dawson-balls-bust-up-social-wo.html>, accessed 6 November 2009.
16. The Every Disabled Child Matters campaign highlights several worthy ideas for making transitions easier, and thus giving disabled people better prospects from the cradle to the grave. See: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2009/10/02/112767/welfare-rights-keep-claimants-up-to-date-with-changes.html>, accessed 6 November 2009.
17. See <http://carerwatch.com/cuts/?p=117>.
18. See Brunel Sociology Prof Peter Beresford's blog ' Means-test welfare reform is a costly waste', *Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/oct/28/means-test-welfare-benefits>.