

The national context

The state of care – October 2023

The independent regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), produces an annual assessment of health care and adult social care. The latest national report, published in October 2023¹, highlight and include the following national trends:

- Turbulence across health and social care – in addition to the ongoing problem of ‘gridlocked’ care, the cost-of-living crisis is biting harder for the public, staff and providers and workforce pressures have escalated.
- Adult Social Care providers are facing increased running costs, including food and electricity, with some struggling to pay their staff a wage in line with inflation and the increase in the living wage which affects recruitment and retention. The increase in borrowing and insurance is also affecting the cost of care. This is likely to have an impact on people, both in the quality of care they receive and in providers’ ability to re-invest in care homes.
- Local Authority budgets have failed to keep pace with rising costs and the increase in the number of people needing care. As adult social care places funded by a local authority are often less profitable, there is the risk that people who live in more deprived areas and are more likely to receive local authority funded care, may not be able to get the care they need.

ADASS Autumn Survey Reports (Parts 1 and 2) – November 2023

An ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) Autumn Survey has been sent to every Director of Adult Social Services in the 153 English councils with adult social care responsibilities. This snap survey has been conducted around the same period for several years to enable comparability, with this latest report summarising data and responses carried out from 26 September-13 October 2023.

It gathers information on a range of issues including adult social care budgets, the number of people waiting for assessments or reviews, and the health and social care interface. 126 councils submitted responses to this survey, an 82% response rate.

Key messages include:

- **Adult social care is facing significant budgetary challenges in 2023/24 which impact on its ability to support people with care and support needs and their carers.** This is due to a mix of high rates of inflation, increasing need and complexity of need, workforce challenges, welcome but costly increases to the National Living Wage, the demand and budgetary challenges facing other council services, such as children’s social care, and also as a result of the well-

¹ [State of Care 2022/23 - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/state-of-care-2022-23)

documented challenges facing the NHS. This is compounded by our findings that 70% of Directors report that social care staff are undertaking activity that would have previously been done by the NHS on an unfunded basis. This means that despite access to additional funding from Government, 83% of councils are projecting to overspend by an average of 3.5% on adult social care in 2023/24. This is not sustainable as councils are required by law to balance their budgets.

- **Nearly a third of Directors of Adult Social Services have been asked to make additional in-year savings to their budgets because of the challenging financial environment facing adult social care and councils.** 29% of Directors indicated that they've been asked to make savings that collectively total £83.7mn for 2023/24. This is in addition to the £806mn of savings that Directors across England have already planned to deliver this year. Several Directors indicated that they have yet to be asked to model additional in-year savings, however, they expect that this will be the case over the coming months due to the overarching financial challenges faced by their councils.
- **Adult social care is already expecting to have to deliver nearly £1 billion in savings in 2024/25, a higher level of savings than in the current year.** Directors are expecting to deliver savings of £964mn in 2024/25, or an average of 5% of their budgets. This is the highest level of savings since 2015/16 when Directors were tasked with making £1.1 billion of savings.
- **The number of people awaiting an assessment of their needs, care or direct payments to begin or for a review of their care plan has increased by 8% since March 2023.** While this is at a slightly lower level than this time last year, there are still nearly half a million people who are not getting the support they need or whose needs may have changed since their last review. There are 470,576 people waiting and some of those individuals will inevitably deteriorate, need hospital care as a result or have to rely on unpaid carers to support them.
- **The true financial pressure on adult social care is hidden because of the backlog of people waiting for an assessment of their needs.** Nearly a quarter of a million people (249,589) were waiting for an assessment of their care needs as of August 2023, an increase from 224,978 people at the end of March 2023. A proportion of those people waiting for an assessment will go on to access council-led adult social care support, ranging from short-term care to enable them to regain their independence, long-term residential care or end of life care.

[autumn-survey-2023-social-care-housing-health-and-winter-final.pdf \(adass.org.uk\)](#)
[autumn-survey-report-2023-adult-social-care-budgets-waiting-times.pdf \(adass.org.uk\)](#)