Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011

Quarriers

Quarriers welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Health & Sport Committee’s call for evidence. Quarriers is a major Scottish charity providing practical care and support every day to thousands of people. Through more than 120 services for Adult Disability, Children and Families, Epilepsy and Young Adults in Scotland and a growing number of services in parts of England, we challenge inequality of opportunity and choice, to bring about positive change in people’s lives.

The previous Scottish Government said that: “Preventative action is integral to the approach to government in Scotland and delivering the outcomes set out in the National Performance Framework”. However, we have concerns about lack of implementation of this approach at local level. There is a tension between consistency in terms of eligibility for services, service delivery and localism. A central overview does not necessarily provide a solution to this.

Spending Commitments and Priorities

The majority of our services are commissioned by local authorities, and are designed to fulfil a statutory obligation to provide social care services to those who meet specific eligibility criteria. These criteria are set by commissioning bodies, and, in general, are developed to ensure that spending is targeted at those in greatest immediate need of statutory services. The opportunities, therefore, for focusing on more innovative preventative interventions is limited by the need to comply with commissioning bodies’ funding requirements, by criteria designed to restrict eligibility, and by the short-term approach to spending adopted almost universally by public bodies in the current financial climate. Greater resources need to be made available from the Scottish Government to provide support services where the benefits may not be immediately apparent.

Quarriers Family Support Project West Glasgow was set up in 2007 in response to local need within the west of Glasgow CHCP area to provide a responsive family support to families affected by parental substance misuse. Referrals to this service came from statutory services, whereby children’s names were already on the child protection register or there were child protection concerns raised. When the integrated grants fund was merged under Community Planning Partnerships, we did not receive continued funding which resulted in staff being made redundant and the project losing its base. We continued to provide a service to a smaller number of families with the 2 workers that remained. The service provided was much reduced and resulted in those staff members finding alternative positions 6 months later. The families were not referred onto other services as none existed, despite this being an area of recognised need.
We would also recommend that the Scottish Government considers how it might provide additional financial support for people who will be subject to income cuts as a result of the UK government’s proposals on Welfare Reform. Disabled people are likely to be at significant risk of this, when the Disability Living Allowance is abolished and replaced with Personal Independence Payment. The stated aim of this reform is to remove 20% of claimants from the benefit and this equates to 150 people supported by Quarriers. The proposal to remove the mobility component from people who live in residential care homes is of particular concern, and, unless it is deemed acceptable that people remain at home without access to, for example, community facilities or transport for health appointments, then provision will need to be made by local authorities or by the Scottish Government for an alternative method of financing these mobility needs.

K lives in residential accommodation. Despite his disabilities, he’s very active and works in a supported environment every day. K goes out at least 3 evenings a week to various clubs, karaoke, bingo, and to the theatre. He plays pool and is a keen supporter of Celtic football club. He visits his family frequently.

K goes shopping and to the local bank, but lives in a location poorly served by public transport, with only one bus an hour up until 5 pm, and there is no public transport in the evenings or at weekends.

K uses the DLA mobility component to contribute to the cost of a shared project vehicle and to pay for taxis. Without it, his income would be severely reduced and his opportunity to participate in the community, and the economic contribution which he makes to local businesses, will be significantly restricted.

“If I didn’t have the mobility money, I couldn’t go out. I’d be bored and depressed. It would be like being a prisoner.”

We also have serious concerns about the impact of JSA sanctions on children whose parents who will be penalised for failing to access work/training opportunities, despite the lack of affordable childcare.

**A greater focus on preventative spending**

In the current financial climate, spending is becoming increasingly restricted, and it is becoming clear that funding of social care will be limited to only those in greatest need. In certain local authorities, measures such as Resource Allocation Systems have already been put in place that will see some social care services for people with learning disabilities cut by up to 50%. For the majority of people, this will mean only their immediate, urgent needs being met, rather than the longer term, preventative measures that will deliver the greatest value in terms of outcomes and quality of life. It is our considered belief that this may also see greater demand being put on acute health services as a result of accidents or health issues, or more people with
disabilities being moved to residential care services, at a greater cost to the public purse.

