



## Healthwatch: Missing millions Exploring hidden and unmet social care need for disabled people – July 2024

### Key findings

- Social care support can be life changing: Healthwatch's research shows that social care support can be transformative, with 78% of people with access to care speaking positively about the help they have received. This includes support that helps people to learn, to work, to socialise, and to live the lives they want to live.
- Access to social care must be improved: A substantial majority of working-age disabled adults are not currently receiving social care. Just over three-quarters of working-age disabled adults are not currently accessing social care, compared to a fifth (20%) who are.
- Reliance on unpaid support: Healthwatch found that 73% of respondents accessing care also receive unpaid support from a friend or family member. Receiving unpaid care from a friend or family member was the primary reason people had never received formal social care support, with 44% citing this as a reason. Only using state benefits, like Personal Independence Payments (PIP), to meet their needs instead was named by some people (30%) as a reason for no longer receiving social care support.
- There are a number of reasons for not accessing care: People were identified as not having received social care due to the following reasons:
  - Not knowing where to go for support (34%).
  - Not thinking they could get any support (65%).
  - Not being able to afford to pay for care or contributions (26%).
  - Finding it too difficult to get support from councils or the NHS (14%).
  - The closing of local services (2%).

These estimates excluded people who had previously accessed care, those who did not want help, those who were accessing state benefits, those who told Healthwatch they were ineligible for support, and those receiving unpaid support.

## Key recommendations

- Healthwatch set out the following recommendations for decision-makers, including Government, local authorities, and NHS and local authority commissioners:
- The Government must fund local authorities to raise public awareness of social care, improve ways of accessing social care services, and find potentially eligible individuals through proactive outreach and statutory information, advice, and signposting services.
- Funding should be made available to local councils to boost social care capacity and support councils in addressing existing care assessments and care package backlogs.
- Funding should be ringfenced for organisations providing independent advice and guidance related to social care.
- In response to broader challenges facing social care, Healthwatch sets out the following recommendations for long-term and funded reforms:
- A fully funded and long-term reform plan for social care addressing:
  - Workforce challenges, including retention, recognition and pay.
  - A focus on prevention of care needs and support to help people live as well and as long as possible in the place they call home.
  - More support for unpaid carers, including reform of [Carer's Allowance](#) and improved access to support for themselves and those they care for.
- Expanded access to [Care Act](#) advocates to support everyone accessing a social care needs assessment.