

Campaigners furious to see Supporting People budget line disappear in 2019/20 Welsh budget

Cymorth Cymru, the umbrella body for providers of homelessness and housing related support services in Wales, has responded to details of the Welsh Government's two year draft budget, which has been published today. The detailed proposals show that the Supporting People budget line will disappear in 2019/20, despite assurances from the Welsh Government on 1st October 2017 that funding for this Programme would be protected up to and including this year.

Although the 2018/19 budget shows a distinct budget line in the housing policy department for the Supporting People Programme at £124.4million, this has disappeared in the budget for 2019/20. Instead, it has been merged with several other Welsh Government grant schemes, including Flying Start, Families First, Communities First and an employability grant scheme. The total amount allocated to this merged budget line in 2019/20 is £252million, which appears to be a £13million cut when compared to the total allocated to these programmes in 2018/19. It is therefore unclear which services within this merged budget line will be cut.

Cymorth Cymru and Community Housing Cymru have spent the last few months campaigning to protect the Supporting People budget from cuts. Both organisations and their 100+ members were delighted when the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru announced a budget deal on 1st October that would protect Supporting People funding for the next two financial years. Although the detailed budget shows that this promise has been kept for 2018/19, there are no assurances for 2019/20.

Cymorth Cymru Director Katie Dalton said:

"I am furious that the Supporting People budget line has disappeared from the 2019/20 Welsh Government budget just three weeks after we were told that this funding would be protected for the next two years.

"We are extremely concerned that this budget, which specifically focuses on homelessness and housing-related support has merged with several programmes that have no direct relation to housing or homelessness prevention.

"This decision is both baffling and dangerous at a time when Welsh Government and third sector statistics show that homelessness and rough sleeping is rapidly increasing across Wales. Politicians should be making sure that Programmes like Supporting People remain ring-fenced and focused on housing-related support that alleviates homelessness, rather than risking the dilution or even disappearance of these funds in future.

"We are also deeply concerned that the disappearance of a distinct budget line means that the Welsh Government can no longer be held to account on how much they spend on Supporting People, effectively enabling them to hide from their responsibilities to provide homelessness and housing related support to vulnerable people in Wales.

"We urge the Welsh Government to reverse this decision before the final budget is laid and reinstate a specific Supporting People budget line under housing policy."

ENDS

Notes to editor:

1. Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for homelessness and housing-related support services in Wales. Our members support people to live safely and independently, managing their own lives in their own homes. Types of services include sheltered accommodation for older people; refuges for families fleeing domestic abuse; supported housing for a range of vulnerable groups; homeless hostels; floating support delivered to people living in the community; and extra care schemes (www.cymorthcymru.org.uk)

2. Supporting People (SP) supports over 60,000 people per year, helping them to maintain their independence and prevent homelessness. Services include homeless hostels, domestic abuse refuges, supported accommodation and tenancy support for older people, vulnerable young people and care leavers, people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing domestic abuse, people with mental health problems, people with substance misuse issues and people with learning disabilities.

3. The Supporting People budget for 2017/18 is £124.5million

4. Cymorth Cymru has been raising the issue of budget cuts on a variety of media channels over the past few months in light of the planned £10million cut. The First Minister refused to rule out cuts to this programme (Sharp End, ITV Wales, 11 September, 2017), and was challenged on this publicly by Michael Sheen (ITV Wales, 12 September, 2017)

5. Rough sleeping continues to increase throughout Wales
(<https://sheltercymru.org.uk/whyis-rough-sleeping-on-the-rise-in-wales/>)

6. Recent homelessness statistics suggest that it is getting harder to meet the needs of individuals that are homeless, and that numbers of those homeless are also increasing
(<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness/?lang=en>)

7. The Welsh Government budget can be seen here:
<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/gen-ld11249/gen-ld11249-e.pdf>

Contact:

Cymorth Cymru Director Katie Dalton is available for interviews. Please contact the Cymorth Cymru office on 02920 553 687 or 07807 137505 after office hours.