



The health & social care crisis: Age UK's statistics

Research by [Age UK](#) reports that since the 2017 Spring Budget, an average of 77 people a day have died whilst waiting for a care package to be put in place.

During the same period, more than half a million older people have had their requests for care refused or ignored and a million more have developed an unmet need, such as being unable to wash, dress, or prepare meals.

So, how and what has contributed to this health and social care crisis?

The Care Act 2014 introduced a new assessment process, eligibility criteria and clarified a Local Authority's statutory responsibilities with regard to adult social care provision.

Within the Act, a "care cap" was proposed. The idea was to impose a cap on lifetime social care charges to limit care costs to £72,000 for the over 65s and younger adults with disabilities. The Government quickly delayed the

implementation of the “care cap” until at least 2020 following calls from Local Authorities to delay because of the “enormous pressures” they faced.

Time for a new solution?

In November 2017, [Damian Green MP made an announcement](#) that the Government recognised the need to build a more sustainable social care system to meet the needs of elderly people. A Green Paper was commissioned to investigate potential solutions. It was to be published in the summer of 2018.

The Green Paper was not published in the summer of 2018 as promised. It has been delayed, and delayed yet again. It is now expected that the Green Paper will be published [“at the earliest opportunity in 2019”](#).

Continued delays

The problem is however that the continued delays by the Government do not help those elderly persons who need access to care provision now. Local Authorities simply lack the resources to meet demand.

Regardless of means or whether the adult will qualify for support to meet eligible needs, all adults have a [statutory right to an assessment of need](#).

The needs assessment

The needs assessment must identify and document all of an individual’s care and support needs using specified categories and determine eligibility for support. An assessment must be completed whenever it appears that an adult may have a need for care and support. Requests for an assessment cannot be refused or ignored on the basis of a lack of resources because this may breach a Local Authority’s statutory obligations.

Age UK’s care crisis data is indicative of a very worrying state of affairs for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Older people cannot wait any longer for the long-overdue Green Paper. Without care provision commensurate with need, older people may be left at risk of harm.

Urgent action required

All we can hope is that the statistics published by Age UK prompt the government to take urgent action. We need a Green Paper to be published without delay. It is essential that the Green Paper addresses both how unmet need can be tackled in the immediate term to safeguard the needs of vulnerable elderly persons, and how a more sustainable care system can be created for the future.

Need advice?

If you have been affected by the issues raised in this article, please contact a member of the [Community Care Team](#) at Lester Aldridge.