

BRIGHTON & HOVE OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS ON OLDER PEOPLE

During 2015/16 Adult Social Care provided long term funded services for 3,831 adults which is slightly more than 10% of the over 65 population (35,800). The budget plans put to the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee on the 6th December 2016 proposed cuts of £13.806 million to the Health & Adult Social Care budget over the next four years. This is an extremely large amount of money which will disproportionately impact on the oldest and most vulnerable members of our community.

Backdrop of local health services turmoil

These budget reductions are against a backdrop of crisis in our local health service. We have had seven GP practices close and our local hospital is in special measures and has been on the highest alert since the New Year. Patients have suffered the failed privatisation of patient transport and many older people have been unable to leave hospital due to the lack of suitable social care arrangements. Overall, we are in danger of failing those most in need of care, many without relatives or friends to assist. Brighton & Hove has a large number of older people who live alone (41%) who are more dependent on public services. The majority of those over 75 living alone are female (61%) so these cuts will disproportionately impact on older women.

Community Care cuts

The BHCC budget proposes to cut Community Care by £4.741 million over the next four years. This includes £466,000 for those with physical disability and sensory loss. Those affected are our most vulnerable older people at a time of life when they need more, not less, support. In our view, these cuts will lead to more older people going to A&E when a crisis occurs. This will only add to the problems at our local hospital. There will be a further pressure on Primary Care services at operational level and even now some GP practices are not accepting new NHS patients.

Much work is being undertaken to tackle loneliness and recent Age UK research has shown that social isolation has a detrimental impact on health. However, these cuts will risk people experiencing greater social isolation and increase the risk of mental health problems. We have an increasing number of people with dementia in the City. Brighton & Hove have 3,500 people diagnosed with dementia (which is nearly 10% of those over 65) and these people will need increasing levels of support during future years.

Assessment & Support & Intervention

This is clearly a critical service and all older people are legally entitled to an assessment. Again the cut proposed is large at £1.35 million over the next four years. Some particular service impacts are:-

Occupational Therapy - merger & cuts

Occupational therapy can play a critical role in keeping people independent but there is currently a backlog due to demand. A merger of two occupational health services on efficiency grounds is proposed, but this is to be accompanied by a 10% cut in funding. It is difficult to see how the backlog can be cleared in the near future. Such are the severity of the proposals that the Councils own Equality Impact Assessment acknowledges that service reductions for people with eligible social care needs, as defined by the Care Act, may increase the risks of legal challenge. This indicates how close to the edge these cuts will take the Council.

Community Equipment Service - is funded through the Better Care Fund. This service has been provided by NRS Healthcare since October 2015. There is a potential overspend of £1.1 million. Why this outsourcing has led to such a massive overspend is unclear. They are now paying an independent consultant £6,000 to establish protocols but should this not have been part of the contract letting process?

Memory & Cognitive Support - Cuts to the most vulnerable in our community

Ireland Lodge - A budget cut of £61,500 is being proposed. This is a residential facility supporting individuals over 50 predominantly with dementia. There are 23 beds in the Woodingdean unit. They propose to review this service, yet the most recent CQC report rated this service as Good and patients and families clearly value the service. The CQC report stated that people were treated with respect and dignity by the staff. Given the increase in those with dementia and the growing need, any cut to this service will impact on dementia sufferers and their families.

Wayfield Avenue - is a residential care facility supporting individuals with mental health needs. It is located in Hove with 24 beds and care is provided to predominantly to those over 50 years. This facility had a cut of £100,000 in 2016/17 and is now expected to find a further £61,500. It is a CQC registered facility and had an overall summary and rating of Good. Why re-commission a service that is clearly working well and supported by users and their families? Also proposed is to consider the closure of the Day Centre as part of the service review. In our view closure would be completely inappropriate given the role that day care centres can provide in support and companionship for those with mental health needs.

Tower House - this well loved day centre was closed in 2016/17 budget round with a saving of £150,000. Commitment was given at that time that Tower House would be retained as a community asset. The OPC is aware that a faith based charity has

approached the Council offering to run Tower House as a day centre. However, we are not aware that they have been given a positive response despite being prepared to put some of their own funding into the project. The situation with regard to the future of Tower House needs to be clarified.

Community Transport - There is a proposed cut of £82,000 which is a swingeing 65% of BHCC funding and likely to undermine the Easylink shopping service. A survey of users, the vast majority women, showed the majority of users were over 70 years old with long term health needs. The loss of this service will increase social isolation yet no Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for this funding cut.

Community Meals - the contract was ended and details of providers who met nutritional standards were given to clients to decide who to use as their suppliers. Many users were known to Adult Social care. The proposal is to cut the remaining budget, but a survey of users and a report is awaited. We would urge no further budget cut until the impact of the change has been evaluated.

Sexual Health - Over 50s are the fastest growing group with HIV and the OPC cannot understand any cuts to this service. We would challenge the logic of the withdrawal of funding from the LGBT switchboard or the cut of £112,434 from HIV prevention, sexual health promotion & HIV social care services. Older people living with HIV can often feel isolated and need support. The proposals will not tackle the issue as it impacts on older people.

Health Improvement - A massive reduction of £914,000 over 4 years is proposed. This includes a 10% reduction in Older People's activities contracts. The focus on prevention has been a key part of policy in recent years. Reducing this budget is extremely short-sighted if we want to keep people independent and out of hospital. Also proposed is a cut to the Citizens Advice Bureau service in GPs that aimed to reach isolated older people and demonstrates complete inconsistency in tackling social isolation.

Public Transport - cuts proposed of £170,000 to supported bus services and this will disproportionately impact on older people and women carers. It will also increase social isolation for those whose access to bus routes is reduced.

Public Toilets - a budget cut of £325,000 over the next 3 years in a new contract does not inspire confidence that the service will be of high quality. Currently complaints about the declining quality of facilities, for example, Pavilion Gardens, abound. Drug problems around some toilets such as those at The Level need extra support and maintenance. However, with such a large reduction of funding for a new contract it is difficult to see how quality can improve.