

Surely a radical shadow chancellor should be able to do...

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According to [the Guardian](#):

John McDonnell is demanding that Philip Hammond finds more than £1bn from within the government's emergency budget plan to rescue Britain's ailing social care system.

The shadow chancellor says the money could come from the "fiscal headroom" left by the chancellor in the autumn budget. The money has been put aside in case of a financial emergency caused by Brexit, reports have claimed.

The reports are based on a letter, not verbal comment, and so it seems likely that they are a fair reflection of what John McDonnell has said. In that case I have to say I am disappointed, for three reasons.

That's because of course there is a contingency in the budget; there always is, but it is unusual to think of a contingency as being the solution to a long term. Contingencies are solutions to short term crises and the social care problem is, according to most reports, bigger than £1 billion and is systemic in its nature.

I would entirely accept that McDonnell is up against a government that is vastly more intent on dogmatically devolving problems to local authorities and then claiming because some authorities in largely wealthy areas are able to cope when the funding formula virtually guarantees this will be the case that is the fault of inefficiencies in those authorities who are not coping, when in practice they have substantially different funding made available to them to usually address much higher levels of need, that we now have a care crisis. This claim is cynical manipulation of the truth at cost to people in need, and McDonnell should be saying it time and again, but even if he did the onus is on him to offer a better alternative than to raid the contingency budget.

We have a care crisis in this country because we have decided that those in need do not matter. So we will use tax revenues to fund capital projects when we could use People's QE instead.

And we [subsidise the wealthy by maybe £80 billion a year](#) rather than address need.

As we will spend money on Trident and useless aircraft carriers rather than on people in need.

Suggesting the solution is in a bit of book-keeping is to deny the scale of the problem we face and to pretend that this is not about real choices that a government that really cared would have to make. And that's what annoys me about McDonnell's approach. Surely a radical shadow chancellor should be able to do better than suggest raiding the petty cash to solve the social care crisis?