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BRITONS READY TO PAY MORE COUNCIL TAX TO FUND SOCIAL CARE 1

Britons ready to pay more council tax to fund social care

Survey finds 57% would pay extra to reverse shortfall caused by years of cuts

A majority of Britons are prepared to pay more council tax to help stem the growing crisis in social care, with some ready to hand over £200 a year extra, according to a new survey.

Age UK report calls for urgent action, including cash injection in spring budget and development of long-term plan

In all, 57% of the public are ready to pay more council tax in order to boost social care. Funding care has become a key domestic political challenge after years of falling town hall budgets led to cuts in home services for older people.

The survey results come as the [Conservatives](#) finalise their manifesto, which is due to be published in the next few days and is widely expected to contain new plans to improve social care, after Theresa May promised that she would not “duck the issue” and would bring forward a long-term solution.

Pollsters ComRes found that 33% of the 2,029 British adults it interviewed last month were ready to pay up to £50 a year more in council tax while another 17% said they would happily see their bills rise by between £50 and £100 for that purpose. Much smaller numbers of people were prepared to pay between £100 and £150 (4%), £150 to £200 (1%) and more than £200 (1%) for social care.

Men (27%) were much more likely than women (20%) to say they were willing to pay more than £50 a year extra. And the better-off, those in the AB socio-economic groups, were also the social class most likely to say the same.

One in three (33%) people classed as ABs were prepared to pay at least £50 more, against the average of 23% across all social classes.

“This shows the clear appetite for paying a bit more to ensure that our loved ones get the care they need. With over a million older people going without the care and support they need, this has become a moral imperative,” said Norman Lamb, Liberal Democrat shadow health secretary, who was a health minister in the coalition government.

However, one in three people overall were not prepared to pay more. Unwillingness was highest in the north-west of England (40%) and Wales (39%), with men (35%) more opposed than women (31%). “Talk of tax rises always causes political nerves to jangle, particularly at election time. However, the scale of the crisis in social care appears to be hitting home with voters,” said Mike Birtwistle, a founding partner of Incisive Health, the health consultancy which commissioned the survey.

“Social care has traditionally been the poor relation in health and care, but this might be changing. If the £2bn additional funding announced in the budget is used to prop up providers but fails to address the underlying problems in the sector, then the pressure for more funding could grow further,” he added.

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But Lamb warned that raising income tax was a fairer way of raising the extra money needed for social care than council tax. “The disadvantage of council tax is that it is an unfair tax which hits people on lower incomes disproportionately hard. Also, relying on council tax to increase spending on social care would increase the divide between better off parts of the country and disadvantaged areas,” he added.

Philip Hammond, the chancellor, responded to growing concern about the growing numbers of mainly elderly people being left with inadequate support by letting councils across England levy an increased 3% surcharge, or precept, on council tax this year. But critics, such as Age UK and the Local Government Association, have warned that that is nowhere near enough, given the scale of the deepening problems in social care, which have contributed to hospitals becoming very overcrowded in recent years.

ComRes interviewed 2,029 British adults online from 11-12 April, who were chosen to be representative of the population as a whole

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