ADULT SOCIAL CARE · ENGLAND'S COUNCILS, 2021–2026

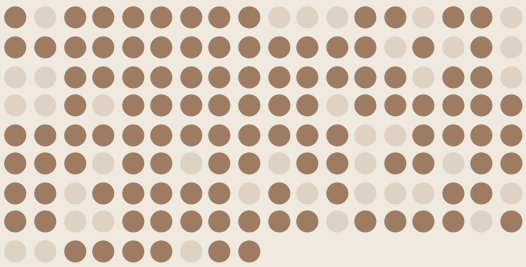
Promised, deferred, promised again

Five years waiting for a national fix, and what England's councils did while they waited

Adult social care is the help councils arrange for older and disabled adults to live their lives: home care, care homes, day services and support for the families who do much of the caring. It is the largest call on most council budgets, and for five years it has been the subject of a national promise that kept being withdrawn.

This report reads the councils' own record of those years, every adult social care decision Phemia's pipeline flagged in the minutes it holds. It finds councils waiting for reform, passing new costs down the line, being inspected rather than funded, and finally making the big choices themselves, increasingly along party lines.

THE COUNCILS THAT RUN CARE



Each dot is one of England's 153 upper-tier councils, the councils that run adult social care. The **115** highlighted have adult social care decisions in Phemia's record.

851	653	173	2021–26
COUNCIL DECISIONS, EACH READ IN FULL	MEETINGS	COUNCILS	YEARS OF MINUTES

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The story comes first, in six short parts. Every claim carries a numbered note: notes link to the council's own minutes, to the Phemia record of the decision, or to the national source. The numbers behind the story are in the appendix (A1 to A13), which also explains the method and its limits.

INTRODUCTION

Five years of waiting for someone to fix care

In 2021 Westminster promised to sort out adult social care. It still hasn't. We read every decision England's councils made about it in the meantime, to see what they did while they waited.

On 8 September 2021, a care home owner brought a simple request to a full meeting of Sheffield City Council. In seven years, he said, his home's fees had gone up by no more than £1 a year per resident. He wanted £15 a week, or the home might not survive.[1]

The day before, the Prime Minister had announced a plan to fix social care: a new tax, and an £86,000 cap on what anyone would have to pay for their own care.[2] Neither the tax nor the cap exists today. The care home owner's question, about who pays and how much, has been asked in council chambers across England ever since.

Adult social care is the help that lets an older or disabled person get out of bed, get washed, eat and stay in their own home. It means care workers who visit, care homes, day centres, adaptations to people's homes, and support for the families who do most of the work for nothing. Councils have to provide it by law, and most of them buy it from private companies and charities.

It is also where the money goes. Across the councils responsible for it, adult social care takes about 41p in every pound of spending on services other than schools.[3] In Kent it is close to half of the council's entire £1.6bn budget.[4] Yet you would barely know it from council meetings. Only 4 to 6% of the decisions they record are about care.[3] Most of the money moves quietly, through contracts and officers' decisions that never come to a vote.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AT UPPER-TIER COUNCILS, 2026-27 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER) 3

Most of the money, little of the record

SPENDING

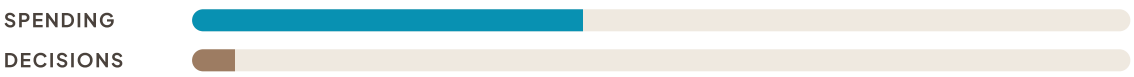
42%

of upper-tier councils' non-schools service spending

DECISIONS

4.3%

of the service decisions their meetings record



Both bars on the same 0–100% scale. Earlier years are in A3. This measures how visible care is in the democratic record, not how carefully it is managed.

That makes the moments when care does reach the council chamber worth paying attention to. Usually something has gone wrong, a hard choice has to be made in public, or a decision taken in Westminster has just landed on the council's desk.

So we read them all. Phemia holds the minutes of meetings between March 2021 and September 2026 in which councils took decisions about adult social care: 653 meetings of 173 councils, plus two decisions by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Phemia's classification pipeline flagged 853 candidate decisions about adult social care. Phemia's AI analysis tool then read each one in full and noted its tone and what it was really about (a member of the Phemia team read and verified a sample; no person read them all), and we analysed the language of the minutes around them.[5] Then we checked what was happening nationally at the time against primary sources.

The story that comes out of it has four parts. Councils spent five years waiting for a reform that never arrived. In the meantime they got by, mostly by passing costs on: to care providers first, then to the people using care and their families. The one thing Westminster did deliver was inspection, so councils ended up being marked rather than funded. And as the wait dragged on, they started making the big decisions themselves: whether to run care at all, and how much to charge local taxpayers for it. By 2026 those decisions were splitting along party lines.

THE SHORT VERSION

How one thing led to another

In our reading, each part of the story made the next one more likely.

THE NATIONAL REFORM CYCLE, 2021 TO 2026 [6]

SEP 2021	SEP 2022	NOV 2022	JUL 2024	JAN 2025	JUL 2026
Levy and £86,000 cap	Levy scrapped	Cap pushed back	Cap dropped	Casey Commission	Big Conversation
A new tax and a lifetime cap on care costs		By two years		A review of the whole future of care	Report now due summer 2027

Waiting. In September 2021 the government promised to fix adult social care.[2] Three years later the new tax had been reversed, the cap delayed and then dropped, and the question handed to a broader commission whose report is now due in summer 2027.[7] Councils were sceptical from the start, whichever party ran them. By the end, most had stopped planning for reform and were offering to advise on it instead.[8] With no reform there was no long-term money, so every new cost had to be found locally.

Absorbing. So costs rolled downhill. When Westminster put up the cost of employing care staff, as it did with the rise in employers' National Insurance in October 2024, the government gave councils £515m towards their own staff bills. There was no equivalent national grant for the care companies councils pay.[9] Councils passed on what they could to providers through the fees they set, and what they couldn't to the people using care, through higher charges, tighter means tests and new fees. At the bottom of the hill were unpaid family carers.[10] It kept services going. It also left councils exposed when providers struggled and residents got angry.

Judged. The one new thing Westminster did give councils was an inspector. From 2023 the Care Quality Commission began assessing and rating every council's adult social care.[11] The ratings quickly became political. Good grades were announced from the chair; poor ones came out only when the opposition dragged them into the open, if they came out at all.[12] Being marked without being funded raised the pressure on whoever was in charge to look in control.

Choosing. With nothing settled nationally, councils started making the big structural decisions themselves. Some bought, built or took back care services. Others sold or shut them.[13] And in 2026 the new Reform UK councils kept council tax below the maximum that nearly everyone else charged, which turned the size of the bill for care into a party question.[14]

You can hear all of this in the minutes. Talk of reform fades and comes back. Talk about care workers drops by a third (Phemia's analysis of the minutes). Talk of inspection, and of who should run services, climbs steeply.[15] And who councillors blame depends on who is in Downing Street.[15]

PART ONE · WAITING

01 A reform that kept moving

Our shorthand for the national story: reform announced, deferred, dropped and then reopened in a different form. It is Phemia's framing, not one policy announced four times. Councils' demands changed with it. They started by demanding that the government pay. They ended by offering to help it think.

The plan arrived on 7 September 2021: a 1.25 percentage point rise in National Insurance, labelled the Health and Social Care Levy, and a lifetime cap of £86,000 on personal care costs.[16] Councils did not exactly cheer. Their first reaction was suspicion, and it came from every side.

