

Key Messages

Adult social care financial pressures are intensifying, meaning that councils continue to face challenges in fully delivering on their legal obligations to people accessing care and support and their carers. 81% of councils are on course to overspend their adult social care budget in the current financial year, up from 72% in 2023/24. This is why ADASS has asked Government to, at a minimum, take urgent action to stabilise social care. Investing in social care is not only important to provide the care and support people need, but an important strategic investment in our economy's productivity and growth, through supporting more people get into and stay in work.

More councils are being required to make savings despite growing levels and complexity of need and escalating costs. Some 35% of councils are being asked to make in-year savings, up from 19% in 2022. This is on top of planned savings for 2024/25, which in our Spring Survey we reported was £903bn, the highest since 2016/17. For 2025/26, these planned savings are estimated to increase by 55% to £1.4bn. In this context, it will be even harder for councils to make the investment needed in workforce, prevention and unpaid carers, all of which are crucial to improving health and social care in the longer-term.

To achieve the Government's goal of shifting health and social care from "sickness to prevention," investment is needed to ease council pressures that currently limit spending to only those with the highest needs. Directors have a good understanding of how prevention can reduce care needs and support people to live well. They rated financial barriers and competing service pressures such as delayed discharge as the most significant barriers to implementing the preventative activities that will help more people live healthier and more independently for longer.

The workforce is key to making community-based health and social care a reality. Social care professionals working alongside health colleagues, workforce planning for Allied Health Professionals¹, and enough physios and occupational therapists in hospitals were identified as key NHS investments that could have a positive impact on local care and health services.

The Better Care Fund is vital for sustaining adult social care and aligning it with local finance cycles, and earlier framework publication could enhance its effectiveness from 2026. The next iteration of the policy framework is an opportunity to reorientate the fund towards prevention, with health and social care partners working together to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Access to better and more joined up health and social care data can transform our understanding of people's needs and the support that suits them best. Client Level Data is part of this, though it's still on the journey to reaching its full potential. Continued Government focus and collaboration are crucial to unlocking the potential of integrated data across health, housing, welfare, and social care – empowering people with more choice and control and informing sound policy and spending decisions.

¹ [TLAP Jargon Buster](#): *Allied health professionals*: people who provide different types of health care who are not doctors, nurses or pharmacists. The description includes a wide range of roles, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, podiatrists and others.