



The Personal Care at Home Bill – sitting on the fence

The government's proposals for personal care will go ahead – if the new government implements it. That was the message from Tuesday's enabling legislation which was passed on Tuesday evening.

The government accepted a House of Lords amendment in order to get the enabling legislation through before the general election which means that the introduction of free personal care at home for elderly and disabled people with the greatest needs is to be delayed by six months. The effect of this, as Lord Warner, a former Labour health minister who helped push for amendment, said: "We feel we have done our job. We have slowed the bill down and it will be for a new government to deal with it in a more measured way." The bill is now expected to receive royal assent before parliament is dissolved for the election.

In other words, wait until we know who has won the election to see what will happen.

If implemented, the bill will guarantee free personal care at home for 280,000 people with the highest level of needs and will also provide "re-ablement" services for 130,000 people so that they can remain independent.

Under the white paper plan, stage two of the process of creating a national care service would be free personal care in residential and homes for all people after two years. Stage three, "after 2015", would be free care for all after introduction of a compulsory comprehensive insurance scheme.

SFE members are advising their clients to adopt a wait and see policy as the general election may change things yet again.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Solicitors for the Elderly (SFE) is a national organisation of lawyers, such as solicitors, barristers, and legal executives who are committed to providing and promoting robust, comprehensive and independent legal advice for older and vulnerable adults, their family and carers.

2. For further details about SFE, please visit www.solicitorsfortheelderly.com

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