



A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS



The Reform Agenda – Issue 1

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Following his appointment as UK Prime Minister, Andy Burnham has made social care a core priority, stating that the historic failure to address Britain's social care crisis is "not defensible". He has explicitly pledged to "use some of my political capital" to finally resolve the issue and stated that he refuses to leave office having failed to do so.

Given the above and the appointment of seasoned veteran Yvette Cooper as Health and Social Care Secretary, it certainly feels like a genuinely pivotal moment for social care reform in England.

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Key Statements to date

Rhetoric on the State of Social Care

The PM has used strong language to distance his government from past political inaction, framing social care as a moral necessity rather than just an economic problem:

- **"A Dereliction of Duty":** The PM called the decades-long failure of successive Westminster governments to reform adult care a "major dereliction of public duty" and criticized his own generation of politicians for treating it as "too big a political risk"
- **Workforce Value:** The PM stated that social care teams should be "the best paid people in society, not the worst," heavily criticizing the current exploitation of undervalued care workers.
- **Vision for a National Care Service:** The PM outlined a vision where the service operates seamlessly alongside the NHS. The goal is a fully funded, preventative system that allows citizens to transition smoothly between hospitals, home care, and community services without bureaucratic friction

The change being proposed

- **Free at Point of Use:** The PM wants social care to "operate on the NHS principle". He intends to make adult social care free at the point of delivery, arguing that the current system is "broken".
- **Relieving NHS Pressure:** The PM has pointed out that a failing social care system is the "biggest cause" of the current crisis in A&E and hospital "corridor care". He notes that patients who are medically fit to be discharged but have nowhere to go costs the NHS billions of pounds annually.
- **Fixing Palliative care:** The PM has stated that palliative care and social care needs to be fixed before assisted dying is considered further in the UK

Timing

- **The Casey Review:** The PM has announced plans to fast-track the independent review of social care funding, led by Baroness Louise Casey, asking her to bring her recommendations forward by 12 months to the summer of 2027 so his administration can act swiftly.
- **Civil Service Action:** According to reports by [The Times](#), civil servants in the Department of Health and Social Care have already been instructed to draw up plans for this free-at-the-point-of-use model.
- **Timelines on changes:** The PM has told the BBC "the NHS will collapse" if social care is not reformed but said he could not put a timeline on changes (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn0n5xpz1z2o>)

Funding & Taxes

- **Tax Rises Not Ruled Out:** Speaking to BBC Radio 4's PM programme, the PM refused to rule out tax rises to properly fund the system, stating that "the risks of failing to act are too great"
- **Manifesto Red Lines:** Simultaneously, he re-committed to Labour's core manifesto pledges not to increase Income Tax, National Insurance, or VAT, suggesting any new funding mechanisms would have to target other areas or optimise existing capital
- **Asset Protection:** the PM stated that in an "ideal world", no one should have to sell their home to pay for elder care.

Progress to date

- **Initiating Cross-Party Talks:** The PM launched formal cross-party discussions, inviting the leaders of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to find a consensus on long-term funding and structural changes. (He notably excluded Reform UK and the Green Party, which drew criticism from those parties).
- **Workforce Integration & Pay Reform:** The PM ordered immediate plans to reform pay, training, and career progression for care staff. The government is fast-tracking integration with the broader NHS to boost workforce security and move toward a fair pay agreement
- **The Casey Commission**
<https://caseycommission.co.uk/>
 - 29/7/2026 - Baroness Casey launched The Big Conversation on Care, which the Commission describes as the most ambitious public conversation in a generation, handing the public a direct role in shaping the future of adult social care in England.
 - 31/7/2026 – The Big Conversation on Care goes live online

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