**The Future of Social Care – Big changes now taking place**

Two closely related but very different activities have been taking place recently in relation to social care – the key policy which is meant to secure the rights and needs of older and disabled people. First the government has at last announced its plans for social care reform. Second, we at Shaping Our Lives have been getting together to develop our own position on what we as a disabled people’s and service user led organization feel about improving social care.

These two processes have been very different in process and outcome and we think that it may be helpful to set out some of those differences, which may help all of us to get a clearer idea of any weaknesses and strengths each has. So here goes.

First let’s look at the government proposals for reform. These have to be put in the context of very widespread concerns that social care in England isn’t working, is in crisis and is beset with problems through the whole of the UK. There have long been concerns that the budget for social care is just not big enough, that it doesn’t work fairly for different groups and that many people who need its support just do not get it.

Disabled people’s and service users’ organisations have almost all condemned the government’s plans. First, they haven’t involved any serious involvement with disabled people. The disabled people’s movement says the level of funding being planned is inadequate, there is a failure to address the needs of working-age disabled people, a lack of detail, and the plans will have a disproportionately negative impact on lower-income workers.

Older workers will now have to pay National Insurance, lower paid workers will have to pay more tax, only the better off are likely to benefit from losing less money from their inheritance than they would have before. The proposals are not really about reforming social care, since most of the additional money will actually go to the National Health Service, so badly hit by the government’s disastrous handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. (Disability News Service, 9th September 2021, <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/johnsons-social-care-fix-is-disappointing-regressive-and-insulting/>).

There has been no real consultation with the wide range of older and disabled people who need help from the social care system. We have been almost entirely ignored.

It’s a very different story when you look at the statement we have been developing as a blueprint for future social care at Shaping Our lives, the disabled people’s and user led organisation. First of all, we had a discussion in Shaping Our Lives to see what people felt generally, then we agreed to set up a sub-group to work things out and take them forward in more detail, then we wrote the draft statement together, agreed it with everyone in the organisation and it will be the basis for our campaigning and activities to improve social care. Also, we are involved with other service user and disabled people’s groups and organisations in supporting their plans and aims so we can have some more strength together.

At the heart of our plans aren’t making people pay or restricting who can get help, as is still the case with government plans, but instead the values of the social model of disability and the philosophy of independent living – both developed by disabled people ourselves.

So, watch this space as we at Shaping Our Lives make available more information about our social care manifesto and we hope you will be able to become more involved in bringing it to life. See you soon.

Peter for Shaping Our Lives