



CHAPTER FIVE

DELIVERING CARE

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Before the Coronavirus pandemic took hold, the social care sector was in danger of being overlooked. It was the forgotten sector of the healthcare system, under-resourced and over-stretched. A decade of austerity has resulted in underpaid, under-valued and over-worked staff, the majority of whom are women.

The scale of the pandemic left the sector badly exposed and its staff faced an uphill battle to cope with the high levels of infection. What's more, they were sent into the frontline with insufficient training and inadequate PPE. In the circumstances, the care, love, time and attention that care home staff provided was a credit to their unsung profession. But such a situation should never have been allowed to develop, and Labour locally and nationally will campaign for a better deal for care workers and for those in their care.

The Labour Party will work for a better way forward in providing a system that gives dignity and respect to our most vulnerable and will ensure that workers in our public services are properly rewarded. Wiltshire Council must rethink social care to develop a professional, skilled, properly paid quality care service to meet the needs of elderly and vulnerable people in Wiltshire

LABOUR WILL

- Pressure national government to properly fund adult social care in England.
- Develop and implement a new Adult Social Care Strategy for Wiltshire to improve the provision of care for elderly and vulnerable people.
- Review the current out-sourcing of social care in Wiltshire and pilot in-house provision.
- Ensure that care services include key worker support to disabled people, enabling independent living choices.
- Make Wiltshire Council an Ethical Care Council by signing up to Unison's Ethical Care Charter, paying care workers the living wage and ending the use of zero hour contracts.
- Ensure that all care workers are properly equipped with PPE and every care home has a robust system of infection control.
- Raise the profile of care workers as "key workers" and raise the standards of training.
- Fully acknowledge and improve the support provided to Wiltshire's unpaid carers, including mental health and well-being support.

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS IN SOCIAL CARE

There is an adult social care funding crisis in England. Spending on adult social care has fallen in real terms since 2010 while, with an ageing population, demand has increased. Government spending on adult social care is just £324 per person per year in England, compared to £446 in Scotland and £424 in Wales. For years, the Conservative Government has been promising a Green Paper to set out a plan for properly funding social care, as recommended by the 2011 Dilnot Commission Report, but nothing has been forthcoming.

Labour will pressure the Government to address this to ensure that elderly and disabled people are given the support and care that they need. This solution must address the funding question, the eligibility criteria that are restricting access to support, and the question of social protection against catastrophic costs.

The recent Care Quality Commission Local System Review identified significant opportunities for improvement in the provision of adult social care services in Wiltshire.

We will undertake a full review of care services to deliver a new Social Care Strategy for Wiltshire. A significant part of this will include improving collaboration and integration within the health sector (including NHS Trusts, Clinical Commission Groups and GP surgeries) and the voluntary sector. The strategy will address how Wiltshire Council commissions services, look to improve skills, qualifications, working conditions and staff retention, provide support to Wiltshire's unpaid carers and tackle the mental health issues associated with loneliness and isolation of our elderly population.

As part of this review, we will work towards improving the connectivity between hospitals and care homes to provide an efficient and sensitive system for managing elderly care. We will limit the number of people allocated to each care worker, ensure that visits are regular and include the provision of meals so that clients can build a long-lasting relationship with their carers.

We will work in partnership with the voluntary and not-for-profit sector to ensure that care services include recognition of key worker support to disabled people to enable independent living choices. An important part of this will involve supporting self-advocacy for clients to help them determine the support they need.

The last thirty years have seen a continuing process of out-sourcing social care services in the UK, placing enormous reliance on a private sector that is fragile, unresponsive, puts profit ahead of peoples' needs and is dependent on poorly paid staff. Bringing services back in house gives us the opportunity to provide services that deliver better care, more flexible services, better integration with the health sector, improved staff training and retention, less bureaucracy and more accountability. We will reverse the process of privatisation with a review of current out-sourcing provision and pilot the development of in-house services.

We are strongly concerned about the way in which residential homes in Wiltshire have been, or are being closed, such as Fives Court Residential Care Home in Mere and Furlong Close in Rowde. These are not just facilities, but homes that are valued by their residents. We will ensure proper consultation takes place with all residential homes facing closure and will do everything we can to keep them open where that is the wish of residents and families.

SUPPORTING CARE WORKERS AND CARERS

Nationally, the adult social care sector employs 1.52 million people, the vast majority being women. During the Coronavirus pandemic, care workers displayed enormous commitment, dedication and courage in caring for people during challenging times. However, they still do not get the recognition that they deserve. The median hourly pay for care workers in the UK is just £8.50 an hour and 24% are on zero hours contracts. There is a huge issue with staff retention, with an annual turnover rate in the sector of 30.4% and approximately 112,000 vacancies at any one time.

Labour will take action to address this and will properly value and recognise the contribution to society of our care workers and carers. We'll improve employment conditions and skills in the social care sector by signing up to Unison's "Ethical care charter for the commissioning of homecare services" - joining other councils like Cornwall and Plymouth in becoming an Ethical Care Council. This will ensure that none of the care services commissioned by Wiltshire Council would be based on zero hour contracts, that they would all pay the Living Wage, and would also include adequate training and pay for the travel time of staff between visits. This will improve the experience of care-users by ensuring that time allocated for visits is appropriate for their needs, and that they see the same homecare worker where possible. It would also raise skills in the workforce and ensure that there is a clear, accountable procedure for following up staff concerns about their client's wellbeing.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, it became evident that the sector struggled to cope with the level of infection due to lack of personal protection equipment (PPE) and systems of infection control. Despite the best efforts of staff, many people lost their lives in care homes during the pandemic. We will ensure that this will not happen again and will require all care workers to be properly equipped with sufficient PPE and that every care home has a robust system of infection control.

Raising the profile of care workers is also important. During the pandemic, we celebrated their enormous efforts and their role as key workers and we'll continue this by ensuring that Wiltshire Council shares their stories, and publicly recognises and celebrates their contribution to society. We'll work with care service providers to ensure that sufficient training is provided for all care workers leading to recognised qualifications; and we'll work with the local further education sector to ensure that suitable courses are available to meet demand.

Much of the burden of care in Wiltshire is carried by unpaid carers: spouses, families, friends and neighbours. We'll work with the voluntary sector to improve the support available to carers, including advice, training, access to financial support, respite care, day-care centres and support groups.

Caring for other people can place an enormous toll on people's mental wellbeing. We will work to improve the mental health and well-being support available to carers and care workers in Wiltshire.



*The Labour Party created the NHS in 1948.
The NHS is a core value of the Labour Party
and of every Labour Party Candidate.
“We pledge Our Continued Support”*

