

Local government in England is facing imminent collapse

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These are the conclusions of a report on local authority finances in England, issued this morning by the [National Audit Office](#):

Steps taken by the government, led by the Department, have supported local authorities in the COVID-19 pandemic response. The Department's successful monthly collection of data and continued intensive engagement with the sector provided a good evidence base to underpin the financial and other support provided by government. Action by the Department and wider government to support the sector has averted system-wide financial failure at a very challenging time and means that the Department has managed the most severe risks to value for money in the short term.

However, the financial position of local government remains a cause for concern. Many authorities will be relying on reserves to balance their 2020-21 year-end budgets. Despite continuing support into 2021-22 the outlook for next year is uncertain. Many authorities are setting budgets for 2021-22 in which they have limited confidence, and which are balanced through cuts to service budgets and the use of reserves.

The second paragraph is by far the most telling. The last sentence is the most telling of all.

Let's be clear what local authorities do that is vital. It is the provision of care services, above all else.

So, they protect the vulnerable, including many at risk, large numbers of whom will be children.

And what is the government planning for those at risk? That their services be cut. Not only is this recklessly irresponsible at an individual level, it undermines the whole fabric on which we build a fair society. What is worse is that this is entirely unnecessary. The resources to provide the services exist in our society.

For the sake of money that can be created at will (and is, for Tory friends) the most vulnerable in our society and a whole tier of democracy are to be abandoned,

apparently.

Despite that, it seems the Tories are popular. I wish I knew why, because what that seems to say to me about many of the people I must walk past in the street does not bear repeating.