

Somerset Council
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Helen Whately
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Please ask for: [Cllr Dean Ruddle](#)

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Date: 2 November 2023

Dear Ms Whately,

I write to you in my role as Lead Member for Adult Social Care at Somerset Council.

You will be aware of the growing evidence nationally highlighting the perilous financial position many Councils face.

Today the County Councils Network (CCN) and Society of County Treasurers (SCT) have published analysis revealing that England's largest councils face overspending their budgets by over £600m this year and warning that Local Authorities are 'running out of road' to prevent financial insolvency as they grapple with overspends triggered by stubbornly high inflation, rising demand for support, and challenging provider markets for both children's and adult services¹.

In Somerset, we are facing up to a £100m funding blackhole. Latest budget figures go before the Council Executive on 8th November are expected to show an estimated £70m increase in adult social care costs for 2024/25.

This means the Council cannot rely on reserves to cover the gap for next year and, without action, risks us needing to issue a s114 notice at the point of setting next year's budget in February.

The pressures we're seeing in Adult Social Care are not unique to Somerset and are being felt nationally. The funding model for local government is undeniably broken, with many councils struggling with soaring costs and demands on services.

¹ [Councils warn they are 'running out of road' to prevent financial insolvency, as in-year overspends top £600m - County Councils Network](#)

Somerset's Adult Social Care budget covers all adults, from younger working age people up to the end of life, and despite having a population which is older than the national average, we are among the lowest spenders nationally for older people.

This is because people living in Somerset have told us that they want to remain living as independently as possible in their own homes, which has led us to develop the market to support this - helping us keep our costs low.

We have worked closely with our vibrant volunteer and community sector, domiciliary care sector and our micro providers to help people live independently in their own homes for as long as possible and have been careful with our spending to ensure the best possible value for money.

Despite this, numerous factors beyond our control have contributed to rising costs:

- Care providers have had to raise their prices due to increased running costs, with rising costs for food, fuel, heating and electricity, and interest rates. Our residential care placement costs have risen from around £577 per week in 2022/23 to £850 per week at the time of writing. This is a huge increase of over 47%.
- Demand for care has increased, with the average person receiving care in their own home now needing 14 hours per week at the time of writing, compared to 12 hours per week in 2021/22. This is an increase of 16%.
- Planned reforms have been paused, meaning we have not received the full amount of money originally allocated to fund the fair cost of care exercise.

In view of this wider context and the significant and growing challenges we now face here in Somerset and very much wish to avoid, I ask for your urgent assistance in securing additional funding for adult social care. Our overspend position is not because of poor control or oversight, nor policy decisions or legal action – rather it is simply an exceptionally large increase in our costs for demand-led services we have no choice but to manage.

I await your response.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Dean Ruddle
Lead Member for Adult Social Care – Somerset Council