



A GENERATION OF BROKEN PROMISES

A history of social care funding reform in England since 1997

A. TIMELINE

September 1997 The new Prime Minister, **Tony Blair**, tells the annual Labour party conference “**I do not want (our children) brought up in a country where the only way pensioners can get long-term care is by selling their home**”

1 December 1997. A Royal Commission on long-term funding for the elderly under Professor Sir Stuart Sutherland is established.

1 March 1999. The Royal Commission publishes its report entitled “With respect to Old Age – Rights and Responsibilities”. It argues for free personal care funded by general taxation and a more generous means test, but a minority of the commissioners rejects this approach.

July 2000. The Labour government rejects the idea of free personal care and makes only minor changes to the means test, although Prof. Sutherland had said that “Doing nothing is not an option”

April 2002. H.M. Treasury commissions Sir Derek Wanless to conduct an independent review of NHS funding. The review also recommends a more thorough assessment of social care funding needs, but this is not acted upon.

July 2002. The Scottish government also initially rejects free personal care in 2001, in July 2002 it is introduced in Scotland.

21 March 2005. A Green Paper entitled “Independence, Well-Being and Choice- Our vision for the future of social care for adults” is published with the aim of setting the social care agenda for the next 10-15 years. It contains the familiar themes of personalisation, prevention and technology but offers no new money and makes it clear that there will be no fundamental reform of entitlement to receive state funded care.

January 2006. A White Paper entitled “Our health, our care; our say” building on the 2005 Green Paper is published but offers no specific funding proposals.

30 March 2006. The Kings Fund publishes an independent report, based on the Wanless report. This argues for widening eligibility through a partnership model in which everyone is entitled to some free care but must contribute to the cost based on



their income. The concept of a partnership between the individual and the state re-emerges in future proposals.

9 October 2007. The 2007 Spending Review welcomes “important contributions” to the debate around social care reform. The government commits to look at reform options and consult on a way forward.

14 July 2009. In a new Green Paper, the Labour government argues for a “national care service” in which there is universal access to free care. It also outlines three possible funding approaches to take this forward.

29 September 2009. The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, announces a commitment to free personal care at home for those with the highest needs. The Personal Care at Home Bill is published, passed through Parliament and receives Royal Assent in April 2010. It is never implemented because no source of funding had been identified.

Spring 2010. Cross-party talks to develop a consensus on social care funding break down with the Conservative party labelling the Labour party proposal for a levy on people’s estate as a “death tax” A White Paper confirms universal access to free care. It settles on an approach based on everybody paying in but left the mechanism for doing this open, with a commission to advise on this.

April 2010. All three main political parties each promise reform in their General Election Manifesto. The Conservative party propose a one-off voluntary insurance premium to protect people from having to sell their homes to fund residential care. The Liberal Democratic party promise to establish an independent commission, with cross-party support, while the Labour party maintains its existing policy of a national care service free at the point of use with a funding model to be decided by a new commission.

6 May 2010. A Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government says that “**it understands the urgency of reform**” and commits to an independent commission to review options for social care, including voluntary insurance and partnership models.

20 July 2010. The government establishes a commission on funding of care and support chaired by Sir Andrew Dilnot.

4 July 2011. The Dilnot commission recommends a partnership model with a much more generous means test and a lifetime “cap” of between £25,000 and £50,000 (at



2010/211 prices) on social care costs to ensure the state steps in where people face catastrophic costs that cannot be planned for.

July 2012. The government publishes a series of policy documents including the White Paper “Caring for Our Future”, a progress report on funding reform and a draft “Care and Support Bill”. While the government confirms that it is committed to the principles, it cites the “current economic situation” as the reason for not being able to commit to introducing the new system “at this stage”.

February 2013. The government accepts the recommends of the Dilnot commission and announces the introduction of social care funding reforms including a capped-cost model from 2017.

March 2013. The Spring budget brings forward the implementation of a capped-cost model with cap set at £72,000.

May 2013. The Care Bill is introduced and incorporates clauses to implement the Dilnot proposals.

May 2014. The Care Act is passed introducing wide-ranging reform of the way social care is organised and delivered. It includes proposals for the introduction of a more generous means test and a cap set at £72,000 although these are not to be implemented until 2016.

September 2014. The independent Barker commission, established by The King’s Fund in 2013, recommends a new settlement for health and social care, based on a single integrated budget funded through taxation and changes to existing public services.

May 2015. The Conservative party win the general election. Its manifesto had confirmed that the party would cap charges for residential care from 2016 and allow the use of deferred payment schemes.

July 2015. The government postpones the implementation of the Care Act funding reforms from April 2016 to April 2020. The delay is explained as being due to the cost of the policy, the concerns of local government over implementation and lack of insurance products available in the private insurance market. The Minister commits to using the additional time to ensure “**that everybody is ready to introduce the new system**”.



