

Briefing: the "mini budget" and Plan for Patients

26 September 2022

On Friday 23 September, Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng released a "mini budget" (known as [The Growth Plan](#)) outlining measures designed to address the cost of living crisis and stimulate economic growth. On Thursday 22 September, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Thérèse Coffey set out the Government's [Plan for Patients](#) and the NHS. But what do these measures mean for the neuro community?

The mini budget

1. Income tax cut

The Government has brought forward a planned cut to the basic rate of income tax, reducing it from 20% to 19% from April 2023. This may mean that some people will get to keep around £170 more of their income in the year.

2. National Insurance and the social care levy

The Government has said it will reverse the recent rise in National Insurance contributions from November. The "health and social care levy" was intended to help meet the rising cost of health and social care but will no longer be introduced. The Government has said that it will continue to provide the £13 billion a year needed to fund health and social care, likely from general taxation and government borrowing. The Government has also committed £500 million extra for social care to support hospital discharge and the social care workforce. It's also committed to keep the cap on care costs introduced last year.

3. Greater restrictions on Universal Credit claimants

People who claim Universal Credit who are earning less than the equivalent of 15 hours a week at minimum wage (known as National Living Wage) will now be required to meet

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regularly with their Work Coach and take more active steps to increase their earnings or face having their benefits reduced.

The Plan for Patients

Alongside the budget, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Thérèse Coffrey set out a Plan for Patients and the NHS.

The plan outlines measures to address the ambulance shortage, cut waiting lists and address backlogs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also a focus on addressing shortages of care staff, and increasing access to doctors and dentists. The plan also aims to give patients access to GP appointments within two weeks (although this is an “ambition” rather than a funded commitment) and work alongside existing measures in the NHS Winter Plan.

What will these measures do to support the neuro community?

The “mini budget” and the Plan for Patients provide little detail about how the measures announced will be implemented, paid for and resourced. It’s also uncertain how effective these measures will be in addressing the cost of living crisis and providing the right support, health and social care and access to treatment for people affected by neurological conditions.

The Government estimates that around 13 million people could be £170 per year better off because of the income tax cut. However, in day-to-day terms, this will have very little effect: the cost of living is still rising and the value of the pound is falling.

The continued commitment to providing funding for health and social care is welcome, although measures implemented by the Government so far have done little to address the waiting lists for neurology and neurosurgery appointments which are high and continue to grow.

We know from our own research, and that of the Care and Support Alliance, that this sparsity of care is having [very real negative consequences](#) for older people and people with disabilities and their carers, including people affected by with neurological conditions.

Currently people who claim Universal Credit who work for 12 hours or less at minimum wage already risk having their benefits reduced if they do not take active steps to increase their

earnings. From January 2023 this requirement will be extended to people on Universal Credit working up to 15 hours a week.

This requirement already has the potential to impact people with disabilities, including those with neurological conditions, many of whom have to work part-time hours in order to be able to manage the physical and mental impact of their condition(s) and/or the time commitment needed to attend vital healthcare appointments.

The Plan for Patients acknowledges a number of the key challenges facing health and social care services: ambulance response times, long waiting lists and backlogs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is welcome. However, there is nothing in the plan about how these measures will be resourced, paid for or implemented. Crucially, we are still yet to see the desperately needed workforce strategy for health and social care.

Next steps

We will continue to call on the Government to publish a detailed workforce plan for health and social care. The plan must be long term, fully funded and cover all health and care professionals who provide services and support for people with neurological conditions.

We will continue to call on all UK governments to work together to create a Neuro Taskforce to address common problems faced by people with neuro conditions, particularly:

- Lack of mental wellbeing support.
- Lack of access to treatment and care at the right time.
- Lack of information and support at diagnosis and beyond.

A Neuro Taskforce would provide a framework to support greater collaboration and sharing of best practice in the approaches taken to tackle these common problems. It would build on similar policy approaches in health and care, such as the recent Rare Disease Framework and associated implementation plans. Fundamentally, and most importantly, it would help to show that the UK Government (including the Prime Minister) and governments in devolved nations, are listening to people affected by neurological conditions.