**SHA POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.**

**CARERS AND SOCIAL CARE: A SCOPING PAPER.**

**1. Background and purpose**

Central Council will recall agreeing to the establishment of four policy groups of interested SHA members to explore topics agreed by Council. These were: i) updating the current SHA Public Health policy paper, ii) building upon the current (bland) policy position of the Labour Party in respect of Mental Health as set out by the National Policy Forum in a recent policy round, iii) exploring the needs of carers, and iv) exploring what the much mooted National Care Service might look like, and how it might be achieved.

In respect of Carers, CC sent out a request for participants and nobody replied. There is therefore a “vacant policy group” waiting to be filled. This paper provides to Central Council an initial “scoping paper” describing the work a reshaped Carers Policy Group is proposing to undertake.

**2. Political background**

England’s social care system is broken. Local Authorities face £700m cuts in 2018-19. With £7 billion slashed since 2010, 26% fewer older people receive support, while demand grows. Most care is privatised, doesn’t reflect users’ needs and wishes; charges are high. Staff wages, training and conditions are slashed. Staff turnover is over 30%.

Consequences include isolation, indignity and maltreatment. Disabled and elderly people face barriers to inclusion and independent living, thousands feel neglected. 8 million unpaid, overworked family carers, including children and elderly relatives, provide vital support.

Public money goes to shareholders and hedge funds as profits. Service users and families face instability as companies go bust.

Social care is misunderstood by both professionals and the public. There are few leaders to rally protest. Local Authorities have mostly knuckled down to manage the cuts as best they can. They have not spent much effort in challenging the status quo.

In the last few months, the terrible impact of these cuts on users and carers has become more public with articles and programmes showing the desperate state of both users of the service and the organisations that deliver the services.

In view of the relatively thin nature of Labour Party policy in social care, it is important and urgent that the SHA develops policy which can then go to the NPF and Shadow Team.

**3. Key issues to be explored**

Carers are a relatively unsupported group providing essential services to vulnerable people. Most do it out of love but many are in formal, paid, positions.

Carers sit within a complex system of social care and it is only possible to formulate policy on carers if that whole system is also explored and policy improved. Labour Party policy on social care is developing but there is further it can go.

Those who make decisions on whether people are accepted for packages of care should be made accountable for those decisions.

CC agreed a motion in March 19 which recommends significant change for carers and the whole system. This is likely to be reworded in the following way, if CC agrees. The key demands are:

**Conference demands Labour legislates a duty on the SoS to provide a universal system of social care and support acknowledging a right to independent living wherever possible:**

* Based on need and offering choice.
* Meeting the needs of all disabled, frail and sick throughout life with robust safeguarding procedures.
* Free at the point of use, universally provided, fully funded through progressive taxation
* Subject to national standards based on Human Rights, choice, dignity and respect for all, complying with the UN Rights of persons with disabilities, including Articles on Independent Living (19) Highest Attainable Health (25) and Education (24).
* Democratically run services, delivered through local public bodies working co-productively together with users and carers.
* Training to nationally agreed qualifications, career structure, pay and conditions.
* Gives informal carers strong rights and support, including finances and mental health.

**Labour to establish a taskforce involving users and carers/Trade Unions/relevant organisations to deliver the above, including an independent advocate system, and national independent living support service.**

The aim of the group would be to explore those key issues with a strong focus on carers. Each issue is complex and has often had decades of debate behind it. The group will attempt to develop practical policies that could be debated within the NPF and Party.

4**. Other reference points for the group.**

CC is in the process of discussing a paper on a National Care Service. CC’s conclusions will need to be accommodated by this group.

There have been many attempts to deal with most of these issues in the past – there is a large literature. That may make aspects of the work easy and others more difficult. Documents from the Reclaim Social Care campaign and other socialist groups will help develop thinking.

**5.** **Conclusion**

Central Council is requested to note the proposals of the Policy Group and offer constructive comments on its intended work.