Labour-run Tameside opposed paying for care through National Insurance and wanted wealth taxed instead.[17] In Conservative-run East Riding, a Conservative motion recorded "grave concerns" about whether the money was enough, and whether it would arrive in time.[18] Trafford noted that "the overwhelming majority" of the levy would go to the NHS backlog rather than to care.[19] Wirral pointed out it was only funded for three years.[20] In Durham, members argued that a flat £86,000 cap was unfair in a county where houses are cheap; the Conservative group wanted it tied to people's assets instead.[21] North Tyneside simply declared that nobody should have to sell their home to pay for care.[22] Underneath it all was the same doubt: would the money ever actually reach care?

It didn't. The levy was scrapped in September 2022,[23] and that November the cap was pushed back by two years.[24] Some councils were relieved. Devon, in a motion first tabled in October, had asked the government to delay the reforms and give the money to councils instead.[25] Oxfordshire, one of the councils piloting the new charging system, had already noticed that only £5.4bn of the levy's £36bn was ever earmarked for care reform in England.[26] In Bristol, officers quietly downgraded charging reform on the council's risk register. It wasn't coming any more.[27]

In July 2024 the cap was dropped altogether.[28] Council minutes barely noticed. In the two years since, not one of the decisions we read mentions it.[29] Councils had long since stopped planning for it.

TALK OF NATIONAL REFORM IN THE MINUTES 15



Sentences about reform (levy, cap, white paper, Casey, National Care Service) per 1,000 sentences about adult social care. *2026 to September.

In its place came a commission, which was a different thing from the cap. Baroness Casey's review, announced in January 2025, looks at the whole future of adult social care, including the idea of a National Care Service. The original timetable had it reporting in two stages, in 2026 and by 2028.[30] The tone of council motions changed. In Newcastle, a Liberal Democrat motion called "Sort Social Care Now" was amended by Labour into an offer to share the council's expertise with Casey.[31] Gateshead invited her to visit.[32] Coventry built room for her findings into its five-year plan.[33] Councillors in Warwickshire asked for the timetable to be speeded up.[34] Motions calling for a National Care Service passed in Cambridge and Sunderland, and failed in Oxfordshire.[35]

By September 2026 the timetable had moved. Casey's "Big Conversation on Care", launched in July, runs to April 2027, and GOV.UK now says her report is due in summer 2027. On 29 September 2026 the government set out plans for a National Care Service to be established in the next Parliament, but no such service exists yet and the Commission has not yet made its recommendations.[36] Oxfordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Bath and North East Somerset passed almost identical motions promising to promote it.[37] Five years earlier, councils had been arguing about a cap and a levy. Now they were being invited to a conversation.

PART TWO · ABSORBING

02 Costs roll downhill

With no settled funding, each new cost was passed on: from Westminster to councils, from councils to care providers, and from providers to the people who use care and the families who look after them.

Go back to that Sheffield care home. When its owner asked for £15 a week, the cabinet member's answer was that the home was on "non-standard fees", outside the council's annual uplift, and that the owner and the council should talk.[1] The fees councils pay providers are the first link in the chain. In 2022 the government's Fair Cost of Care exercise tried to measure the gap between what councils paid and what care actually cost. Knowsley's leader said it showed how underfunded the reforms were. Norfolk put its fees up by £30m, or 9%, and admitted the exercise showed that wasn't enough.[38]

The biggest test came on 30 October 2024. The Budget raised employers' National Insurance to 15% from April 2025, lowered the point at which it kicks in from £9,100 to £5,000 per employee, and doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500.[39] The government provided £515m to help councils with the cost for their own directly employed staff; the Local Government Association estimated the direct cost to councils at £637m, and the indirect cost through their suppliers at up to £1.13bn. The Nuffield Trust estimated that the rise would add around £940m to the employer National Insurance bill of independent social care providers. There was no equivalent national compensation grant for those providers.[40]

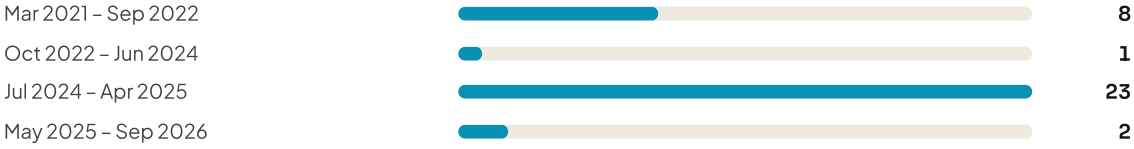
£515m

government grant towards councils' costs for their own directly employed staff[41]

£940m

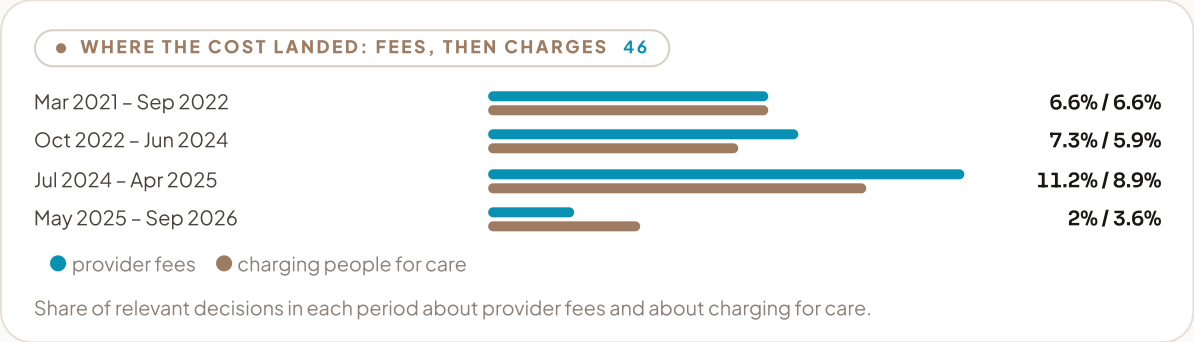
Nuffield Trust estimate of the rise in independent care providers' employer National Insurance bill, with no equivalent national grant[42]

DECISIONS CITING EMPLOYER NATIONAL INSURANCE 29



Decisions read that refer to National Insurance rises, by period. The 2021–22 references are to the levy.

Nothing else in five years produced a spike like it: 23 decisions in ten months, compared with one or two in the periods either side.[29] And the complaints didn't come from one party. Liberal Democrats in Sheffield, a Conservative mayor in Croydon, a Conservative administration in West Sussex and Labour councillors in Coventry all asked for care providers to be exempted or compensated.[43] Wokingham worked out it faced £3.5m a year in extra costs, of which government money covered about 30%.[44] In Norfolk, councillors were told there was no extra funding and that some providers might go out of business.[45] While the rise was being argued over, rows about fees made up 11% of the care decisions we read. Afterwards it was 2%.[46]



Share of relevant decisions in each period about provider fees and about charging for care.

Next in line are the people who use care, and this is where things get heated. Of the 45 decisions we read about charging, 27 were contested, the highest share of any subject. Most reached the chamber because a councillor asked a question or tabled a motion, not because officers brought a report.[46] Norfolk cut its Minimum Income Guarantee, the amount disabled adults who pay towards their care are allowed to keep for everyday living. It pressed on with consultation despite "previous damage", and when the cut went through in 2024 a Green councillor warned it would leave unpaid carers to fill the gap.[47] Bedford paused new charges for telecare alarms after a petition.[48] Manchester brought back means-testing for disability adaptations.[49] In 2026 Shropshire put its fee for deferred payments up from £610 to £750. Birmingham noted that it collected 11% of care costs from clients, against a national average of 13%, and signalled that charges would rise. Wokingham consulted on raising the age at which its income guarantee applies from 60 to 66, to save £250,000.[50]

At the bottom of the hill are families. Carers come up in the minutes more often than any other group of people.[15] Councils of every party lobbied about Carer's Allowance, including the scandal over overpayments being clawed back from carers.[51] Leicestershire voted to check every future decision for its effect on carers.[52] But the same budgets that praised carers sometimes cut their support: Westmorland and Furness reduced carers' direct payments in 2026.[53]

Passing costs on kept services running. It also meant councils took the blame from both ends: when providers failed or cut pay, and when residents saw the bill.[54]

PART THREE · JUDGED

03 Graded, not funded

The one new thing Westminster gave councils in this period was an inspector. Within two years, CQC ratings were the main source of good news about care in council chambers. How they were reported tells you as much about politics as about care.

