

Health Campaigns Together SOCIAL CARE CONFERENCE 17.11.2018

Summary of areas of broad agreement and suggested actions

The label “Social Care” can be problematic

as it appears to be all about giving people care and assistance and doesn't reflect the fact that we all need to be included in society and empowered to live fully. “Disability” is not what we have, it is what we encounter”.

NB Australian disability rights activists' campaign : <https://www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au/about/> demands services are universal (no means test; united (no division), self-directed (no patronage), positive (no pity), funded (no misery and no crisis). - from Simon Duffy's presentation.

Goals

- Get the market/profit making out of Social Care.
- Services should be nationally funded from taxation and free at the point of use.
- There should be national standards, eligibility and entitlement and independent regulation but
- Services should be locally provided, accountable and controlled.
- Users of services must be fully involved in designing services not just relegated tokenistic space.
- Services should focus on people's aims and aspirations not just a narrow notion of “needs”.
- Carers need to be valued, respected and supported.
- Paid care workers need to receive decent pay, have recognised skills, a career structure, improved hours of work, and good quality training. (NB referring baldly to care workers as “poorly trained” at the moment was felt to be neither accurate nor helpful)
- Informal carers need to be informed of their rights, have respite and support, including operating direct payments.

Key messages we need to get across to public and politicians alike

- Many people are suffering real harm , indignity, isolation and sometimes abuse because of the dire state of so called “social care” which is too often social neglect
- Local government funding has halved in the last 10 years and thresholds for assistance shot up. An estimated 1.2m older people aren't getting vitally needed support and many are stuck in hospital well enough to go home but without the help they need to return home safely. Last year it was estimated that shortfalls in social care accounted for 50,000 unnecessary days sent in hospital.
- Social Care work is seriously undervalued and underpaid. 900 social care staff leave their jobs each week, meaning loss of skills and experience as well as undermining key continuity of care.
- Most social care provision is now almost entirely run by private companies and exhaustively means tested (Simon Duffy called it care taxing!) Nail how much private firms are taking out of public funds and highlight the instability of the system and human cost when firms collapse or pull out because they aren't making what they consider sufficient profit. (12/13% !)
- The dominant ‘me first’ philosophy underpinning Government policy is being driven by rampant neo-liberalism/ capitalism and is not what most people want or ascribe to and is not in our interests at all. We need services to be shaped by a commitment to mutual care or what some might call communitarian values.

- We can afford to fund social care from taxation but for this to be seen to be fair taxation needs to be geared to tackle gross inequalities of wealth and income in society and priorities need to shift (eg welfare not warfare !)
- Investment in social care is not a drain on the economy. It creates jobs, wealth and spending power. (it is estimated that every £1 invested creates £3)

Key actions needed

- ❖ Agree a simple set of demands (mini charter) and try to get other organisations on board to unite around them. Engage with the TUC. We already have HCT, Keep Our NHS Public, Socialist Health Association, National Pensioners Convention, Unison and GMB activists coming together today.
- ❖ Produce a campaigning leaflet which people can use both on its own or as part of their NHS and other campaigning. Plan some co-ordinated actions and get TV, radio and social media coverage. Dignity Day on Feb 1st might be a starting point.
- ❖ Target private companies to expose who runs them, what profits they are making, what taxes they pay or don't pay etc.
- ❖ Press Local Authorities to insource services and reverse previous outsourcing. This requires
 - clarity re the finances – the national Economic Foundation and CHPI have useful information on this as have several people at the Conference including Gordon Peters, ex SC Director and Prof Peter Beresford.
 - learning from areas which are doing this already eg Scotland, Hammersmith (offers free personal care) Australian campaigners .
 - strategic approaches eg. raising standards for social care provision (using ethical care charter, living wage, staff training etc.) so private companies withdraw because they can't make the profits they seek..
 - Looking at wholly owned workers co-ops etc.
- ❖ Press the Labour Party to pursue our key demands. Take up Eleanor Smith's offer of a meeting in the House of Commons, arrange a deputation to Barbara Keely, shadow minister for Social Care, put resolutions through local CLPs etc.
- ❖ Look to develop a Social Care Bill similar to and possibly linked to the NHS Re-Instatement Bill. Simon Duffy suggested we also need rights embedded in a constitution.
- ❖ Link the fight for social care into the struggle for cross sector public policy change – housing particularly critical.
- ❖ Support some trade union struggles to try to keep LA run services in house rather than give to large voluntary organisations. Although we want “not for profit”, user led services, there needs to be critical analysis of the way some large third sector empires are being built , moving closer to big business and further from the grass roots. Third sector contracts can also be a staging post on the way to privatisation.
- ❖ Oppose the Mental Capacity Act amendment which would enable care home managers to undertake an assessment to deprive people of their liberty instead of Local Authority.

Next Step

Everyone interested taking forward action or digging out/ researching information to assist, please come to the follow up meeting from the Conference on

Thursday December 13, 13.30 - 16.00 at Carr's Lane Conference Centre Birmingham, B4 7SX.