

# Social care at 'tipping point' as back pay crisis grows, warn councils

In a letter to the Observer, ministers have been urged to plug the £400m hole created by new rules on overnight care

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A crisis in social care will lead to the imminent closure of providers across the country unless ministers' step in to fill a £400m black hole in back pay, councils have warned today.

Senior Tories are among those angry that the government has failed to plug the hole created by new rules forcing care providers to pay wages retrospectively to staff who work night shifts. In a letter to the *Observer* (page 52), Tory councillors and care providers say a failure to act has put social care at a tipping point by creating a “significant financial risk” that is causing “widespread anxiety for carers and those who use care services”.



The rule change means anyone carrying out “sleep-in shifts” is now entitled to the minimum wage, rather than a flat-rate £30 per shift. It has left some providers facing bankruptcy as a result of bills covering up to six years. It comes on top of a social care funding crisis that requires an immediate £1.3bn to fix.

“We fully support care workers being paid fairly for the work they do and we urge government to fund the cost of sleep-in payments with genuinely new money, to prevent more care providers going out of business, contracts being handed back to councils, care workers losing their jobs and less investment in prevention,” write the signatories, who include Izzi Seccombe, leader of Warwickshire county council, Margaret Willcox, president of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, and Bridget Warr, head of the UK Homecare Association.

“Without this it will put further strain on informal carers and negatively affect those who rely on social care, impacting on people’s wellbeing and outcomes and leading to a decreased ability of social care to help mitigate demand pressures on the NHS.”

A government spokeswoman said: “The compliance scheme announced last year aims to help ensure workers are paid what they are owed, while maintaining services for people who access social care. The government is exploring options and engaging with stakeholders to minimise any impact on the sector, including opening discussions with the European commission to determine whether any support, if deemed necessary, would be subject to EU state aid rules.”