On 1 April 2023 the Care Quality Commission took on a new job: rating how well each council meets its duties under the Care Act.[11] The effect on the minutes was immediate. Language about inspection went from 25 to 87 sentences in every thousand about adult social care between 2021 and 2026.[15] Decisions framed around performance and ratings went from almost none to 14%.[55] Rating announcements account for 13 of the 45 upbeat decisions in the latest period, against 10 of 66 before it.[56]

SHARE RATED BELOW GOOD: THE REGULATOR VERSUS THE RECORD 57

The regulator's picture, and the record's

CQC, JULY 2026

37%

of councils with published ratings were rated below good (53 of 143)

COUNCIL MINUTES

12%

of the grades named in the minutes were below good (2 of 16)

Three further councils in the record were rated below good but the grade does not appear in their minutes.

What's more revealing is which ratings make it into the minutes, and how. By July 2026 CQC had published ratings for 143 of the 153 councils, and 53 of them, 37%, were rated below good: 50 "requires improvement" and 3 "inadequate".[58] The grades named in council minutes are almost all good, and they arrive as achievements. Lincolnshire's, a pilot result in December 2023, was announced by a cabinet member, and Suffolk's by the chairman. Stoke-on-Trent's, Staffordshire's and Rotherham's came from the leader, Sandwell's from the chief executive, Cheshire West and Chester's and Nottinghamshire's from the chair, and Doncaster's from its cabinet member.[59] Barnet's ruling group put down a motion congratulating the council.[60] Ratings are the least argued-over subject in the whole of adult social care.[46]

Bad news travels differently. Kent's "requires improvement" rating made it into the record because the Liberal Democrat group leader raised it in reply to the leader's report.[61] Bedford's score of 42 out of 100 came out in answer to a councillor's question.[62] In three more councils the grade isn't mentioned at all. CQC scored Warrington's safeguarding 1 out of 4, the lowest possible mark, and rated Lancashire "requires improvement" and East Riding "inadequate".[63] In their minutes these show up only as an "assessment", a motion about safeguarding governance and a new improvement board.[64] East Sussex, rated good, discussed its result without any fuss.[65]

If you relied on council minutes to tell you how councils had been rated, you would get a rosier picture than the regulator's. The people in charge publicise good results, and it is left to the opposition to bring out the bad ones.[12]

Ratings also measure how care is delivered today, not whether it can last.

THURROCK

Effectively bankrupt in 2022, "high Good" in 2025

Thurrock issued a section 114 notice in December 2022, effectively declaring itself bankrupt, and needed £632m of exceptional financial support. In 2025 CQC rated its adult social care "high Good", in the top 15% of councils, and councillors from every party lined up to thank the staff.[66]

Wokingham, rated good overall by CQC and told by its executive member that key areas were rated outstanding, still called the national system "broken".[67] A council can go broke without its care falling apart, and a good grade is no guarantee about the future.

PART FOUR · CHOOSING

04 Who should run care?

As the wait for reform dragged on, the argument moved from who should pay for care to who should run it. The answers depended less on party than on money.

In 2021 the minutes barely discussed who should run care. By 2026 words like "in-house", "insourcing", "private equity" and "profit" turned up in 48 of every thousand sentences about adult social care.[15] Decisions about commissioning and the care market went from 6% of the topic to 17%, and decisions about housing with care from 3% to 14%.[46]

Some councils moved towards running care themselves. Salford's mayor announced that social care services were coming back into public ownership, and the council later created a director post to run them.[68] Cornwall set up arrangements to build and buy its own care homes, and took back from the NHS the commissioning of residential care for working-age adults.[69] Medway committed up to £37m to build and run a care home.[70] Liverpool asked officers to report on what bringing services in-house had taught it, as evidence for a National Care Service.[71] Westmorland and Furness took over care homes that their operators could no longer run.[72] None of these councils was run by the Conservatives or Reform UK.[13]

Others went the other way, and they came from every party. Birmingham, Labour-run and recovering from its own section 114 notice, closed four of its nine day centres and stopped providing dementia care in its care centres.[73] In Derbyshire, closures that began under the Conservatives in 2022 were finished under Reform UK. By 2026, two residents were left in the last of the council's dementia homes.[74]

So the dividing line looks less like party and more like money. Labour, Conservative and Reform UK councils all sold or closed services when budgets were tight. The councils that built had capital to spend and, often, a political case to make for public provision. Even Reform-run Durham brought children's supported accommodation in-house when the private market let it down.[76]

NORFOLK

Selling the council's own care homes

Norfolk, still Conservative-run, agreed to sell the care homes owned by its council company to a provider backed by an American operator with more than 24,000 beds. Opposition attempts to pause the sale and survey the homes first were voted down.[75]

The most persistent opposition came from councils with no care budget at all. District councils kept passing motions against their county's cuts: Bolsover over Derbyshire's day centres, Ashfield over Nottinghamshire's budget, Basingstoke over Hampshire's plan to close a day service, Broxtowe over Nottinghamshire's occupational therapy service, and Pendle and Preston over Lancashire's care homes.[77] In Lancashire, at least, it seems to have worked. In May 2026 the county sent its plans back to be redesigned with the people who use care.[78]

PART FIVE · CHOOSING SIDES

05 The bill becomes a party question

In May 2025 Reform UK won control of a string of county councils. Within a year its councillors were talking about care much like everyone else. Its budgets were a different matter.

Reform's first speeches blamed other people. Kent's new leader said "successive governments" had failed to come up with an overall plan for adult social care.[61] Durham's new administration scrapped the county's climate emergency and declared a "Care Emergency" instead, though the motion was mostly about children's care and special educational needs.[79]

Six months later Kent sounded like everyone else. It reported an "unprecedented" £46.5m forecast overspend overall, about 3% of its budget, with adult social care and health alone forecast to overspend by £50.9m. Its Reform cabinet member observed that without adult social care the council's finances "would appear much stronger", and asked the government to take more responsibility.[80] Councils of every party had been saying the same thing since 2021.

> "if Adult Social Care were excluded, the Council's financial position would appear much stronger"
>
> REFORM UK CABINET MEMBER, KENT COUNTY COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 2025, AS RECORDED IN THE MINUTES[80]

Where Reform really differed was the bill. Councils that provide care can raise council tax by up to 4.99% a year without a referendum, including a 2% precept set aside for adult social care.[81] In 2026–27 most councils took the lot. Every Reform-led budget we found came in below it.[14] Lancashire set 3.8%, though that still included the full 2% for care.[82] Durham froze its main council tax, seven months after declaring its Care Emergency, and raised the care precept by less than inflation.[83] Kent went for 3.99%.[4] In Warwickshire, Reform's 3.89% minority budget was voted down 16 to 33 on 5 February. Every other group had proposed more, and that meeting ended without a budget. On 17 February the council adopted 4.4% (including the 2% care precept) after Reform and the Conservatives agreed a deal, by a margin of six votes.[84]

Almost everyone else, whether Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or independent, took the full 4.99%. The main exception was Middlesbrough's Labour mayor, who raised only the 2% for care.[85]

The row over the new national funding deal added fuel. Durham's Reform leadership called the government's Fair Funding settlement "false advertising". Its own scrutiny committee heard that £50m of new grant was set against £137m of extra pressures over four years.[86] Cornwall, led by Liberal Democrats and independents, made the same point more politely: the headline figure had gone up, but some grants had simply been "re-badged".[87] Councils of all parties doubted the settlement. Where they differed was on how much of the gap to ask local taxpayers to fill.

