

Dear Editor,

Although the Government has the main responsibility for the disgraceful state of social care and support, **Local Councils CAN make a difference.** The local elections are the time for new commitments.

Older and disabled people, who bore the brunt of the pandemic, are being particularly hard hit by current dramatic rises in the cost of living. Households with at least one disabled person are losing £1 in every £3 of their income.

The effect is a drastic increase in already unacceptable levels of poverty and exclusion. Many disabled and older people are turning off vitally needed heating, giving up services they need and becoming increasingly isolated as their basic rights to participate in social and community life become "luxuries" they can't afford.

Understandably, councils are clawing back every penny they can from people's disability benefits in charges. They have been cut to the bone by government.

THIS IS NOT RIGHT, NOT SAFE, NOT FAIR!

I support End Social Care Disgrace, (www.nacsils.co.uk) a broad based non-party political campaign pressing for a free, universal, not for profit, social care, support and independent living service radically redesigned with those who use services, care and support workers, family/unpaid carers and local communities.

We are calling on councils to make urgent changes - to:

1. Resist any rise in Council Social Care charges and pursue raising the the local minimum income guarantee for service users in the 2023 budget
2. Pursue an immediate end to debt recovery actions against older and disabled people who are unable to pay charging debts
3. Ensure the Council pays care and support workers the real living wage, nights included, and only contracts with providers who do likewise. (see Salford City Council). Support national calls for £15 per hour.

We are also looking for longer term changes that councils can make - to:

4. Provide better financial and wellbeing support, including respite services, to family/ unpaid carers.
5. Commit to democratically designing and delivering 'not for profit' services in equal partnership with disabled people's organisations.
6. Take steps to scrap charges entirely – like Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Join ESCaD - make change matter!

Yours,

Brian Fisher

Tony O'Sullivan, Chair of ESCaD

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