

When those looking after the elderly are deliberately u...

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This [report in the Guardian is shocking](#):

Cuts in council funding mean that rising numbers of care firms are having to break the law by employing workers at below the minimum wage, the head of the Low Pay Commission has warned.

David Norgrove told the Guardian that councils were sometimes dramatically slashing the rates that they paid care companies to wash, feed and dress the elderly and frail; and this was happening so fast that the firms concerned were using ruses to get round the £6.31-an-hour minimum pay rate.

The explanation is clear:

Heather Wakefield, Unison's head of local government, said: "The government have made such swingeing cuts to council grants that forces social care providers into cutting pay and conditions. Many employees are now being paid below the minimum wage. That's because they are not being paid for travel time, use their own cars without being paid reasonable mileage rates and have to pay for mobile phones and uniforms."

It's what happens next that needs to be known.

Firstly, we have to know if HMRC will proactively pursue these companies for breach of the minimum wage. If not, why not? HMRC cannot turn a blind eye to such abuse in my opinion.

Secondly, we have to ask why it is that in one of the richest countries in the world this happens. How can we abuse those providing an essential public service to the vulnerable in this way - in the process telling all involved we do not value them. What does that say about our society?

Third, and as importantly, we have to ask why out-sourcing is allowed to cover this abuse.

What this practice represents is a sickness at the heart of the UK. The elderly deserve better. Those who care for them deserve better. We deserve better of our politicians, government and local government. And we need a business sector that does not abuse in this way if society is to survive as a coherent force that holds us together in community.

Right now is it surprising that people believe in the integrity of none of these groups?