D is supported by Quarriers to live in his own tenancy. Until recently, he had 24 hour support with sleepovers. He now has an approved Outcome Based Support Plan with a Resource Allocation equating to a 45% cut on his current budget, resulting in 4-6 hours unsupported each day and a community alarm at night. Because of the nature and severity of D’s disability, the risks that he faces as a result of the reduction in social care support are significant.

D has very little perception of risk and this is evident in areas such as money, carrying out household tasks, use of alcohol and building relationships. Due to family breakdown and poor physical health, D can find himself quite isolated. Prior to having a robust support package, D would spend a great deal of time in pubs, buying drinks for anyone who showed any interest. D would become drunk and struggle home with his new found ‘friends’ in tow. These people would often abuse D’s hospitality and generosity further and as a result of their behaviour, D’s tenancy was at risk. Whilst alcohol had a role to play, D’s learning disability and emotional insecurity are the major factors in his perceptions and actions.

The robust support provided assisted D to be part of his community, to find a range of ways to reduce boredom and isolation and offered him guidance and emotional support on an ongoing basis. In addition, his small support team would help him to consider his alcohol intake and understand that certain people could mistreat him. Since the reduction of his support package, there already has been a marked change. Time in the pub has increased again and on one recent occasion he attempted to cook for himself on his return, resulting in a near miss and smoke damage. Again, alcohol played a significant part but his poor co-ordination and limited understanding of consequences were critical.

D lives in a 4 in the block style flat. His right to increased independence and exposure to every day risks is understood, however on this occasion, his neighbours are counting their blessings too.

Support for delivery agencies

Much of the creative and innovative preventative work is developed and delivered by voluntary organisations. Statutory agencies often find it difficult to engage with vulnerable families, who prefer the non-judgemental and non-stigmatised approach of voluntary organisations that can support families in difficult circumstances, thus providing better outcomes for children. Many voluntary organisations have already made efficiencies in relation to infrastructure and costs. Yet it is these voluntary organisations that are now facing disproportionate cuts in funding vis a vis the public sector. The potential to continue with this imaginative work, which is usually developed in close collaboration with service users and therefore provides the most responsive reaction to need, is in jeopardy of being lost, as funding becomes ever tighter.
In many voluntary organisations, staff numbers are being cut and conditions of employment are being reduced, to meet the budgetary requirements of local authorities, and there may be a danger that some of the best and most creative workers will feel unable to continue in the third sector. The previous Committee’s report on preventative spending and the Scottish Government’s response included discussion about universal vs targetted provision, but we believe that there is an equally valid debate to be had about statutory vs voluntary community-based services.

What families tell us:

“She [Quarriers worker] was there every day when I needed that”

“They ask you what you want, they don’t say to you ‘right, you’ll do this and that’ – they ask you, like, what do you think you need? Then they work it that way, instead of telling you what they think you need”

“When social work was heavily involved with us we had very little say over what was to happen”

“We sat down and spoke about what we all thought was going on. I actually got a chance to say … this is what I think is going on … and I got to say this is what I would like to do”

One of the advantages of voluntary organisations has been their ability to add value by drawing down additional funding from grants and trusts. However, if the core local authority funding is deemed unstable, it will become more difficult to secure this external funding and there will be, therefore, a decrease in the additionality that can be brought to services. This will be particularly felt in children and families services, where typical funding is for only 1 year at a time. The resultant difficulty in providing the diverse, long-term support for vulnerable children and families is at direct odds to the Scottish Government’s vision for early years and early intervention.

In another family support centre, a Volunteer Befriending Initiative was established in 2009, initially financed by a trust. The children who use the service have experienced real difficulties and Quarriers uses befriending to tackle these issues head-on by creating a new and positive relationship, building the child’s confidence and developing a talent or interest that might otherwise have been missed. This provides an extremely valuable addition to the core family support, which is funded by the local authority.

A further application was submitted in 2011 to another large grant-making body, to maintain and further develop the Volunteer Befriending Initiative. However, at the time of application, funding from the local authority was tentative. Other matched funding had been confirmed, but even combined with the amount requested, would not have met the core project costs. Our application was unsuccessful, the reason given being uncertainty around funding for the project. Funding for the core family support project has now been confirmed by the local authority and the service continues to support
families, but without the additionality that could have been brought to the project.

I hope that the above is helpful but would be happy to provide further information if that were useful and to discuss further the work of Quarriers and the people we support.

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