

Home care 'on the cheap'

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HOME care services for the disabled and frail older people are being 'bought on the cheap' by councils, an industry body has claimed.

The UK Homecare Association condemned local authorities and warned that 'underfunding' and 'rationed' services means that many who need vital support to live in their own homes are missing out.

Its nationwide survey found councils are 'continuing to exploit their dominant purchasing power',

Councils accused of penny-pinching tactics that deny vital help to disabled and elderly

and that the average price paid to independent, voluntary and not-for-profit home care providers is £16.12 an hour – almost £2 an hour less than its recommended minimum of £18.01. This pays for the carer's wages and their equipment, transport to each client's home and administration costs – but is so low in some parts of the UK that councils' requests to pro-

vide help are being turned down as uneconomical.

UKHCA policy director Colin Angel, the report's author, said: 'Rates paid by the majority of authorities do not cover adequate wages for our vital home care workforce and the costs of running safe and effective services.'

'These rates also illustrate why home care providers are increas-

ingly left with no choice but to refuse to take on, or hand back, care to authorities. State-funded home care is also being rationed by councils in a way which leaves many older and disabled people without the support they need.'

More than 850,000 people in the UK are given care at home to help them live independently.

UKHCA said its report 'exposes

the scale of underfunding' in home care and is calling on the Government to provide a £402million boost in the Budget next week.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said: 'We have provided local authorities access to up to £9.6billion in dedicated adult social care funding over three years. The social care workforce is vital to support the most vulnerable people in our society. The average salary has risen by 9 per cent since 2015.'

UKHCA's survey found the lowest figure paid by councils was an average of £13.70 an hour in Northern Ireland. The lowest in England was £14.15, while in Wales it was £16.78 and £16.54 in Scotland.

Daily Mail 26.10.2018