

## There is no hope of accountability and transparency in...

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As the [GMB reported yesterday](#):

*Almost half of Southern Cross care homes are owned by companies based outside the UK, including hundreds registered in tax havens, according to a union dossier.*

*The GMB said 199 homes are registered in the Cayman islands, 43 in Guernsey, 41 in Gibraltar, 39 in Jersey, four in the British Virgin islands and one in the Isle of Man.*

*The union said it had established the names of 80 landlords who own 615 of the 750 homes but was still trying to find out details of the other owners.*

*National officer Justin Bowden said: "Southern Cross may be on its last legs but for Southern Cross's 31,000 residents and 43,000 staff, this looks like a case of 'out of the frying pan, into the fire'.*

*"These 80 landlords are a rag-bag bunch whose number includes overseas interests, tax dodgers and in some cases 'identity still unknown'. Many themselves are in financial difficulties.*

*"All this spells months more uncertainty and worry for residents and staff. Where is Government in this care scandal? The ears of the 31,000 elderly and vulnerable residents and 43,000 staff must be ringing from the deafening silence from Downing Street.*

Cameron says he is in favour of transparency, accountability and obligation in public services. This, though, is the reality: we get offshore companies, completely opaque, accountable to no one, with no financial information available on public record, ending up as the landlords and operators of care homes for the elderly in this country.

It's sickening.

It's wrong.

It's as opaque as it is possible to be.

It lacks all forms of accountability.

There is no protection to those who need it within such a system.

Cameron wants to devolve responsibility from the state to the corporate entity. But [as my research has shown](#), 20% of all companies in the United Kingdom disappear each year without question being asked. That is a complete failure of corporate responsibility.

In addition I've shown that the government does not ask almost one third of companies to submit tax returns each year. That's the behaviour of a cowardly state.

Of those 1.8 million companies that are asked to submit tax returns, 600,000 do not submit them and they are not pursued for any penalty for not doing so. That is the behaviour of companies who know they can ride roughshod over the government: a cowardly government; a government that is not willing to enforce regulation to ensure transparency, accountability and the obligation to pay tax.

And Cameron presides over a government that is responsible for more tax havens in this world than any other, and he's doing nothing about it.

To argue that the functions of state should be passed to corporations when regulation of corporations is so weak, and is known to be so weak, is the act of a man who is both a coward and a fool. Cameron knows that if he does what he proposes accountability, transparency and responsibility will all go by the wayside. But he says otherwise. That's grossly dishonest.

If there is to be any further devolvement of any responsibility of any sort from the state in this country to the private sector then the rules by which the private sector operates have to be enforced and enhanced.

Companies must be made to account.

Their directors must be held accountable if they do not.

Tax havens must be shattered open and the information within them brought into the public domain.

Full accounts of every corporate entity must be on public record.

Country by country reporting must be the norm.

Corporate social responsibility reporting should not be an optional extra: it should be a requirement of all companies of any size.

Tax avoidance, and the transfer of profits generated from state funded activity to tax havens outside the UK should be banned.

Personal liability for those persons who act in breach of trust, who have committed fraud, who have deliberately assisted their companies to evade tax, and who've misrepresented accounting information should be rigourously enforced.

Then, and only then can the public sector be satisfied that the private sector can undertake the tasks that they may wish to transfer to it.

Until then, any transfer of services to the private sector involves unknown and very obviously significant, and dangerous, risks for the users of the services in question and that is wholly unacceptable and an act of gross irresponsibility on the part of any politician.

Which is why Cameron's Big Society must be stopped, now.