November 2015. The government announces extra money for the means- tested adult social care system through and improved Better Care Fund and a new power for councils to levy a special council tax “precept” for social care.

March 2017. In the Spring Budget, it is announced plans for a Green Paper on the reform of social care funding and promises £2 billion extra funding for adult social care over the next three years.

April 2017. During the 2017 general election campaign, the Conservative party announces plans for a Green Paper to be published by the end of the year, including a more generous means test and a cap on lifetime costs. This policy is dubbed a **“dementia tax.”**

November 2017. The government delays publication of the Green Paper to July 2018.

December 2017. The government formally drops April 2020 as the date for implementing the Care Act funding reforms No new date is announced but the government affirms its commitment to a Green Paper.

29 October 2018. At the Autumn Budget, additional short-term funding is announced but nothing about fundamental reform through a Green Paper.

During the following months, a series of policy papers from various bodies, including the House of Lords Economic Affairs committee argue that reform is urgently needed. Many of the proposed reforms are variations of the proposals from the Sutherland commission report (1999) including free personal care.

24 July 2019. In his maiden speech, the new Prime Minister, vows to **“fix social care once and for all”**

September 2019. At the spending round, nothing is mentioned about reform of the social care funding system, but councils are allowed to increase the adult social care precept.

19 December 2019. After winning a general election, the Prime Minister stood outside 10 Downing Street and stated boldly that **“we will fix social care for good”** and The Queens Speech reiterates the government’s manifesto commitment to seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long-term reform of social care.

2020-2022 Covid Pandemic. The pandemic had an immediate and catastrophic impact on social care, exacerbating long standing challenges facing the sector.



Deaths were on an unthinkable scale. The levels of unmet need for social care are increased, inadequate workforce pay and conditions are highlighted, and the social care market was profoundly shaken as occupancy rates fell in care homes.

December 2020. In the one-year spending review for 2021/2022 a funding package is announced to include additional monies to maintain care services and recover from the impact of Covid.

2021. The government publishes White Paper, “Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all”, closely followed by the Care Bill, these include targeted measures to improve the social care system but do not amount to the much-needed reform of the adult social care system.

Summer 2021. The new Health and Social Care Secretary promises that **“social care is one of his priorities”** and the government is committed to a sustainable plan for adult social care with **“full proposals, a full plan”** to be brought forward in 2021.

7 September 2021. Alongside funding for the NHS, the government publishes proposals to make the social care means test more generous and set a cap on the amount an individual would pay for care in their lifetime, raising the prospect that the reforms proposed by the Dilnot Commission will at last be implemented and that the cap will be set at £86,000. To fund the investment in health and social care, the government announces a Health and Social Care Levy based on National Insurance (NICs). The Levy will be introduced in April 2022. The government also promises to publish a White Paper on social care later in the year with input from the sector.

March 2022. The government proposes amendments to the core components of the Dilnot reforms, the care costs cap and the extended means test. It plans to stop any care that has been funded through the means test counting towards the care cap. It estimates that from 2027/2028 the savings would be about £900 million, one fifth of the total cost.

September 2022. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, announces that the Health and Social Care Levy, introduced in April 2022, will be abolished.

November 2022. In the Autumn Statement, the government announces increased funding for social care but the promised reforms for the social care cap and means testing will now be postponed until October 2025.



April 2023. Following the 2021 White Paper on adult social care, the government publishes a “next steps” document. It announces that many of the measures from the White Paper have been reduced in scope or abandoned. A key promise of at least £500 million for workforce training, qualifications and wellbeing has been cut to £250 million and a promised £300 million to transform housing adaptations has been replaced by £102 million for smaller adaptations.

4 July 2024. In its manifesto for general election, the Labour party pledges a national care service, a fair pay agreement for care workers and indicates that it will implement a cap on care costs but has not allocated any resources.

29 July 2024. The Chancellor of the Exchequer cancels the cap on care costs. This policy has been repeatedly delayed, most recently to October 2025 and it had not been included in the Labour party manifesto.

3 January 2025. The government announces that, under its “Plan for Change”, the Disabled Facilities Grant will be increased by £86 million to £711 million. Alongside the funding the government will support adult social care to use technology to allow older people to live at home for longer, cutting red tape and offering improved career pathways to care workers and new national standards to ensure care providers and families use the best care technology.

Care workers will be supported to take on further duties to deliver health interventions without needing to travel to healthcare settings. The national career structure for care staff will be expanded to ensure opportunities for career progression, upskilling carers will boost morale and retention of care workers and lead to better health outcomes for service users.

The government will develop a shared digital platform to allow up-to-date medical information to be shared between NHS and care staff,

The government announces that Baroness Louise Casey will lead a commission, which will work with all stakeholders to make clear recommendations for how to build the adult social care sector to meet the current and future needs of the population.



