

Social Care

Policy Briefing Note 1

April 2015

Version 1

Introduction

This is one of a series of documents covering various policy topic areas that are aimed at helping people to compare an approach proposed by any political party to the underlying principles that we find in the Bible.

This series of documents, which will be expanded and kept updated, is politically neutral and represents a unique approach, starting as it does from the Bible and building upwards.

The policies and approaches to a topic area of several of the political parties may line up with all or some of the principles. It allows a person to have a baseline on which to measure and compare.

Each easy to read document will cover a separate topic, and so you can look at a particular area of interest to you or build up a picture over a number of topic areas. We hope you find this a useful resource not only at election time but also in the future.

Biblical Principles Underpinning Social Care Policy

In 1942 the principle set out by Beveridge was for the state to provide health care to the population free at the point of need, where families were not able to provide for that need.

Since then there has been an expansion of health and social care free at the point of need across the lifespan, and across the socio economic diversity. An ageing population and lower birth rates have seen some question whether or not we can continue the current service provision at reasonable cost, but there is no doubt that we have over the last 50 years witnessed positive development of social care values and principles.

Health and social care are inextricably linked, and if we want to continue with our “cradle to the grave” ideal of service provision it seems that a social policy that includes health care alongside a social model of health throughout the lifespan is a reasonable place to start.

The following are the key principles to highlight, when considering social care policy.

The Dignity of the Human Person

Our values and principles need to take into consideration what the effect would be as a result of poor delivery across the broad contexts of family, societal roles and relationships. The Bible talks a great deal about the “one anothers”. We are told to lead our lives with love towards one another; to comfort one an-

other; and even to be devoted to one another.

When we look at social policy we need to keep at the very centre of policy the human being.

Every person is made in the image and likeness of God, (Gen 1:27) hence every human life is sacred and has inherent dignity.

The measure of any nation is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of humanity and in particular its own citizens.

No nation should ignore the stranger, and the biblical principle illustrated in the story of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37) is the prime example of how to treat a stranger who is in need.

Needs may be social, medical, and physical, and the follower of Christ should not see felt needs as an abstract concept but something they are deeply involved with. This may perhaps not be in the actual delivery of health and social care, but certainly in resourcing those who do. The Good Samaritan was personally involved holistically, illustrating Jesus’ holistic commitment to our welfare.



Social Care continued

The Human need for relationship with Family and Community

From the outset of human existence we have fared better in relationship. God said "it is not good for man to be alone" Gen 2:18, so instituting the family, and community.

We are social beings and have the right and duty to participate in society and seek the common good

The family is the central social institution, and must be supported and strengthened. Failure to recognise this will inevitably lead to social disintegration.

Rights and Responsibilities

When developing policy we must take into consideration how people will be affected. The need for human beings to be respected and treated with dignity is fundamental in a just and fair society. This principle is very well illustrated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who ultimately was sacrificed on the cross for the spiritual benefit of all of mankind. He didn't die for just a few but for all. He gave every person the right to respond to His overwhelming act of good that all may receive eternal life. (Of course one must have faith that what He did for all, he also did "just for me")

Every person has a fundamental right to life and human dignity.

Each person in turn has a responsibility to every other, to their family, and to the larger society to ensure that these rights are preserved and protected for all.



What about the Poor and Vulnerable?

Scripture tells us that God has a preferential concern for the

poor and vulnerable, and it instructs us to put their needs first. Whilst we need to offer care free at the point of need, the individual has a responsibility to be a contributor as well as a consumer of care. Where individuals are capable of paying then along with the right to quality care is the responsibility of contributing taxes commensurate with ability; and all who are able have responsibility of taking care of self where appropriate.

A basic moral measure of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring.

The Dignity of Work

The Bible is clear on the principle that we should be working and resting, (Exodus 20:9)

All work has inherent dignity, for it is a way in which we participate in God's continuing creation. Work is inextricably linked to our faith, and must be recognised as essential for human well-being. Every person has a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to be protected at work, to own private property, and to take economic initiative.

An economy must serve the people, not the other way around. Jesus came to serve the world not be served by it. As Christians we need to see our right to work, alongside our responsibility to serve our world with excellence in all we do. Our social policy should include freedom of opportunity across the spectrum of socio economic diversity to create opportunity for us to flourish and prosper.

Unity and Solidarity

Social policy needs to be inclusive of all people groups. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family. "Loving our neighbour" has national and global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Care for God's Creation.

We are the stewards of God's creation. We are therefore called to protect our planet and the natural blessings and resources it provides for all people and generations.

Our social policies need to take into account the impact of human beings on the environment. They need to be fair, and seen to be fair. For example: if there is a social advantage for one sector of the community in exploiting natural resources, but this brings disadvantages to others, then our policies need to reflect justice, openly aiming to be balanced towards such opposing interests.



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