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Dementia and wider Social Care Reform

One in 14 people over the age of 65 and one in six people over the age of 80 are currently living with dementia, and cases of new early onset dementia are rising. I sympathise profoundly with anyone who is affected.

The needs of people with dementia must move to the top of the agenda. For too long, social care has lacked the priority and funding it deserves. A decade of cuts to local government has resulted in £8 billion being lost from adult social care budgets. As a result, too many people have been left to cope without the support they need.

The Government recently outlined a new health and social care levy to pay for reforms to the sector. In a move that breaks their 2019 manifesto commitment not to raise taxes, Ministers propose a 1.25% rise in National Insurance from April 2022, which will then become a separate tax on earned income from 2023.

I do not agree that increasing National Insurance contributions is the right way to fund social care reforms. It will hit working people hard, including low earners and young people, and it will place a significant burden on businesses as they recover from the pandemic.

In my view, the taxes that pay for social care should be fair across the generations and all forms of income. Those with the broadest shoulders should pay more, not the working families now set for an unfair tax rise.

Moreover, I am concerned that the Government's proposals will do nothing to improve the quality of care or help families who are struggling to care for their loved ones affected by dementia. Crucially, Ministers have refused to guarantee that people will not have to sell their homes to pay for care.

As part of a wider ambition to make Britain the best country in which to grow old, I support a long-term plan of investment and reform that will empower care users by expanding the options between care at home and care in a care home. We also need a plan that sets out a new deal for frontline care workers to transform pay, training and working conditions.

I urge the Government to bring forward proposals that will genuinely fix the crisis in social care and has a fair funding model at its heart. The thousands of families struggling with the system, who only want to do the best for their loved ones, deserve nothing less.

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