PART SIX · LANGUAGE

06 Listening to the minutes

We analysed 4,747 sentences about adult social care in councils' own minutes, and 2,847 remarks by named councillors. Four patterns stood out.

Blame follows Downing Street. Before July 2024, 5.7% of Conservative councillors' recorded remarks about adult social care mentioned the national government. Once Labour was in power, that rose to 12.6%. Labour councillors went the other way, from 10.7% to 7.0%, and Liberal Democrats from 12.7% to 5.8%.[15] Reform councillors mentioned the last Conservative government as often as they mentioned "the government" at all.[15]

COUNCILLORS' REMARKS REFERRING TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT 15

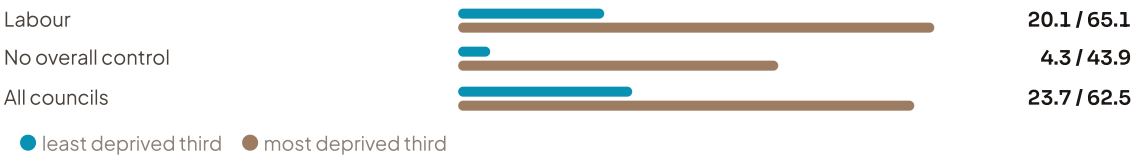


Share of each party's recorded remarks on adult social care decisions.

Labour councils went quiet, then didn't. In the minutes of Labour-run councils, crisis words (crisis, unsustainable, broken, emergency) appeared in about 70 of every thousand sentences about care before July 2024. In the first ten months of the Labour government that fell to 21. By 2025–26 it was back up to 57.[15]

Crisis talk follows deprivation. Councils in the most deprived third of areas use crisis language more than twice as often as those in the least deprived third, and the gap holds within parties. In Labour councils it runs from 20 per thousand in the least deprived places to 65 in the most deprived. In councils with no overall control it goes from 4 to 44.[15] Minutes in the North West use it most, and in the South West least.[15]

CRISIS LANGUAGE BY DEPRIVATION 15



Sentences using crisis, unsustainable, broken or emergency, per 1,000 sentences about adult social care.

The conversation has moved away from staff. Talk about the care workforce fell by more than a third, from about 141 to 88 sentences per thousand, even though, from July 2025, the route for recruiting new care workers from overseas was closed, with in-country switching arrangements continuing until 2028.[88] Talk of inspection grew three and a half times.[15] Our reading of the decisions found the same thing: 18% of decisions were framed around the workforce in 2021–22, and just 3% by 2025–26.[55] When staffing does come up now, it is usually through motions on migrant care workers or home care workers' pay.[89] And the phrase the care sector itself prefers, "people who draw on care", has never really caught on in the council chamber, though "service users" is slowly disappearing.[15]

One health warning. Minutes are officers' summaries of a debate, not transcripts. What we are measuring is the language councils choose to put on the record about care.[5]

CONCLUSION

What it adds up to

For five years the national story of adult social care has been a series of promises: a levy, a cap, a commission, a conversation. The story councils wrote down is about coping. They absorbed each new cost by passing it on, first to providers and then to the people who use care and their families. They were watched more closely than ever and funded no more securely. And more and more, they made the big decisions themselves.

That has three consequences for anyone who wants to understand care in England, or change it.

The arguments that matter most are now local. Whether a council owns care homes, how hard it means-tests, and how much it puts on council tax shape people's care more directly than anything proposed nationally so far. Those choices are increasingly made along party lines, and in 2026 very clearly on how much residents should pay.[90]

Council minutes understate trouble. Poor inspection results, failing providers and rows over charges reach full council late, partly, or only because the opposition forced them there. Good news arrives by announcement.[12] Anyone relying on minutes should read them alongside CQC reports and budget papers.

The strain is felt, and voiced, unevenly. Councils in more deprived places talk about crisis far more, whoever runs them.[15] And district councils, which don't run care at all, have become the loudest critics of county cuts.[91]

Baroness Casey's report, which will advise on how and when a National Care Service might be built, is due in summer 2027.[92]

The question that Sheffield care home owner asked in 2021, about who pays and how much, is still being answered one council at a time.

TIMELINE

Five years in twelve moments

WAITING · 2021	**Durham County**, 20 Oct 2021[21] Durham argues the £86,000 cap is unfair where houses are cheap; the Conservative group wants it tied to people's assets.
WAITING · 2022	**Devon County**, 8 Dec 2022[25] Devon asks the government to delay charging reform and give the money to councils. The national delay had been announced on 17 November.
ABSORBING · 2024	**Norfolk County**, 24 Sep 2024[93] Norfolk cuts the income disabled adults may keep when they pay for care. A councillor warns unpaid carers will be left to fill the gap.
ABSORBING · 2024	**Sheffield City**, 4 Dec 2024[94] Sheffield's Liberal Democrats call for care providers to be spared the National Insurance rise, one of a wave of motions from every party.
ABSORBING · 2025	**Norfolk County**, 25 Mar 2025[45] Norfolk councillors are told there is no extra money for the National Insurance rise, and that some providers could go out of business.
JUDGED · 2025	**Warrington Borough**, 16 Jun 2025[95] Warrington debates safeguarding after its CQC assessment. The grade itself never appears in the minutes.
JUDGED · 2025	**Thurrock**, 22 Oct 2025[96] Thurrock, three years after effectively going bankrupt, is rated "high Good" by the CQC.
CHOOSING · 2025	**Durham County**, 16 Jul 2025[79] Durham's new Reform UK administration scraps its climate emergency and declares a Care Emergency, focused mainly on children's care and SEND: an adjacent example of care-emergency language entering council politics.
CHOOSING · 2025	**Kent County**, 19 Nov 2025[80] Kent's Reform administration reports an "unprecedented" £46.5m overall overspend, with adult social care and health alone forecast £50.9m over, and asks the government to do more.
CHOOSING · 2026	**Norfolk County**, 27 Jan 2026[97] Norfolk agrees to sell its council-owned care homes to a provider backed by an American operator with more than 24,000 beds.
CHOOSING · 2026	**Warwickshire County**, 5 Feb 2026[98] Warwickshire's 3.89% Reform minority budget is voted down 16 to 33 and the 5 February meeting ends without a budget; a 4.4% budget is adopted on 17 February.
WAITING · 2026	**Stoke-on-Trent City**, 10 Sep 2026[99] Stoke-on-Trent welcomes the Big Conversation on Care: caring should be "a well-paid, respected career".

APPENDIX A1

A1 Method, sources and limits

What was counted. Phemia's classification pipeline tags every decision in the councils' minutes with a topic category. 853 decisions carried the adult social care category when the reading started. This is the "candidate" set. 851 of them are decisions by principal councils; the other two are decisions by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The 653 meetings and 173 councils quoted in the text are the principal-council figures. Meetings run from 17 Mar 2021 to 17 Sep 2026. The corpus is weighted to full council meetings; cabinet and committee coverage is deep only for some councils, and much care activity happens through officer decisions, contracts and operational processes that never reach a meeting. Appearing in minutes is not the same as being important.

