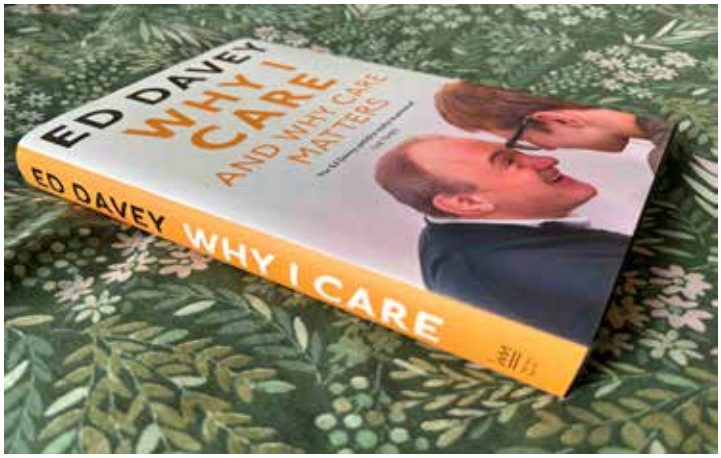
TAKING GOOD CARE

Sophie Layton looks at Ed Davey's book on his life beyond politics as a carer

Marking exactly one year since the announcement of last year's general election, Sir Ed Davey released his first book. A touching tribute to carers everywhere, the book is a chance for us all to see beyond the politician and stunt-enthusiast, and take a deeper look at Davey's personal life.

Following Davey's experiences caring for both his mother and now his son John, Why I Care & Why Care Matters is a deeply personal insight into the Davey's private life, the challenges his family have faced when adapting to John's condition, and the experiences that have led to Davey's strong focus on carers and caring during the election and since, and orienting much of the Liberal Democrats' focus since 2024. The book also contains anecdotal stories from other carers from a variety of backgrounds, sharing their own tales to highlight the breadth of caring responsibility and circumstances.

Having read this book just over 24 hours after publication to say I found it captivating would be a major understatement. There was not a single person who was unmoved by Davey's touching video one year ago, and this book goes a long way to filling in the wider picture, connecting you with the man behind it. Reading about how his childhood experiences caring for his mother has influenced his current approach with John feels like you are not only connecting with the family but gives a closeness as if you were there.



One of the most touching passages comes from Davey's recollections of touring domestically and internationally in search of effective treatments for John, a journey with which many will be able to empathise. Tales of hope and despair, progress and determination show Davey as a caring and loving family man, a characteristic that not many politicians would have assigned to them. It is also incredibly powerful that the book demonstrates coming to terms with the realities of long-term conditions, rather than dressing up the raw emotions with resoluteness.

The book also does a fantastic job at highlighting challenges that carers face. Whether long waits for appointments, referrals and treatments, to wrestling with the Department of Work & Pensions, or the financial difficulties that being a carer can impose, Davey is direct and open with the hardships his family have faced; for many, it will be a reflection of their own lives, one that Davey has shone an impressively powerful spotlight on.

Davey has a captivating writing style that hooks readers that feels not only natural, but as if from a seasoned writer. While he will have much experience from his time in Parliament and in Government, a heartfelt account is an entirely different format, and achieving such a successful product is commendable. While I am a fast reader, this book was completed even quicker than I had imagined.

I also want to particularly highlight the stories from individual carers that complement Davey's own experience. Handing approximately one-third of the book over to others, we get the chance to hear and highlight a range of experiences, challenges and points of view. Davey, despite still facing significant obstacles, it cannot be denied occupies a relatively privileged position, and seeing this utilised to highlight carers overall is a stroke of genius and a chance to highlight the everyday and unsung carers.

My one major criticism comes from the imposition of policy or agenda points throughout. While I applaud the use of the publication to put forward an agenda and several ideas to make carers' lives materially better, this is occasionally done in a heavy-handed manner. Several times there is a direct reference to Liberal Democrat policies or actions, or pressure that the party is applying, which can represent a sharp change in tone, and sometimes feels too much as if a secondary motive is being applied. The book overall does a good job at splitting from this party-political tone, but occasionally slips back, which can snap you as a reader out of the narrative.

Regardless of this minor criticism, this feels like a new frontier being tackled, shining a light on the army of carers across the nation giving up everything for the selflessness of looking after another. I hope that many choose to read Davey's book, for an emotional and powerful account it may be, it also continues a conversation so rarely had, and yet exceptionally important.

Sophie Layton is an international political communication student at the University of Sheffield

Why I Care & Why Care Matters by Sir Ed Davey Harper Collins 2025 £20