

Rt Hon Paul Burstow

Layla Moran MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1P

21st March 2025

Dear Layla,

Committee Inquiry: Adult Social Care Reform: The Cost of Inaction

I am writing in a personal capacity to express my deep concern about the Treasury's enduring role in blocking meaningful reform of social care—a pattern that transcends individual governments and has become an entrenched orthodoxy. The Treasury's reluctance to enable long-term solutions has repeatedly stymied progress, prioritising short-term cost containment over systemic reform, regardless of which party is in power.

As Minister of State for Care Services (2010–2012), I saw first-hand how the Treasury treated social care reform as an inconvenient expense rather than an essential investment. It was Treasury resistance—not political opposition or public disinterest—that prevented the Coalition from delivering a sustainable funding model for social care. Even with the weight of the Dilnot Commission's recommendations for a cap on lifetime care costs, the Treasury's instinct was to kick the can down the road, ensuring that families continue to face the indignity of catastrophic care costs and that the sector remains in a permanent state of crisis.

This pattern is not new. Successive governments have faced the same Treasury orthodoxy: delay, defer, and deny the resources necessary for reform. The Dilnot reforms were eventually included in the Care Act but over the last decade have been postponed, dropped, dropped again, and most recently cancelled on the advice of the Treasury. As a result, we are stuck with short-term sticking plasters, with no real appetite to develop a plan for lasting change.

The result is a system trapped in a cycle of underfunding, workforce crises, and growing unmet need. Ministers may change, but the Treasury's mindset remains stubbornly fixed—viewing social care as an avoidable cost rather than a national priority. This failure to act has consequences: thousands of families struggle with inadequate care, NHS pressures escalate due to hospital admissions that could have been avoided, deconditioning in hospital and delayed discharges, and as Skills for Care have documented, the workforce crisis deepens. This inaction leaves individuals and families unable to plan for the future, creating uncertainty and anxiety about how they will manage care needs as they arise.

If we are to break this pattern, there must be a new approach. Any serious attempt at reform—whether through the Casey Commission or some other process—must confront the Treasury's historical obstruction head-on. The question is not whether we can afford to fix social care, but whether we can afford not to.

The current timetable for the Casey Commission is, in my view, a further example of the Treasury seeking to put off any meaningful reform. It is imperative for the Commission to avoid starting from scratch. It should make use of the extensive body of existing research and reports, focusing on evaluating trade-offs to reach a viable future model. Key considerations should include:

1. Developing care models that align with the evolving needs of our population through to the 2050s.
2. Establishing robust workforce plans that are resilient to demographic changes affecting labour markets both domestically and internationally.
3. Achieving an equitable distribution of entitlements, shared responsibilities, risk pooling, and taxpayer funding.
4. Recognising the inter-dependency of social care and other public services, particularly the NHS, and ensuring that reforms are aligned with the NHS's long-term goals, including those outlined in the 10-Year Plan.

I urge the Health and Social Care Select Committee to examine the Treasury's role in blocking reform and to demand a fundamental shift in its approach. The Treasury must be part of the solution, not the perennial roadblock. It is time to end this cycle of delay and build a social care system that is fair, sustainable, and fit for the future.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) stands ready to support the Committee's inquiry and its recommendations, drawing on our expertise and evidence base to help shape a social care system that works for everyone.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Burstow', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Paul Burstow

Chair, Social Care Institute for Excellence