

Autumn Budget 2026

Representation from The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to HM Treasury

September 2026

Context

- Adult social care at its best transforms lives. It enables millions of us to live the lives we want to lead, where we want to lead them, protected against abuse and neglect, whether we need support with our mental health, because of physical disabilities, a learning disability, or because we are older and have additional support needs.
- The number of people drawing on publicly funded long-term care rose to 889,000 in 2024/25. The number of people accessing short-term care to maximise independence (ST-Max) in 2024/25 was 245,000.¹
- Adult social care employed approximately 1.5mn people in 2024/25, equivalent to 4.9% of the economically active population in England.
- The adult social care sector was estimated to contribute £77.8 billion gross value added (GVA) per annum to the economy in England in 2024/25.
- An estimated 19,000 organisations were involved in providing or organising adult social care in England as at 2024/25.²
- The financial pressures facing adult social care are showing no signs of abating. Councils in England overspent on their 2025/26 adult social care budgets by £715mn.³
- One in five, or 32 councils with social care responsibilities, were provided with access to Exceptional Financial Support from Government for 2026/27.⁴ This funding allows those councils to access *'financial assistance to handle pressures that they considered unmanageable and to enable them to set balanced budgets'*.⁵
- Over 400,000 people are waiting for an assessment of their needs, for care and support or their direct payment to start, or a review of their care plan.⁶

Introduction

¹ [Social Care 360: Access | The King's Fund, 8 April 2026](#)

² [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, Skills for Care, October 2025](#)

³ [ADASS Spring Survey, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, July 2026](#)

⁴ [Emergency government bailouts needed by third of councils over next three years, Local Government Association, February 2026](#)

⁵ [Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 23 February 2026](#)

⁶ ADASS Spring Survey, 2026

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) welcomes the opportunity to submit a representation to HM Treasury ahead of the 2026 Autumn Budget.

We know that Baroness Casey's Independent Commission on Adult Social Care is working hard to identify what could and should be done differently. After numerous attempts to reform adult social care, we need these reforms to stick both as a sector and as a society. We are hopeful that politics will be put aside for the greater good.

In the interim, it's important that we don't remain in the crouch position and wait for Baroness Casey's recommendations. Government, councils and the adult social care sector in its broadest sense need to continue to lay the foundations for more fundamental reform.

The asks set out in this representation should be seen as the building blocks that help lay those foundations. The proposals are predominantly low cost, acknowledge the challenging financial outlook facing Government and will be complementary to any recommendations put forward by Baroness Casey as part of the [Independent Commission on Adult Social Care](#).

Investable Propositions

Housing

- 1. Increase the disabled facilities grant upper limit from £30,000 to £50,000 and expand the criteria for what the grant can be spent on to promote independence and encourage innovation.**

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are grants available from councils to help meet the cost of adapting a property to support '*disabled people to continue living safely and independently*'.⁷

The national statutory upper limit of the DFG has remained at £30k since 2008 and has not kept pace with inflation. As such, Government should increase the upper threshold to £50k at a minimum, supported by increased funding for councils as part of the 2027/28 local government finance settlement, if not earlier.

Government should also urgently work with the sector and people who draw on care and support to update and expand the criteria for what DFG can be spent on, giving people more choice and control and encouraging innovation. This should include low level technology adoption and the ability to fund ongoing maintenance costs for equipment.

- 2. Implement changes to building regulations to make new homes more accessible and adaptable to support more people to live as independently as possible for as long as**

⁷ [Frequently Asked Questions on Disabled Facilities Grants, Foundations, Accessed 29 June 2026](#)

possible.

At present only 13% of homes in England have all four basic accessibility criteria that help make a home visitable for most people, namely:

- A toilet at entrance level
- Sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space for a wheelchair
- Level access to reach the front door
- A flush threshold with no obstructions that create a trip hazard or make it difficult to cross in a wheelchair⁸

The lack of accessible and adaptable housing limits the ability of people who draw on care and support to live as independently as they want for as long as they want and to do the things they want on a day-to-day basis. We need to move to a place where there is a diverse range of housing which can adapt as people's needs change through their lives

Any new homes being built must be fit and suitable for our ever-growing, ageing and diverse population and ensure that, regardless of their changing needs or disability status, people can thrive in inclusive communities, with the capacity, dignity and independence that an accessible home offers.

Government should enact changes to Building Regulations as set out in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) response to '*Raising accessibility standards for new homes*' in July 2022. The changes should mandate the current M4(2) (Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings) as a minimum standard for all new homes. M4(1) should apply only by exception, where M4(2) can be shown to be impractical and unachievable.

Data and Intelligence

3. Provide councils with equitable access to health data at a local level to support better planning and to support the shift towards Neighbourhood Health.