B. ROYAL COMMISSION, ENQUIRIES AND REVIEWS: GREEN PAPERS AND WHITE PAPERS: PARLIAMENTARY BILLS: ACTS OF PARLIAMENT.

1. Royal Commissions, Enquiries and Reports

May 1999 Royal Commission report; “Old Age – Rights and Responsibilities”.
REJECTED

April 2002 Wanless review. **NOT ACTED UPON**

March 2006. Kings Fund report. Concept of a partnership model emerges later.

July 2011 Dilnot commission. recommends a partnership model with a more generous means test and a lifetime “cap” of £25,000 to £50,000. **DELAYED, DELAYED and THEN ABANDONED.**

September 2014. Barker commission recommends an integrated health and social budget funded out of taxation.

January 2025. Casey Commission to make clear recommendations for how to rebuild the adult social care system to meet the current and future needs of the population. 7 Jan 2025. **Expected reporting timeframe 2028.**

16th January Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced a new national-level “rapid audit” of grooming gangs, plus up to five new local inquiries, The [national three-month audit](#), will be led by Dame Louise Casey. **More delay!**

2. Green Papers.

March 2005. “Independence, Well-being and Choice” with the aim of setting the social care agenda for the next 10-15 years e.g. personalisation, prevention and technology but no mention of any fundamental reform.

July 2009. Another Green Paper which argues for a **National Care Service** in which there is universal access to free care, with three possible funding approaches.

April 2017. A Green Paper is planned to be published by the end of the year but does not appear throughout 2017 or 2018.



3. White Papers.

January 2006. “Our health our care our say” is published but no mention of funding reform.

Spring 2010. Confirms universal access to free care based on the principle of everybody paying in but left the mechanism to a future commission.

July 2012. “Caring for our future” a progress report on funding reform and a draft “Care and Support bill”, but also the current economic situation is put forward as a reason for being unable to commit to introducing the new situation at this time.

4. Parliamentary Bills and Acts of Parliament

September 2009. The Personal Care at Home Act receives Royal Assent but is never implemented.

March 2014. The Care Act is passed with wide ranging reforms of the way social care is organised and delivered with the introduction of a more generous means test and a cap set at £72,000 – **delayed until finally cancelled on 29 July 2024**.

C. MINISTERIAL COMMENTS/PROMISES DOWN THE YEARS.

September 1997. After winning a landslide victory in May, the new **Prime Minister, Tony Blair**, tells the Labour Party Annual Conference “**I do not want our children brought up in a country where the only way pensioners can get long-term care is by selling their home**”

July 2009. The Department of Health, under **Andy Burnham** issues a green paper **arguing for a National Care Service, in which there is universal access to free personal care**. A White Paper is published in early 2010, but a General Election is held in May 2010 resulting in a change to a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government.

September 2009. **Prime Minister, Gordon Brown** announces a commitment to **free personal care at home**. The Bill is published, given Royal Assent but never implemented; it remains in Statute, **not implemented to this day**.

May 2010. The new Conservative/Liberal Democrat government says it “**understands the urgency of reform**”.



July 2011. The **Dilnot commission**, set up in July 2010, recommends a partnership model with a much more generous means test and a lifetime cap of between £25,000 and £50,000 (in 2010/2011 prices) but a **White Paper**, published in **July 2012**, cites the “**current economic climate** “ as the reason for not being able to commit to introducing the new system at this stage” but in **February 2013**, the government announces the introduction of social care funding reforms including a capped model from **April 2017**, which in the **Spring Budget 2013** is **increased to the equivalent of £61,000 at 2010/2011 prices**

May 2014. **The Care Act is passed** but the proposals for a **more generous means test and cap set at £72,000 but will not be implemented until 2016**

May 2015. A new Conservative government is elected with a **manifesto commitment** to cap charges for residential social care from 2016 and allow the use of deferred payment schemes. **Two months later, the government postpones the implementation of the funding reforms until April 2020. Again, in December 2017 formally drops the implementation date to April 2020**

July 2019. After becoming **Prime Minister, Boris Johnson vows to “fix the crisis in social care once and for all”**

Summer 2021. The new H&SC Secretary, **Sajid Javid**, promises that **social care is one of his priorities and full proposals and a full plan will be brought forward in 2021**, but in September 2021 the government announces a “Health & Social Care levy” to fund these. In September, it is announced that this levy, to be introduced in April 2022 will be abolished and then in November 2022, these promised reforms will be delayed until October 2025

Summer 2024. During the General Election campaign, the Labour party indicates that it will implement the care cap but has not allocated resources.

July 2024. The new Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, announces the cancellation the cap on care costs.

January 2025. It is announced that Baroness Louise Casey will lead another commission.

AND THE WHEEL OF COMMITMENTS STARTS AGAIN !!!!!

Compiled by East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Partners in Care - January 2025