Close reading. Phemia's AI analysis tool (a language model working from fixed vocabularies) then read every candidate decision in full and tagged it: whether it is genuinely about adult social care (core, partial or not), its theme, tone (crisis, concern, neutral, positive), framing, source (report, motion, question and so on), national references, and whether it was contested. 89.0% (759) were judged genuinely about adult social care and 47.9% centrally so. The other 94 (terminal-illness council tax relief, catch-all question sessions and similar) were mis-tagged by the classifier. A member of the Phemia team read and verified a sample of the tagging; no person read every decision. They stay in the headline counts and in A2 to A4, but are excluded from every tone, theme, framing and national-reference figure. That is why the four periods in A5 to A7 add up to 759, not 853.

Why other totals differ. The year-by-year shares in A2 and the say-versus-spend comparison in A3 use only the four upper-tier council types that hold the care duty (counties, unitaries, metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs), which contribute 755 of the 851 principal-council decisions. District councils (96 decisions) are shown separately in A2 because they do not hold the duty.

Classification coverage. Every decision in the corpus now carries a topic category, assigned at ingestion by a synonym lookup, a trained text classifier and, where those are unsure, a language model. That is complete coverage, not complete accuracy: the category is a machine judgement. The reading above tests precision (how many flagged decisions are genuinely about adult social care). It does not test recall, so a decision about care that the classifier filed under another category is not in these counts. They are a floor on the topic.

Language analysis. For 565 meetings with stored original minutes, every sentence about adult social care (4,747 in all) was matched against word families (A9). Rates are per 1,000 such sentences. Minutes are officers' summaries of debate, so this measures the language of the official record, not verbatim speech. Party remarks (2,847) are the extracted summaries of what named members said.

Who ran the council. From Phemia's record of council control on the date of each meeting. Warwickshire's change from Conservative to a Reform UK minority was corrected to 1 May 2025 on 4 October 2026.

Validation of the extraction. Separately from this report, Phemia checks its extracted data with a grader from a different AI vendor (Claude Haiku 4.5) than the one that extracts it (Google Gemini). It re-reads the original minutes of a sampled meeting and checks each stored item (decisions, votes, attendees and so on) as supported, distorted, fabricated or unverifiable. The 175 sampled meetings verified in August 2026, drawn from the whole corpus and not only adult social care, produced 7,364 checks. Of those that could be judged (unverifiable items are excluded), 92.4% were supported. The grading is automated and was not blind to the stored values, and this report does not rely on a human adjudication of disagreements.

Spend. See A3. National facts were checked against the primary sources in A13 on 4 October 2026.

APPENDIX A2

A2 Share of council business over time

Adult social care as a share of service decisions (procedural, governance and finance items left out) at upper-tier councils. A share rather than a count, because Phemia's coverage grew over the period.

BY YEAR

2021	**4.9%**	51 of 1,036
2022	**4.3%**	129 of 2,996
2023	**4.2%**	127 of 3,013
2024	**4.7%**	142 of 3,050
2025	**5.7%**	198 of 3,474
2026*	**5.7%**	108 of 1,892

*2026 to September.

BY COUNCIL TYPE

Unitary Authority	**4.2%**	251 of 5,990
County Council	**7.6%**	233 of 3,071
Metropolitan Boro…	**4.3%**	198 of 4,564
District Council	**0.9%**	96 of 10,208
London Borough	**3.8%**	73 of 1,917

APPENDIX A3

A3 Say versus spend

Spend share: the adult social care line of each council's annual Revenue Account (RA) budget return, published by MHCLG, divided by total service expenditure minus education. It is a share of budgeted spending, in each financial year. Decision share: the share of recorded service decisions in the same financial year at the same councils. Meetings record decisions put to them; most care spending is committed through contracts, fee-setting and officer decisions that never reach a meeting, so the gap measures how visible care is in the democratic record, not how carefully it is managed.

ALL UPPER-TIER COUNCILS

YEAR	SPEND	DECISIONS	BASE
2022–23	41%	4.2%	3,247
2023–24	41%	4.1%	2,835
2024–25	42%	4.9%	3,201
2025–26	42%	6.1%	3,557
2026–27	42%	4.3%	793

LARGEST ADULT SOCIAL CARE BUDGET SHARES

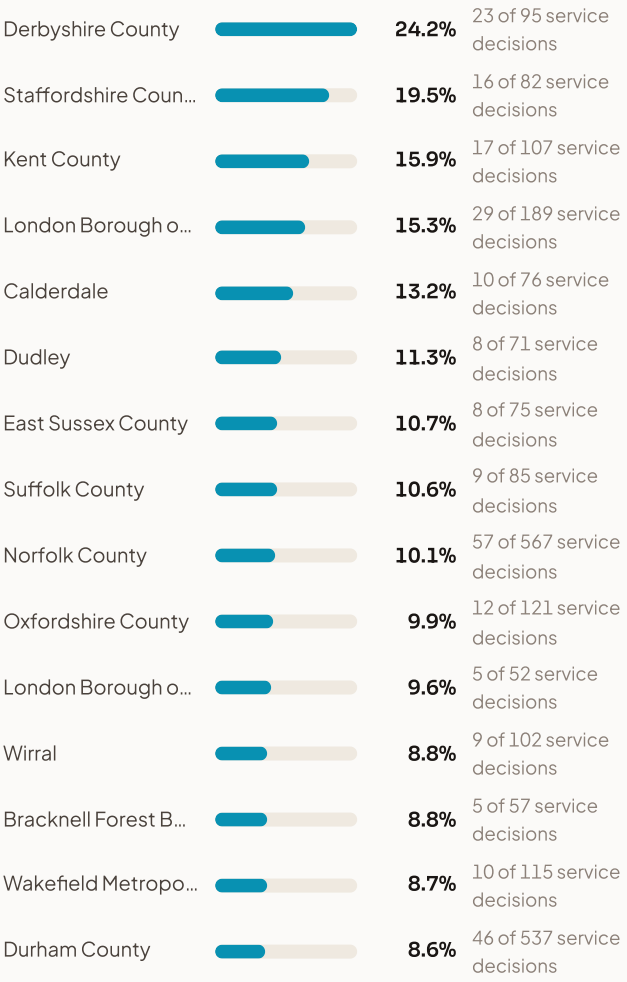
COUNCIL	SPEND	DECISIONS	HITS / BASE
Cambridgeshire County	53%	5.1%	3 / 59
Hampshire County	52%	3.9%	2 / 52
Devon County	51%	2.4%	2 / 82
Lancashire County	50%	6.0%	10 / 168
Newcastle City	50%	10.9%	7 / 64
Kent County	50%	19.5%	15 / 77
Stockport Metropolitan Borough	49%	0.0%	0 / 43
London Borough of Barnet	48%	3.9%	2 / 51
Cheshire West and Chester	48%	4.1%	2 / 49
Norfolk County	47%	11.2%	36 / 320

APPENDIX A4

A4 Where adult social care is decided

Rates are the fairer comparison: raw counts depend on how many of a council's meetings, and which committees, Phemia holds.

