

Social Care Funding

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

The very troubling case that the hon. Lady has described illustrates why we, as a House, must get this right. Does she accept that there has been political failure to resolve the issue of how we fund social care, and will she commit herself to taking a constructive, cross-party approach to getting it right?

Barbara Keeley Shadow Minister (Mental Health and Social Care)

The hon. Lady has asked me that question a number of times, and I always find it difficult to answer. She will know that my party really tried, but when we produced that White Paper in 2010—when we had a way forward and a set of funding proposals—all that we heard was "death tax". In last year's Budget, the Chancellor raised the issue of the "death tax" again: he said that it was not an option. I wonder how the hon. Lady thinks that Labour Members can talk to a party whose Chancellor has ruled out one of the options right at the start, before anyone sits down and discusses anything. I think that that is impossible. I valued the hon. Lady's role as Chair of the Health Committee, of which I used to be a member. Perhaps she will write to the Chancellor, and ask him to stop doing that.

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

As the hon. Lady will know, this is a pattern that has pinged backwards and forwards with successive Administrations. I repeat that we must get it right. We cannot continue these cycles of political failure. We will only solve the problem—particularly in a hung Parliament—with a constructive, cross-party approach.

Barbara Keeley Shadow Minister (Mental Health and Social Care)

I am constantly astonished when Conservative Members talk about a cross-party approach. It is up to their party to come up with some proposals. When it has some proposals, there will be something to talk about. All that we have seen the Conservatives do is abandon all the proposals that they have previously had. We legislated, in the Care Act 2014, for a cap on care costs and a lifting of the ceiling—the asset threshold—but the Conservatives have abandoned that now. They had a set of policies at the time of the election last year, but they have abandoned that. The hon. Lady needs to speak to her own Secretary of State, and I hope that she can have a constructive conversation with the Chancellor as well.

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