

WHOLE PERSON CARE AND DISABLED PEOPLE

Speech to Scope and the Fabian Society

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“Disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else.”

Scope’s vision is strikingly simple, and presents a huge challenge to politicians, Government, our economy, public services and wider society too.

Along with disability organisations up and down the country you believe that disabled people should have the same chance of a good education, to work, have a decent home and social life that other people in society enjoy.

You champion the right of disabled people to control the daily decisions that affect their lives, and to live independently within the community of their choice.

You want a society that sees and values individual disabled people and their contributions, not just their condition or impairment.

And you campaign for a world that sets no limit on the potential of disabled people to live their lives and achieve their goals.

Your vision, values and principles are ones that Labour passionately shares.

Today, I’m going to talk about how our policy of “whole person care” will help make them a reality.

The argument I want to make is achieving this will require fundamental changes to our public services and the role of the state.

These changes are essential if we’re going to improve the lives of disabled people and deliver social justice when there is far less money around.

I don’t need to tell you that that many disabled people feel we are a long way away from living in a society that gives them the same opportunities as everyone else.

As my much admired colleague Anne McGuire said last week, when she stood down as Labour’s Shadow Minister for Disabled People: the last three years have seen an unprecedented attack on disabled people by a Government that is too ashamed to produce a cumulative assessment of their policies.

Take my own area of social care.

This Government’s decision to cut local council budgets by a third is having a devastating impact on services that are essential to helping with the basics of daily life like getting up, washed, dressed and fed.

Whilst most of the debate has focused on the effect this is having on older people, a third of social care users are working age disabled adults.

In my own city of Leicester, 40 per cent of those receiving local council care are disabled adults, and their services account for 60 per cent of the adult social care budget.

The Government repeatedly claims they are promoting independence and wellbeing for disabled people.

But the reality is that four in ten disabled people are now failing to have their basic social care needs met and nearly half of disabled adults say services aren't supporting them to get out into their local neighbourhood.

How can disabled people have a family life or be part of their communities - let alone find work, learn new skills or volunteer - when they can't even get out of their homes?

This same erosion of disabled people's independence and opportunities is happening as a result of the Government welfare policies.

Disabled people are being hit from all sides: by the bedroom tax, the so-called Personal Independence Payment, the closure of the Independent Living Fund, and the Government's failing work programme and work capability assessments.

Yet the Government isn't actually saving money on social security; far from it. The welfare bill has soared by £20 billion because our economy has flatlined for 3 years, the work programme isn't working and the Government has failed to make the real reforms disabled people need to get and hold down a job.

We urgently need a different approach and Labour has already set out some significant changes we would make if we were in Government.

We've said the Government should invest £1.2 billion of the NHS underspend, which Jeremy Hunt has handed back to the Treasury, over the next two years in social care to help deal with the immediate care crisis.

We've called on them to sack Atos with immediate effect.

We've promised to legislate for a specific criminal charge of disability hate crime, to tackle the increasing and unacceptable abuse disabled people face.

And if we are elected in 2015 we will repeal the unfair and costly bedroom tax, funded by scrapping the Government's tax cut for hedge funds and their 'shares for rights' scheme.

These changes would make a real and immediate difference to disabled people's lives.

We also know more fundamental reforms are needed in future, which is where Labour's plans for whole person care come in.

Put simply, whole person care is about ensuring all of a person's needs to live a healthy, independent and dignified life are met together: physical, mental and social.

Currently, these needs are addressed by three essentially separate care systems: the mainstream NHS, mental health on the sidelines, and a completely separate system of local council funded social care.

The consequence is that people too often face a battle between all the different services, being forced to tell their story time and time again.

They end up having some but not all of their needs met in any one system, and too often fall through the gaps in services altogether.

Crucially, these separate silos mean there's too little focus on preventing problems from happening in the first place as different services protect their individual budgets instead of pooling their resources.

The result is a care and support system that doesn't secure the best results for users and their families, or deliver the best value for public money.

One of starkest examples of this failure is care for people with a learning disability.

Men with learning disabilities die on average 13 years earlier than men in the general population, and women a staggering 20 years earlier.

Around 40 percent of deaths of people with a learning disability are premature – that's 1,200 deaths every single year. Research by Mencap has shown one of the main causes of these deaths is delays and problems with diagnosis and treatment.