HIGHEST SHARE OF A COUNCIL'S SERVICE DECISIONS (MINIMUM 50 DECISIONS)



MOST DECISIONS (COUNT, FOR REFERENCE)

COUNCIL	DECISIONS	RATE
Norfolk County	57	10.1%
Durham County	46	8.6%
Essex County	32	6.6%
Birmingham City	29	4.0%
London Borough of Bromley	29	15.3%
Derbyshire County	23	24.2%
Brighton and Hove City	22	5.2%
Bristol City	21	5.5%
Kent County	17	15.9%
Staffordshire County	16	19.5%

WHICH BODY DECIDED

BODY	DECISIONS	SHARE OF ITS SERVICE DECISIONS
Full Council	707	3.0%
Cabinet	109	7.5%
Scrutiny	34	9.0%
Audit Committee	1	2.1%

APPENDIX A5

A5 Themes, by period, and how contested they are

Share of relevant decisions in each period carrying each theme (a decision can carry several), with how often decisions on that theme were contested. All relevant decisions: 28% contested.

THEME	2021–22	2022–24	2024–25	2025–26	DECISIONS	CONTESTED
Budgets and overspends	31%	26%	20%	22%	183	46%
Workforce and pay	27%	21%	12%	6%	116	31%
Prevention and independence	14%	17%	21%	24%	151	26%
NHS and hospital discharge	16%	15%	11%	12%	101	23%
Care homes	12%	11%	10%	14%	91	46%
Commissioning and markets	6%	9%	12%	16%	88	30%
Housing with care and adaptations	3%	6%	5%	14%	59	12%
National reform	22%	9%	15%	7%	89	34%
Provider fees	7%	7%	11%	2%	48	46%
Unpaid carers	8%	10%	9%	8%	66	32%
Charging	7%	6%	9%	4%	45	60%
CQC inspection	2%	7%	7%	12%	62	18%
Learning disability and mental health	9%	9%	4%	9%	59	31%
Safeguarding	6%	7%	3%	3%	36	8%

APPENDIX A6

A6 Tone and framing, by period and by who ran the council

From the close reading of relevant decisions.

TONE, BY PERIOD

PERIOD	N	CRISIS	CONCERN	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE
Mar 2021 – Sep 2022	121	7%	49%	31%	13%
Oct 2022 – Jun 2024	220	4%	36%	47%	14%
Jul 2024 – Apr 2025	169	8%	37%	44%	11%
May 2025 – Sep 2026	249	7%	34%	41%	18%

POSITIVE DECISIONS, AND HOW MANY CONCERN CQC RATINGS

PERIOD	POSITIVE	OF WHICH CQC
Mar 2021 – Sep 2022	16	1
Oct 2022 – Jun 2024	31	6
Jul 2024 – Apr 2025	19	3
May 2025 – Sep 2026	45	13

BY WHO RAN THE COUNCIL

CONTROL	N	CRISIS/CONCERN	FUNDING FRAME	MOTIONS
Conservative	254	43%	26%	17%
Labour	189	38%	33%	29%
Liberal Democrats	39	51%	36%	28%
Reform UK	31	48%	52%	6%
No overall control	213	48%	30%	29%

Reform UK figures rest on 31 decisions, all since May 2025.

FRAMING (SHARE OF DECISIONS)

FRAME	2021–22	2022–24	2024–25	2025–26
Funding and money	40%	30%	30%	26%
Workforce	18%	15%	6%	3%
Provider market	11%	10%	15%	14%
Quality of care	17%	18%	11%	5%
Rights and fairness	12%	12%	14%	11%
NHS integration	12%	10%	4%	10%
Performance and ratings	0%	3%	4%	14%
National reform	15%	6%	6%	4%

APPENDIX A7

A7 National references, by period

Number of relevant decisions referring to each national policy or event, by period.

NATIONAL REFERENCE	2021–22	2022–24	2024–25	2025–26
Adult social care precept	14	18	10	20
CQC council assessments	1	8	7	28
Employer National Insurance	8	1	23	2
Health and Social Care Levy	15	2	–	–
Better Care Fund	3	3	2	7
Cap on care costs	5	7	–	–
Care worker visas	1	3	5	3
National Living Wage	2	4	3	1
Casey Commission	–	–	3	6
People at the Heart of Care white paper	8	–	–	–
Hospital discharge funding	–	5	–	2
Fair Cost of Care	2	3	–	–
National Care Service	–	–	3	2
Market Sustainability Fund	–	3	–	–
Fair Pay Agreement	–	–	–	3
Social Care Grant	1	–	–	–

APPENDIX A8

A8 CQC ratings in the record

Every decision in the record that reports a council's CQC assessment result, how it reached the record, the grade named in the minutes, and the rating CQC lists for that council in its ratings table (updated 14 July 2026). Of 143 published ratings, 4 were outstanding, 86 good, 50 requires improvement and 3 inadequate; 53 (37%) were below good.[58]

COUNCIL	DATE	HOW IT REACHED THE RECORD	GRADE NAMED IN MINUTES	CQC RATING (JUL 2026)
Lincolnshire County[100]	1 Dec 2023	Executive member's statement	Good (pilot assessment)	Not yet published[119]
Suffolk County[101]	7 Dec 2023	Chairman's announcements	Good	Good (67%)[119]
Durham County[102]	16 Oct 2024	Cabinet report	Good	Good (67%)[119]
London Borough of Barnet[60]	28 Jan 2025	Administration motion of congratulation	Good	Good (64%)[119]
Stoke-on-Trent City[103]	10 Jul 2025	Leader's announcements	Good	Good (64%)[119]
Staffordshire County[104]	17 Jul 2025	Leader's statement	Good	Good (75%)[119]
Cheshire West and Chester[105]	9 Sep 2025	Chair's communications	Good	Good (64%)[119]
Thurrock[96]	22 Oct 2025	Motion (carried unanimously)	Good (score 75)	Good (75%)[119]
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough[106]	27 Nov 2025	Cabinet member's announcement	Good	Good (64%)[119]
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough[107]	17 Mar 2026	Chief executive's announcement	Good	Good (67%)[119]
Nottinghamshire County[108]	19 Mar 2026	Chairman's business	Good	Good (64%)[119]
London Borough of Tower Hamlets[109]	25 Mar 2026	Report welcoming the rating	Good	Good (70%)[119]
Wokingham Borough[110]	26 Mar 2026	Answer to a public question	Outstanding in key areas	Good (81%)[119]
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough[111]	22 Apr 2026	Leader's statement	Good	Good (73%)[119]
East Sussex County[113]	2 Dec 2025	Cabinet report, reserved paragraph	Not stated	Good (67%)[119]
Kent County[61]	22 May 2025	Opposition group leader's reply	Requires improvement	Requires Improvement (56%)[119]
Bedford Borough[62]	18 Mar 2026	Members' questions	Requires improvement (42/100)	Requires Improvement (42%)[119]
Warrington Borough[95]	16 Jun 2025	Opposition motion on safeguarding	Not stated	Requires Improvement (53%)[119]
Lancashire County[116]	9 Oct 2025	Cabinet noted the report	Not stated	Requires Improvement (50%)[119]
East Riding of Yorkshire[118]	12 Nov 2025	Motion: improvement board	Not stated	Inadequate (28%)[119]

Lincolnshire's December 2023 grade was a pilot assessment; CQC lists no formal rating for it as of 14 July 2026. Some ratings in the table were published after the meeting concerned.

APPENDIX A9

A9 Language analysis of the minutes

Rates per 1,000 sentences about adult social care in the councils' own minutes (4,747 sentences, 565 meetings). Word families are listed at the foot of the next page.

BY YEAR (SENTENCES: 447, 739, 636, 945, 1244, 736)

FAMILY	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026*
Crisis	34	49	38	22	22	49
National government	145	95	86	89	127	109
Money	121	170	123	150	120	133
Workforce	141	146	126	112	95	88
Inspection	25	43	55	40	76	87
Who runs care	0	11	17	14	18	48
National reform	116	57	17	15	41	64
Prevention	27	36	60	53	77	109
Carers	273	208	193	297	193	114
'Service users'	16	11	8	16	9	4
'Draw on care' / co-production	18	5	6	11	11	7

*2026 to September.

