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Despair at care system

SIR – Recent BBC *Panorama* programmes have illustrated the daily distress of people in need of social care and of their family carers, which the current system simply fails to alleviate. This distress is shared by many of the staff who work in the care system.

As members of the expert group appointed to advise the Government about the social care Green Paper, we are united in our despair at the failure of governments for the last 20 years to deal with the critically important issue of the funding of social care. The system is underfunded, unsustainable and unfair.

We believe the solution is to introduce a new approach, whereby the essential costs of care are universally funded and risk is shared across the whole population in a similar way to the NHS. National eligibility criteria for care and funding levels must be transparent and sufficient for increasing levels of need to be met at the essential standards of quality, safety and dignity. This would help to enable a properly integrated care and health system that supports people of all ages with ill health and disability in living and ageing well.

Inescapably, we will all have to contribute to meet the costs. However, if the public understands that the current system is little better than a lottery, then new initiatives are much less likely to be labelled a “death tax” or a “dementia tax”, but to be seen as an improvement on the current inequitable approach.

We need politicians on all sides with the courage to make this happen.

Caroline Abrahams

Sir Andrew Dilnot

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho

and eight others; see telegraph.co.uk