

# What an Unfilled Shift Actually Costs Your Home

*The true price of a staffing gap is rarely the line on the invoice. It's everything that line was meant to prevent.*

Most homes budget for the cost of cover. Very few budget for the cost of no cover. When a confirmed shift goes unfilled, the expense doesn't disappear, it changes shape, and almost all of it lands on your home rather than the agency. This guide lays out where that cost actually goes, and why a guaranteed fill at a fixed rate is usually cheaper than the risk it removes.

## Where the cost of a gap really lands

Cost area	What actually happens when a shift goes unfilled	Who absorbs it
<b>Staffing ratios</b>	The home risks dropping below its required adult-to-child ratio, the single thing an inspector checks first.	<b>Your home</b>
<b>Emergency spot-rate</b>	Last-minute cover, if you can find it, is bought at a premium, often well above a planned, guaranteed rate.	<b>Your home</b>
<b>Manager time</b>	Hours of your own or a senior's time spent ringing round agencies instead of running the home.	<b>Your home</b>
<b>Existing staff strain</b>	Remaining staff cover the gap, raising fatigue, sickness and turnover risk over time.	<b>Your home</b>
<b>Inspection exposure</b>	A pattern of staffing gaps becomes a documented weakness in your next inspection narrative.	<b>Your home</b>
<b>Continuity for children</b>	Unfamiliar faces, or none, undermines the stability that the placement depends on.	<b>Your home</b>

## The same gap, two ways

A worker calls in sick at 6am for a shift starting at 8am. Here is the difference between a standard supplier and a guaranteed continuity partner, for the identical gap.

<p><b>With a standard agency</b></p> <p>You discover the gap, then start ringing round. Cover is found late, or not at all, at a premium spot-rate. A senior loses the morning to phone calls. If unfilled, you carry the ratio and inspection risk yourself. The financial and regulatory exposure is yours.</p>	<p><b>With a guaranteed partner</b></p> <p>The agency already knows, and fills from a deep bench. Cover arrives at the fixed, pre-agreed rate. Your managers keep running the home. If a confirmed shift can't be filled, a written remedy applies. The financial risk has been transferred off your home.</p>
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## Why the guarantee is worth a premium

A guaranteed fill carries a higher rate than a best-efforts booking, and it should. You are not paying for an extra hour of someone's effort. You are buying certainty, and the transfer of a real financial and regulatory risk away from your home. In that sense it behaves less like a staffing line and more like an insurance premium: a known, fixed, modest cost in place of an unknown, occasional, and much larger one.

The question is not "why does the guaranteed rate cost more?" It is "what is one unfilled shift, with the ratio breach, spot-rate scramble and inspection note behind it, actually worth avoiding?" For most homes, the answer makes the premium look small.

### How SureShift prices this

Our Guarantee Tier puts a written remedy behind every confirmed shift, backed by a deep bench of directly employed PAYE workers. The rate is fixed in advance and held, so there are no spot-rate surprises. If a confirmed shift goes unfilled, that sits with us under our Zero-Gap Guarantee, not on your rota. You buy certainty at a known cost, and move the gap risk off your home.

**Worth 10 minutes to put a number against your own gap risk? [admin@sureshiftcare.com](mailto:admin@sureshiftcare.com)**

*Figures and scenarios in this guide are illustrative, to show how gap costs accumulate. This guide covers the staffing and financial side of cover only. Care practice and clinical decisions remain the responsibility of the registered home. © SureShift Care Services Ltd. Free to share unedited.*