LABOUR-RUN COUNCILS, BY PERIOD

PERIOD	SENTENCES	CRISIS	GOVT
Levy and cap	198	71	136
Delay	270	70	104
New government	479	21	111
New administrations and Fair Funding	584	56	115

CRISIS LANGUAGE BY DEPRIVATION, WITHIN PARTY

GROUP	SENTENCES	CRISIS
Conservative | least deprived third	245	4
Conservative | middle third	116	43
Labour | least deprived third	149	20
Labour | middle third	338	18
Labour | most deprived third	1029	65
No overall control | least deprived third	232	4
No overall control | middle third	619	14
No overall control | most deprived third	114	44
All | least deprived third	801	24
All | middle third	1140	19
All | most deprived third	1344	62

APPENDIX A9, CONTINUED

PARTY REMARKS REFERRING TO GOVERNMENT, BEFORE AND AFTER THE JULY 2024 ELECTION

PARTY, PERIOD	REMARKS	NATIONAL GOVT	PREVIOUS/CON GOVT	LABOUR GOVT
Conservative, before Jul 2024	644	5.7%	1.4%	0.0%
Conservative, after Jul 2024	396	12.6%	2.3%	2.0%
Labour, before Jul 2024	494	10.7%	2.4%	0.0%
Labour, after Jul 2024	459	7.0%	2.6%	1.3%
Liberal Democrats, before Jul 2024	220	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Liberal Democrats, after Jul 2024	325	5.8%	0.3%	0.6%
Reform UK, after Jul 2024	172	7.0%	7.0%	0.0%
Green, before Jul 2024	48	8.3%	0.0%	2.1%
Green, after Jul 2024	78	6.4%	2.6%	0.0%

BY REGION

REGION	SENTENCES	CRISIS	GOVT	MONEY	WHO RUNS CARE
East Midlands	291	38	69	110	0
East of England	799	31	106	140	49
London	443	23	66	90	2
North East	511	43	158	215	6
North West	532	73	152	158	36
South East	569	23	100	123	10
South West	453	18	95	115	11
West Midlands	636	19	85	140	17
Yorkshire and The Humber	451	42	122	106	11

WORD FAMILIES (REGULAR EXPRESSIONS, CASE-INSENSITIVE)

- **Crisis**: `\bcris[ie]s\b|unsustainab|\bbroken\b|\bemergency\b|collaps|on its knees|cliff.?edge|perfect storm|black hole|breaking point|\bstark\b|\bdire\b`
- **National government**: `\b(central )?government\b|\bministers?\b|westminster|chancellor|treasury|whitehall|secretary of state`
- **Money**: `funding|underfund|fund(ed)? properly|fair cost|cost of care|\bprecept\b|council tax|overspend|budget gap|savings`
- **Who runs care**: `private equity|\bprofits?\b|market failure|provider failure|in-?house|insourc|cease[ds]? trading|handed back|market sustainab|\bnorse\b|outsourc`
- **Workforce**: `recruit|retention|vacanc|workforce|care workers?|staff shortage|\bvisas?\b|overseas|international recruit|living wage|\bpay\b`
- **Inspection**: `\bcqc\b|care quality commission|inspection|assurance|requires improvement|\boutstanding\b|rated (good|outstanding)|'good'`
- **Prevention**: `prevent|reablement|independen|early intervention|technology enabled|telecare|strength.based`
- **'Service users'**: `service users?|\bclients?\b`
- **'Draw on care' / co-production**: `draw(s|ing)? on (care|support)|lived experience|co-?produc`
- **National reform**: `\breform\b|\bcap\b|\blevy\b|white paper|casey|national care service|royal commission|big conversation`
- **Carers**: `unpaid carers?|carers'? allowance|\bcarers\b`

APPENDIX A10

A10 The largest sums

The largest sum each decision's recorded financial impact names (£100,000 or more), excluding whole-council budget items. Contract values, savings and grants are different kinds of number, so they are not added up.

SUM	COUNCIL	DATE	DECISION
£230.0m	North Somerset	21 Apr 2026	Adult Social Services and Housing Annual Commissioning Intentions Plan
£170.0m	Blackburn with Darwen Borough	24 Jul 2025	Council Forum
£119.8m	Birmingham City	14 Oct 2025	BETTER CARE FUND SECTION 75 VARIATION AGREEMENT
£115.0m	Coventry City	24 Jun 2025	Adult Social Care Five Year Plan 2025–2030
£112.0m	Cornwall	12 Nov 2025	General Home Based Prevention and Intermediate Care
£103.4m	Bracknell Forest Borough	10 Jan 2024	Executive Report
£83.7m	London Borough of Bromley	11 Feb 2026	PERMISSION TO PROCURE A TIER ONE AND TIER TWO DOMICILIARY CARE FRAMEWORK
£80.0m	Kent County	6 Nov 2025	Report by Leader of the Council
£70.0m	Staffordshire County	21 Jul 2022	Statement of the Leader of the Council
£60.0m	Medway	23 Apr 2026	Leader's report
£58.0m	Stoke-on-Trent City	25 Jan 2024	To receive any announcements from the Lord Mayor, the Leader of the Council or the Head of
£43.0m	Thurrock	21 Jul 2021	Report of the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities

APPENDIX A11

A11 2026–27 council tax decisions

Upper-tier budget decisions for 2026–27 in the record that state the council tax rise. The ceiling without a referendum was 4.99%, of which 2% is the adult social care precept.

COUNCIL	DATE	LED BY	RISE	DETAIL
Kent County[4]	12 Feb 2026	Reform UK	3.99%	Budget agreed 12 Feb 2026, 48–26
Lancashire County[82]	5 Feb 2026	Reform UK	3.80%	1.80% general + 2.00% care precept
Durham County[83]	11 Feb 2026	Reform UK	Care precept only	Core council tax frozen; care precept below inflation
Warwickshire County[98]	5 Feb 2026	Reform UK (minority)	3.89% proposed; 4.4% adopted	5 Feb: Reform budget defeated 16–33, meeting adjourned with no budget. 17 Feb: 4.4% (incl. 2% care precept) adopted after a Reform-Conservative deal
Middlesbrough[120]	18 Feb 2026	Labour mayor	2.00%	Care precept only; no core rise
Cornwall[87]	13 Feb 2026	Lib Dem/Independent	4.99%	£59m savings required
Northumberland County[81]	18 Feb 2026	Conservative minority	4.99%	Incl. 2% care precept
Blackpool[121]	23 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept; 25–15
Isle of Wight[122]	25 Feb 2026	No overall control	4.99%	With Exceptional Financial Support
London Borough of Southwark[123]	25 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept
Thurrock[124]	25 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept
Cheshire West and Chester[125]	26 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	Incl. 2% care precept; 35–23
Telford and Wrekin[126]	26 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	£15.8m net investment in adult social care
Westmorland and Furness[53]	26 Feb 2026	Liberal Democrats	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept
Manchester City[127]	27 Feb 2026	Labour	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept; 76–0
London Borough of Bexley[128]	4 Mar 2026	Conservative	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept
Newcastle City[129]	4 Mar 2026	Labour	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept; 35–28
Council of the Isles of Scilly[130]	10 Mar 2026	Independent	4.99%	2.99% + 2% care precept

APPENDIX A12

A12 Decisions on who runs care

Decisions moving towards or away from councils running care services themselves. Control as recorded by Phemia on the date (see A1).