There needs to be equitable access for councils to NHS data at local geographies which can provide actionable insights across council areas and support more effective system-wide collaboration. Harnessing this data would enable councils to identify trends, develop more targeted interventions, and design proactive, preventative approaches that improve outcomes for people drawing on care and support and reduce long-term pressures on services.

4. Co-produce new approaches to capture the views and experiences of people who draw on care and support, their carers and families of how they experience adult social care.

⁸ [Accessible Homes Factsheet, Centre for Better Ageing, June 2025](#)

The current Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) and the Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) are outdated, unrepresentative of the range of people who draw on care and support and their carers and only capture the views of people who access long-term care.

To ensure that the experiences of people who draw on care and support, including people from all parts of society and those who have short episodes of support are better captured and understood, Government should instigate urgent work to modernise the surveys.

This work should be undertaken in two phases. Firstly, Government should work with councils to identify the information they collect from the people they support and where possible seek to draw regional and national insights from existing approaches. Secondly, Government should work with councils, people who draw on care and support and carers to co-produce new approaches to modernise how peoples views and experiences are captured and utilised to support policy and spending decisions at local and national levels. These could operate continuously, in a way that is similar to the British Social Attitudes survey.

Co-Production

5. Commit to a principle of co-production for any major policy or legislative change.

Government should commit to developing proposals with people with lived experience, carers, families and the social care workforce. After all, they know what works from their own personal experience.

Fair Pay Agreement for Adult Social Care

6. Commit to fully-fund the costs of the Fair Pay Agreement and the wider Employment Rights Act for services commissioned by councils. This funding should be part recurrent and ringfenced to ensure it is used for its intended purpose.

ADASS believes that adult social care staff are skilled professionals whose work is vital to individuals, families, communities, and the wider economy, yet the sector continues to face workforce shortages, high turnover, and low pay compared to other sectors and the NHS.

As such, we strongly support the Government's ambition to introduce a Fair Pay Agreement (FPA). The FPA can deliver fair pay and help secure better terms and conditions for front line care workers which is the right thing to do. However, to ensure the policy intentions of the FPA can be delivered in full councils need guarantees from Government that funding at a minimum will be recurrent funding and ringfenced for adult social care. Without these provisions, councils will need to find additional resources to fund this commitment year on year.

Government should also, at the earliest point possible, clarify what future funding allocations will look like and how they will be announced. There are implications these could have on areas of financial pressure, workforce planning, training, recruitment and retention, impact on providers and the market, compliance of new legal and regulatory obligations, as well as misalignment with other reforms and financial settlements.

Fairness and inclusion

7. Prior to the Casey Commission reporting, Government should commit to and fully fund an increase in the upper and lower capital thresholds to bring them in line with inflation.

The capital thresholds have not changed since 2010/11. If the upper capital threshold of £23,250 had increased in line with inflation it would have been over £35,600 in 2026/27, enabling more people to qualify for state-funded support.⁹

Any adjustments to capital thresholds must be fully funded by Government.

8. Government should ensure that adult social care is fully engaged and involved in the discussions and delivery of the national drive to end rough sleeping.

ADASS supports the national drive to end rough sleeping.¹⁰ However, it's imperative that adult social care is recognised as a key partner and fully funded to play an active role in delivering on this agenda for people with assessed care and support needs. As stated in a recent blog:

'In practice, long-term rough sleeping often sits as much within adult social care and safeguarding as it does within housing. Many people who remain in street homelessness over extended periods have unmet care and support needs that fall within local authority responsibilities'.¹¹

Councils are seeing more people who are street homeless with care and support needs. In the 2026 ADASS Spring Survey, two-thirds of Directors (66%) reported an increase in street homeless referrals to adult social care, an increase from 60% reported in our 2025 survey. 57% of Directors reported an increase in the number of people needing safeguarding who

⁹ ['Social care stealth tax': 15 years of frozen thresholds can set some care users back £12,400, new analysis finds, The Kings Fund, 1 September 2026](#)

¹⁰ [Prime Minister launches national drive to get everyone in for Christmas, Prime Minister's Office, 18 August 2026](#)

¹¹ [Hidden in Plain Sight –Reframing Adult Social Care Responsibilities in Long-term Rough Sleeping – Social work with adults, Department of Health and Social Care, 20 July 2026](#)

are street homeless in the last 12 months.¹²

About ADASS

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) is a charity. Our members are current and former Directors of adult care or social services and their senior staff, including Principal Social Workers. Our objectives include:

- Furthering comprehensive, equitable, social policies and plans which reflect and shape the economic and social environment of the time
- Furthering the interests of those who need social care services, regardless of their backgrounds and status, and
- Promoting high standards of social care services.

If you would like to discuss this submission or any of our other work further, please don't hesitate to get in touch with michael.chard1@adass.org.uk

¹² ADASS Spring Survey 2026