

## Social care: the devil in the manifesto?

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Tory plans have a habit of unwinding. Think of the budgets that have failed on things like pasties, caravans and broken promises on national insurance changes. In themselves each seemed a minor issue. What they collectively did was remind people that far from being infallible, strong and stable, Tory government's and chancellors in question were the purveyors of fragile thinking from which they were willing to retreat at the first sign of dissent.

Of course I am speculating, but Theresa May's decisions not to continue a Tory commitment to cap social care costs, and to change winter fuel allowance payments to pay for social care, have the feeling of being in the same camp. In themselves the policies can be defended. But the reality is that they alienate key elements in the Tory electoral base.

The cap on social care costs will hit all those of around my age with parents needing care who feel it is their absolute right to inherit the family home for which they have waited a lifetime. This absurd and wholly unjustified sense of entitlement is deeply embedded amongst many and any interference with it, whether from inheritance tax or to fund social care, is considered utterly unacceptable. May has trampled on angry toes there.

The winter fuel allowance is another shibboleth. Of course many recipients do not need it. But take it away and they will feel that they have had a very specific tax increase. For many involved they might be able to afford that. This is not the point. Few doubted most could afford the pasty tax but it upset a great many people.

So I wonder whether Theresa May has made two pretty fundamental mistakes that knock the sheen off her image with a great many people and tarnish the last weeks of her election campaign? Something had to go wrong. Most election mistakes are self inflicted. Are these amongst them?