Without fundamental reforms, these problems will only worsen as our population ages, and the number of people with physical and learning disabilities increases too.

The Government claims it wants to join up health and care but its integrated care fund is depressingly un-ambitious – bringing together only £3.8 billion out of a total NHS and care budget of £120 billion.

And its plans to introduce a so-called cap on social care costs at £72,000 will predominantly benefit older people with more expensive homes, not disabled people who desperately need help right now with the basics of daily living.

Labour proposes a far bigger and bolder response: the full integration of the NHS and social care, bringing together the resources of our care system to transform the quality of care for users, and the value we get for taxpayers' money.

One service would create the potential for one point of contact, one care co-ordinator and one team to meet all of a person's care and support needs, transforming the quality and experience of care.

Under our plans, local council Health and Wellbeing boards would take on a more prominent role commissioning services which promote good health and the wellbeing of local populations, rather than predominantly treating sickness.

This would enable much better links to be made with education, housing, employment, leisure and community services, all of which are crucial to helping disabled people lead independent lives.

We need to join up our thinking nationally as well as locally.

In stark contrast to the Government, Labour's health team is working closely with our shadow local government ministers to join up our policies on housing and care.

And we're working with the shadow work and pensions team on how we take forward whole person care in developing our plans to reform social security.

I took part in the shadow DWP team's 'Making Rights a Reality' consultation for disabled people and their carers.

One of the key issues people raised is the need to develop a better and more integrated system of health, social care and employment support.

We're now exploring what could be learnt from Australia's model of 'universal disability insurance', which is giving people with significant and permanent disabilities more power to choose their support and more control over how that support is provided.

Jenny Macklin, the former Australian Minister for Disability Reform, is advising us on their experience. She'll be working closely with Sir Bert Massie and his expert taskforce, which is reviewing disability benefits with the goal of tackling disability poverty.

At the heart of DisabilityCare Australia are personal plans that put the goals and aspirations of individuals at the centre of the support they receive.

This personalised and empowering approach is central to Labour's vision of whole person care for disabled people.

The people who know best how to join up their services and support are users and their families, because they don't see their needs through the prism of separate service silos.

Users are often the strongest champions of prevention, because they are the ones who suffer the consequences if services fail to intervene early on.

And it is users and their families who are frequently the toughest critics of inefficient services, because they see the duplication and bureaucracy that wastes public money which would be better spent on improving their lives.

Labour's has a proud track record of giving people more say and control.

Supporting People, and the introduction of Personal Budgets and Direct Payments, have helped transform the lives of thousands of disabled people and their families, giving them greater choice and control over vital services that affect their daily lives.

We must now develop fully personalised care, so people become genuine partners in designing their services and support.

There are already inspiring examples of how this can be achieved in practice.

The Leeds Centre for Integrated Living, a social enterprise run by disabled people, provides a range of advocacy and other support services to help older and disabled people get the best out of their Personal Budgets.

Co-operative councils like Lambeth are devolving budgets and power to local people so they can co-create new and more appropriate forms of support, drawing on local community and voluntary groups alongside statutory services.

I recently met an inspirational group of parents who run a programme called Partners in Policy Making. They provide training courses which bring together disabled people and their carers with leading care experts, to empower families to get the support they really need.

One of the parents I met said she'd initially been told her disabled daughter would need a series of operations followed by long stays in institutional care. After going on a Partners in Policy Making course, she discovered that postural care and body alignment services meant her daughter could avoid invasive and expensive operations and stay living at home.

She said the course had changed her life and that, above all, it was the network of other people involved in the programme who gave her the knowledge, confidence and strength to get the best services for her family - she couldn't have done it on her own.

These examples show the changes we need in future won't be achieved by the old ways of doing things.

Neither state driven nor purely market based approaches will work, because both can end up disempowering people.

Instead of treating people either as passive recipients of services or consumers alone, the new state understands people are genuine citizens with whom power and control must be individually and collectively shared.

So services must change, the role of the state must change, and the way we achieve reform must change too.

This won't be easy for the providers of services, for Government or politicians: it is never easy to give power and control away.

But working together, I believe we can make the real changes and real reforms disabled people and their families want so they have the same opportunities as everybody else.

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