

# Barbara Keeley speech to Labour Party Conference

**Barbara**

**Keeley MP, Shadow Cabinet Member for Mental Health and Social Care**, speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton today, said:

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Conference,

It is an honour to close this debate as Labour's Shadow Cabinet Member for Mental Health and Social Care

I am proud to have this role in a Labour party that understands how vital Mental Health and Social Care services are. And that makes protecting these services a major priority.

And it's even more important when we see the crisis the Tory Government has created in both social care and mental health. A crisis made in Downing Street

They are failing people across the country, failing those who need care and their families, failing unpaid family carers and failing hundreds of thousands of care workers.

People are now going without the care they need. Nearly half a million fewer people getting publicly-funded care since the Tories came to office. Over a million older people with unmet care needs, many of them isolated and lonely

But this Tory Government isn't just failing social care users, it's failing their families too. With hundreds of thousands of unpaid family carers struggling to balance work and care. It's failing hundreds of thousands of care staff, because under the Tories too often they are under-paid, under-trained and under-valued.

Caring staff who are forced to work on zero-hours contracts, denied pay for travel time, underpaid for sleep-in shifts, with care visits of just 15-minutes. Prevented from giving the quality of care which people deserve

And the Tory Government is failing children and young people in need of mental health services, denied treatment due to Tory cuts. Young people told they are not thin enough to be treated for an eating disorder. Children who have self-harmed being turned

away

unless they have made a serious suicide attempt.

And thousands of people in mental health crisis being sent hundreds of miles from their families just to get the treatment they need. Mental health services for young people that are now so poor, a High Court Judge had to tell Jeremy Hunt that this country: would have "blood on its hands" if suitable care could not be found for a suicidal teenage girl.

Conference, it's time for us in the Labour Party to say that this is not good enough.

Not good enough that care quality has fallen, with one in four services now failing on safety grounds.

Not good enough that thousands of vulnerable people are stuck in hospital for weeks or months, because there is no care for them at home or no place in a care home.

Not good enough that last winter the British Red Cross talked of a humanitarian crisis that saw people sent home from hospital without clothes, people falling and not being found for days, people going unwashed because there are no care services to help them to wash.

This Social Care Crisis was made in Downing Street. A crisis made by a Tory Government cutting billions of pounds from council budgets. And by Tory Ministers failing to find the extra funding needed for social care

And then during the Snap General Election, Theresa May announced her solution to the crisis would be a new tax on care. Dubbed the "Dementia Tax", hitting people who need care even harder. Making people use the value of their homes to pay for their own home care

Such a failing and toxic policy that Theresa May announced a U-turn on it within 4 days. And then the Tories quietly dumped their policy. But in its place, the Tories now have nothing to say on the future funding of social care. They just promise a consultation and a Green Paper.

And on the crisis in mental health for children and young people, they also promise only a Green Paper.

Conference, Labour will fill the Tory policy vacuum. We will show that we are the party that values social care and mental health. At the election, we pledged an extra £8 billion for

social care in this Parliament, with an extra £1 billion this year to deal with the Tory crisis.

This would have delivered:

paying a real living wage to care staff, paying them travel time and letting them choose regular hours; finally ending inadequate 15-minute care visits and ensuring free end of life care.

And Conference, Labour believes funding must be found to pay care staff properly for sleep-in shifts.

And Labour will support family carers. We have pledged to increase the carers allowance for unpaid carers to at least the same rates as Jobseeker's Allowance. A small first step to recognise the value of the work of unpaid family carers.

And Conference, a Labour Government will build a National Care Service. A service in which we pool the risk of high care costs, so that no-one is faced with catastrophic costs as they are now.

In its first years, our National Care Service will receive an extra £3 billion in public funds every year. Enough to place a cap on what individuals have to pay towards care. Enough to raise the asset threshold for paying for care. Enough to provide free end of life care

To act on our pledge, we will invite an independent, expert panel to advise us on how we move from the current broken system of care to a sustainable service for the long term.

In mental health, we will increase the amount we spend on services for children and young people. We will ring-fence mental health budgets so that money isn't siphoned off by other parts of the NHS. We will bring an early end to patients being sent hundreds of miles for mental health treatment. And we will offer school-based counselling for young people in every one of our high schools.

Conference, under the Tories we have seen years of neglect of care needs. Neglect of older people. Of younger people. Of vulnerable disabled people.

This Tory Government has no solution to the problems it has created. Only Labour will end this crisis made in Downing Street. Only Labour will bring hope to those in need of care and those who care for them

And only Labour will build care services fit for the many. Not the few.