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Health

# Trying to get social care can be 'horrendous', Baroness Casey tells BBC



Louise Casey, Baroness Casey of Blackstock, said fundamental change of the social care system was needed

**Alison Holt** >

Social affairs editor

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**The care system that supports older and disabled people in England is cobbled together and confusing, according to Baroness Louise Casey, who has the task of reforming it.**

As chair of the independent commission on adult social care, she told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the experience for people trying to get help was "horrendous".

Giving her first assessment of the problems since the commission started work last year, she says the care system relies on the exploitation of its workforce.

She also said that cross party political support would be needed to bring about the fundamental change required.

Baroness Casey said the care system is fragile and divided, with drawn out discussions over who pays for what, making it anxiety-laden and confusing for those who need support.

"People spend hours and hours and weeks and weeks trying to sort out care for their family", she said.

"Dealing with all sorts of issues from the multiple different letters, the multiple different assessments, multiple financial assessments," she added.

She believes a stock-take is needed to create an adult social care system which meets the needs of the current population, as people are increasingly living longer with more complex needs.

Baroness Casey will deliver her first tough assessment of the problems that need fixing to an audience of health and care professionals at a conference in Windsor on Thursday afternoon.

She will point to a total reliance nationally on underpaying care workers and an imbalance in power between the NHS and council-run social care, which ends up serving the institutions not people.

"We've still got people earning less than the minimum wage. They are often not paid for travel, they are often not paid for holidays," she said.

## **'Families bear the brunt'**

Baroness Casey described two NHS hospital trusts that tried to set up their own care services but discovered they could not make it "stack up" financially because anyone working in the NHS is better paid, and has better terms and conditions, than care staff.

In her speech, she is set to say "this divide between what is care and what is health does not exist to the public. It is our divide."

And she says the deep-rooted difficulties faced by people with dementia or Motor Neurone Disease (MND) to get the right care, are examples of a failing system.

Families of those with dementia "bear the brunt" with little information or support, and people diagnosed with MND, whose life-expectancy is short, still face multiple assessments and means tests.

The independent commission started work last summer. It has been examining the problems facing the care system in England and is due to produce a report this year with a plan for how to create a National Care Service. Phase two, which will look at how social care is funded in the longer term, is not due to report until 2028.

One of Baroness Casey's **tasks** is to start "a national conversation" about the sort of service people want, and build consensus among politicians and the public on the way forward.

She says major political support will be needed to ensure change happens, and says she would "warn any party to be a little careful about throwing stones, until we actually know what we are doing."

Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey said she was "right to highlight how broken the care system is" but asked why the government was still dragging its feet.

"Starmer and Streeting have wasted a whole year with nothing to show for it," he said.

"We can't let 2026 go the same way, while elderly people suffer and hospitals are filled with people waiting for care."

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