



Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers

Statement made to Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee | 11 June 2026

Madam Chair, Councillors and colleagues,

On 15 April, a small home care provider delivering Continuing Health Care services told us that the newly formed NHS Thames Valley ICB was unable to pay their invoices.

To understand whether this was an isolated issue, we contacted providers across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. What came back was alarming. More than 50 providers immediately reported serious concerns, with debts totalling at least £3 million; some going back years, not months. We have found out that the total liability is now £44m, or equivalent to 15% of the annual CHC budget.

CHC is entirely NHS-funded and delivered by adult social care providers. It is essential to keeping people well at home and to the smooth running of our whole system.

Providers told us they had received no payments, no communication, and no explanations. Some had borrowed money to pay staff. Others could not meet payroll, rent, or HMRC liabilities. One provider has an invoice outstanding for nearly two years, another had not been paid for CHC for three years. Several have been penalised by HMRC for late payments caused entirely by this failure.

This is not a marginal issue. CHC delivery by adult social care providers is critical to the NHS. It adds capacity, prevents hospital admissions, and supports personalised care, something Oxfordshire is rightly proud of. We believe this is the most serious local crisis adult social care has faced since the pandemic, but unlike the pandemic, this is not national. It is only happening here, in the Thames Valley.

Two failures appear to have collided. First, a technical issue in the national Tradeshift platform affecting newly formed ICBs. Second, a large backlog of unpaid invoices inherited from BOB ICB and discovered in August 2025, which was not resolved before the new system went live. We have since learned that some CHC clients were not even entered into the system, making payment impossible. This is deeper than a delay – it is a systemic breakdown.

ICB finance colleagues are working hard, but Thames Valley ICB knew there was a problem before this Committee's April meeting and did not raise it. NHS England has also failed to communicate with providers despite promising an explanation weeks ago.

The ICB has set itself a six-month timeline to clear the backlog. Providers will not survive that long. Some could not pay staff at the end of May. Recent payments that should have been made on time have also failed, meaning the "twin-track" approach is not working.

I ask this Committee to:

- Hold Thames Valley ICB accountable
- Request a full explanation of how this situation arose
- Request urgent reporting on amounts owed, number of providers, number of clients, number of unpaid invoices, and aged creditor data

- Establish a local steering group, including OACP, to oversee progress and require Thames Valley ICB to deliver monthly updates

And, if within your powers, request that all CHC payments over 60 days old are paid immediately.

A risk to one part of the system is a risk to all. Providers have carried the financial burden to protect vulnerable people. We must act now to prevent avoidable provider failure and ensure this never happens again.

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Notes for editors

Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers (OACP) is the representative body for adult social care providers operating across Oxfordshire. Our members include home care agencies, care homes, supported living providers, community support organisations and specialist services.

OACP works in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the NHS, and wider system partners to support a sustainable, high-quality care market. We provide sector leadership, workforce development, policy insight, and practical support to providers of all sizes. We also work in partnership with sister associations in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and across England through the Care Association Alliance.

Adult social care providers deliver essential services that enable people to live independently, prevent hospital admissions, and support timely discharge from acute settings. Many providers also deliver NHS Continuing Health Care (CHC) packages on behalf of the local system.

CHC is a national NHS-funded programme for adults with long-term, complex health needs. In Oxfordshire, CHC is delivered predominantly by small and medium-sized adult social care providers.

OACP has been supporting providers affected by significant delays in CHC payments from NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB). More than 50 providers have reported unpaid invoices totalling at least £3 million, with some debts dating back months or years.

The current situation represents a major risk to the stability of the local care market. Several providers have reported severe cashflow pressures, difficulty paying staff, and challenges meeting statutory obligations such as HMRC liabilities.

OACP is calling for urgent action, transparency, and immediate support to safeguard the continuity of care for vulnerable adults across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.