

Case study photos available:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UGv3nvF_7P1yO914OVCSlbiPHpTpBLgO

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High-cost social care packages for young people surge by almost a third in a single year, new survey reveals

A sharp increase in high-cost social care for young adults has been revealed in a new survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) today. It is driven by the growing complexity of care and support needs, the transfer of support from health to local government care without associated funding, pressures on local government finances and workforce challenges.

Directors across England report a 30% increase in the number of 18–24-year-olds whose care package costs more than £7,000 per week.

Councils support young people with the most complex needs including profound physical disabilities, significant learning disabilities, severe neurodivergence, and enduring or high-risk mental health conditions such as complex trauma.

Freya Viles, 24, has cerebral palsy and needs a hoist to move into and out of her power chair. She is an active member of her community, working part time at the Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living two days per week and managing a local hospice shop on Sundays.

Freya said: "I want to live the way other young people do – leading a normal busy life, and choosing who I have around me. Having a direct payment to employ PAs would give me choice and control, but I've been told it costs too much. Instead, I have live-in support and have now had more than 30 different carers from three agencies meaning I really struggle to build relationships of trust.

"It's frustrating because cost is deciding what my adulthood looks like instead of me. I often must balance my lifestyle and the carers. I want to highlight the importance of the right support to allow everyone live the life they want."

The ADASS Autumn Survey report also finds:

- Directors are estimating the largest overspend at this point of the year in the post Covid-19 era, with a projected £623mn overspend for 2025/26
- Significant savings will be required from next year's adult social care budgets totalling £869mn savings in 2026/27
- The Government move to neighbourhood health means adult social care needs a strong voice, yet a third of Directors (34%) say they have very little or no influence over Integrated Care System structures
- In terms of healthcare tasks being delegated to adult social care staff, half of Directors said that they do not have an agreement in place with health partners on funding, training or competency frameworks for staff.

Jess McGregor, ADASS President and Executive Director Adults and Health at Camden Council, said: "Councils overspending on adult social care isn't about abstract numbers – it's about the unmet needs of real people. Nowhere is this more evident than for young adults with complex needs, like Freya, whose care and support ensures they can live full and independent lives.

"The underfunding of adult social care is forcing councils to make impossible choices – trying to balance financial sustainability with doing the right thing for those who rely on us."

The ADASS survey is launched the day before the National Children and Adult Services Conference opens in Bournemouth on Wednesday, 26 November.

It is also published ahead of the Autumn Budget. ADASS has submitted recommendations to the Treasury ahead of the Budget, and to DHSC, calling for:

- Investment in preparation for adulthood, including aligned statutory guidance across DHSC, DfE and MHCLG, and a national set of standards developed with young people and families.
- Stabilisation funding for care markets and support for workforce retention as the Government phases out international recruitment.
- Full funding for the Fair Pay Agreement implementation and other cost pressures arising from the Employment Rights Bill so that funding pay increases doesn't fall to councils who are already under strain.

The Autumn Survey findings also reinforce the importance of the Casey Commission on Adult Social Care. ADASS' President has given evidence to the Commission encouraging support for children, young people, working-age adults and older people to be more coherent, sustainable and fair.

ENDS

Notes to editors

To interview Freya Viles or Jess McGregor please contact:

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Please find hi-res photos for download of Freya Viles at home and headshots of Jess McGregor, [here](#).

The Autumn Survey shows an estimated 547 young people, aged 18–24, have a care package of more than £7,000 per week in 2024, rising to 712 people in 2025. For a copy of the Autumn Survey report please contact:

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NCASC is free for journalists. If you would like to attend all or part of the conference, please email maddy.hayden@local.gov.uk to request a press pass.

ADASS recently published its policy statement on Preparation for adulthood [here](#). And last year, ADASS published a report with Impower called Preparing for adulthood which sets out key findings and recommendations [here](#).

The 18–24-year-olds with complex care packages often need a combination of:

- Care delivered by multiple care workers throughout the day, with two or sometimes three carers per one young person.
- Staff with specialist training, therapeutic expertise or clinical understanding in placements funded by social authority children's and adult services to deliver care at a community level, rather than through NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services delivered in hospitals.
- Homes with enhanced safety features, structured routines or sensory adaptation.
- Adult social care providers capable of offering 24-hour supervision and managing unpredictable crises safely.