COUNCIL	DATE	CONTROL	DIRECTION	DECISION
City of Salford Metropolitan Borough[131]	21 May 2025	Other	Towards	City Mayor: social care services brought back under public ownership
City of Salford Metropolitan Borough[132]	27 May 2026	Other	Towards	New Director of Provider Services post in adult social care
Cornwall[133]	30 Jul 2025	No overall control	Towards	Frameworks to develop and buy council care homes
Cornwall[134]	24 Sep 2025	No overall control	Towards	Working-age residential care recommissioned; work taken back from the ICB
Medway[70]	16 Oct 2025	No overall control	Towards	Up to £37m to build and run a council care home
Liverpool City[71]	28 Jan 2026	Labour	Towards	Report on lessons from insourcing, as evidence for a National Care Service
Westmorland and Furness[72]	7 May 2026	Liberal Democrats	Towards	Council has taken over care homes 'due to operational challenges'
Durham County[76]	6 May 2026	Reform UK	Towards	Children's supported accommodation brought in-house (children's services)
Birmingham City[135]	10 Sep 2024	Labour	Away	Four of nine day centres to close (after s114 notice)
Birmingham City[136]	22 Jul 2025	Labour	Away	Care centres kept, but dementia care ends; £4.9m savings
Wakefield Metropolitan District[137]	16 Oct 2024	Labour	Away	Hazel Garth care home closure; Lib Dem motion defeated 6–39
Derbyshire County[138]	2 Feb 2022	Conservative	Away	Care home closure consultation described as 'pre-determined'
Derbyshire County[139]	25 Mar 2026	Reform UK	Away	Council dementia homes closed; two residents remain at The Grange
Norfolk County[97]	27 Jan 2026	Conservative	Away	NorseCare homes to be sold to Stow Healthcare (US-backed operator)
Norfolk County[140]	28 May 2026	No overall control	Away	Motion for condition surveys and investment plans for Norse homes lost
Lancashire County[78]	19 May 2026	Reform UK	Away	Model of care sent back for co-production after closure backlash
Gloucestershire County[141]	16 Sep 2026	No overall control	Away	Transfer of in-house reablement to private providers paused for scrutiny

APPENDIX A13

A13 National timeline and sources

The national threads, chosen after the reading because they match what the minutes show. This lists what the sources say; it does not claim that any national event caused a particular council decision.

DATE	THREAD	EVENT AND SOURCES
7 Sep 2021	National reform	Government announces the Health and Social Care Levy (1.25 percentage points on National Insurance) to fund health and social care, with an £86,000 lifetime cap on personal care costs. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk · commonslibrary.parliament.uk
6 Apr 2022	National reform	The 1.25 point National Insurance increase takes effect. commonslibrary.parliament.uk
22 Sep 2022	National reform	Chancellor Kwarteng announces the levy is cancelled and the National Insurance rise reversed from 6 November 2022. gov.uk
17 Nov 2022	National reform	Autumn Statement: Chancellor Hunt delays the cap on care costs by two years, from October 2023 to October 2025, and lets councils use the money for care packages now. commonslibrary.parliament.uk
1 Apr 2023	CQC	CQC takes on a new statutory duty to assess how councils deliver their Care Act adult social care duties. www.cqc.org.uk
1 Dec 2023	CQC	CQC's formal assessment programme of all 153 councils with adult social care responsibilities begins, following pilot assessments published in November 2023. www.cqc.org.uk
29 Jul 2024	National reform	Chancellor Reeves cancels the charging reforms due in October 2025, including the cap, saving an estimated £1.1bn by the end of 2025–26. commonslibrary.parliament.uk
30 Oct 2024	Employer NI	Budget: employer National Insurance rises to 15% from April 2025 and the threshold at which employers start paying falls from £9,100 to £5,000. Employment Allowance rises to £10,500. www.gov.uk

APPENDIX A13, CONTINUED

DATE	THREAD	EVENT AND SOURCES
3 Jan 2025	National reform	Government announces an independent commission on adult social care led by Baroness Casey. The original timetable envisaged phase one reporting in 2026 and phase two by 2028. www.gov.uk
3 Feb 2025	Employer NI	The government provides £515m for councils' directly employed staff (announced 18 December 2024; allocations published 3 February 2025). The LGA estimated councils' direct cost at £637m. The Nuffield Trust (22 November 2024) estimated the rise would add about £940m to independent providers' employer National Insurance bill in 2025–26. There was no equivalent national compensation grant for independent providers. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk · www.local.gov.uk · www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk
6 Apr 2025	Employer NI	The employer National Insurance rise takes effect. www.gov.uk
22 Jul 2025	Care workforce	The route for recruiting new care workers from overseas closes. In-country switching for existing workers continues under transitional arrangements until July 2028. www.gov.uk
14 Jul 2026	CQC	CQC's national report and ratings table: 143 of the 153 councils had published ratings. 4 were outstanding, 86 good, 50 requires improvement and 3 inadequate; nine were not yet published and one assessment was not completed. www.cqc.org.uk · www.cqc.org.uk
29 Jul 2026	National reform	Baroness Casey launches the Big Conversation on Care, which runs to April 2027. The Commission's timetable has since moved: GOV.UK (29 September 2026) says her report is due in summer 2027. caseycommission.co.uk · www.gov.uk
29 Sep 2026	National reform	The government sets out plans for a National Care Service, to be established in the next Parliament. It confirms that Casey's report is due in summer 2027. No National Care Service exists yet, and the Commission has not yet made its recommendations. www.gov.uk

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129. Newcastle City Council, Full Council, 4 Mar 2026: "Our Medium-Term Financial Planning for 2026-27 to 2028-29". council minutes · Phemia record.

130. Council of the Isles of Scilly, Full Council, 10 Mar 2026: "Council Budget 2026-27, Council Tax setting 2026-27 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-29". council minutes · Phemia record.

131. City of Salford Metropolitan Borough Council, Full Council, 21 May 2025: "STATEMENT OF THE CITY MAYOR". council minutes · Phemia record.

132. City of Salford Metropolitan Borough Council, Full Council, 27 May 2026: "PAY DETERMINATION FOR NEW DIRECTOR POST (ADULT SOCIAL CARE)". council minutes · Phemia record.

133. Cornwall Council, Cabinet, 30 Jul 2025: "Publication of tenders for Care Homes". council minutes · Phemia record.

134. Cornwall Council, Cabinet, 24 Sep 2025: "Specialist Residential Provision for Working Age Adults". council minutes · Phemia record.

135. Birmingham City Council, Cabinet, 10 Sep 2024: "ADULT SOCIAL CARE DAY CENTRES CONSULTATION: 'YOUR DAY, YOUR SAY'". council minutes · Phemia record.

136. Birmingham City Council, Full Council, 22 Jul 2025: "REVIEW OF CARE CENTRES". Phemia record.

137. Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, Full Council, 16 Oct 2024: "Motion from Liberal Democrat Group (Mover Councillor Speak)". council minutes · Phemia record.

138. Derbyshire County Council, Full Council, 2 Feb 2022: "Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care". council minutes · Phemia record.

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139. Derbyshire County Council, Full Council, 25 Mar 2026: "Elected Member questions". council minutes · Phemia record.

140. Norfolk County Council, Full Council, 28 May 2026: "Motion 7 – County Council Care Homes". Phemia record.

141. Gloucestershire County Council, Full Council, 16 Sep 2026: "Motion 1001: Reablement Services - Transparency, Staff Consultation and Accountability". council minutes · Phemia record.