

Appendix 4 - Housing Related Support Consultation themes:

Just over 700 people responded to the on line consultation. Almost all (97%) were critical of the proposals. A breakdown of responses is shown in the table below:

	Critical	Supportive	Neither	Total	Total %
Residents	357	4	14	375	52.01%
Service users	143	0	0	143	19.83%
Staff	113	0	1	114	15.81%
Organisations	89	0	0	89	12.34%
Total	702	4	15	721	
Total %	97.36%	0.55%	2.08%		100%

Breakdown of respondents by age:

Age	No	%
15 or under	1	0.14%
16-24	34	4.72%
25-34	91	12.62%
35-44	116	16.09%
45-54	162	22.47%
55-64	129	17.89%
65-74	66	9.15%
75-84	14	1.94%
85+	2	0.28%
Prefer not to say	17	2.36%
Not Answered	89	12.34%
Total	721	100.00%

Key issues mentioned by respondents include the following points:

- It appears that not enough research or investigation as to impacts and outcomes has been carried out by WSCC and no long term business case has been set out.
- Proposals are short sighted that offer a false economy which will result in higher costs at a later date for West Sussex County Council statutory services as well as that of partners such as Police, NHS, Probation etc.
- Cuts will result in increased levels of risk for individuals and communities, higher crime rates, increased substance misuse, increased suicide risk, increased early death.
- Cuts will have a negative impact and increase the levels of risk to the most vulnerable and least heard in West Sussex such as; the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, women and children subject to domestic violence, young people, those with mental health and substance misuse issues.

- Proposal contradicts recent central government policy to half homelessness by 2022 and eliminates it by 2027, and are ill timed given that homelessness is already increasing.
- Cuts will result in a loss of expertise in the sector, reputational damage for WSCC and a negative impact on the relationship of WSCC and the VCS.
- There should be an increase in funding not a reduction. Money could be saved elsewhere or council tax could be raised and ring-fenced for this. There should be a phased approach to funding reduction.
- Cuts will result in redundancies and job losses for many highly committed staff who are employed in these services.

Some respondents felt that not enough information had been provided to allow them to make an informed judgement.

Respondents provided a rich range of accounts of how and why the supported housing sector is valued. A large number of very personal testimonies were received from current or former service users. Others came from those working in the wider health, housing and social care sector based on experience of working alongside the services concerned. A representative selection of a few of these responses is provided below.

*"The Money Management Team has helped my clients on numerous occasions and the impact has been extremely positive to their wellbeing and financial outcomes. They have the expertise to understand how to navigate debt agencies and financial bodies and have an in depth knowledge of grants and charities who are also able to provide assistance. As this is not my area of expertise I would not have been able to support my clients with their financial difficulties to the same high standard. The benefits that their support has given include reducing anxiety, providing education on financial matters and budgeting and preventing homelessness to mention a few. I feel that this service provides support to some of West Sussex's most vulnerable individuals and I have not yet come across another service of this type who could engage with and support them. **WSCC Social Worker***

*"I am a Chartered Accountant with considerable experience in controlling costs and managing budgets. Although I am not a user I am both a church leader in the County and involved in a voluntary capacity in several initiatives working with the vulnerable. I am firmly of the view that while cutting support will give short term savings these will be outweighed by the long term costs, in both financial and human terms and am therefore opposed to the proposed cuts". **Community Volunteer Advisor***

*'...we also think there is a real risk around a loss of voluntary sector expertise and capacity around housing and homelessness - If we don't fund the voluntary sector - There won't be one. Voluntary sector organisations can and do fund-raise and bring in considerable additional funding into the sector to support people in housing need. But without baseline statutory funding this potential to bring in more funding is lost. There is a very real risk that the whole sector will be undermined". **Chief Executive of Mental Health Charity***

The support _____ has provided to those suffering from a serious mental illness at the rehab unit I nurse at is invaluable. Without this support our clients would like be unable to leave

hospital, which will increase institutionalization and prevent them from regaining their confidence and independence. This will increase already strained bed pressures within the NHS. Our vulnerable clients are likely to end up on the streets thus increasing their chances of relapse and therefore putting their lives at risk. **NHS practitioner**

"I lead the discharge team at _____ Hospital.

Every one of our patients who is identified as homeless or vulnerably housed is referred to one or more of the services that it is proposed to cut the funding of.

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires that we now use a duty-to-refer form for each patient, but the work carried out by services such as _____ for our inpatients (assistance with benefits claims, provision of evidence for eligibility for housing, making accommodation habitable etc.) will not be picked up in a timely manner by the local council housing departments, who have no extra staff to do so. These patients will therefore remain in hospital unnecessarily or be discharged to the street, without the specialist support to gain the accommodation that they need and to be able to function in it.

Provision of accommodation from providers such as _____ will be reduced, as a result of staffing reductions if the proposed cuts go ahead. This will result in the complex and chaotic clients that require this accommodation being turned down, as their needs will no longer be able to be met by the providers. Instead they will remain longer in a costly acute hospital bed that they have no need of, preventing patients who do require acute care from accessing it.

Day services from the above providers' hubs are also likely to be reduced. For many homeless people the hubs are their only access to medical and nursing care, mental health support and food and warmth. Failure to provide these will result in increased attendances at A&E, increased pressure upon mental health services and increased admissions to hospital with conditions directly attributable to living on the street and not having access to basic care, food and warmth.

I am bemused that the government announced its rough sleeping strategy in August 2018, with the aim of halving the levels of rough sleeping in England by 2022 and ending it altogether by 2027 - the proposals of WSCC seem to be the polar opposite of the government strategy, and will surely increase levels of rough sleeping and all of the negative consequences of that situation. " **NHS Practitioner**

The following statements are representative of responses received from service users:

"I am a vulnerable adult with mental health and alcohol dependent, I was sectioned back in August last year _____ and whilst I was there unfortunately was served a section 21. I was supported straight away by a housing support officer who helped liaise with the council, housing benefits and my landlord to avoid my eviction.

When I was discharged I was then assigned over to another support worker in order to help me live as independently as possible, to help sort out my bills, my benefits and make sure the appropriate referrals are sent to CGL and other agency's for debt support, due to the debt I got into when my mental health deteriorated.

I am still suffering with mental health as of course this doesn't go away but I don't know where I would be [without} housing support. I feel I am able to cope more now and although I still have some way to go, I feel if I didn't have their support i would have ended my life by now...." **Service User**

"When you are faced with debt and eviction and benefits letters that do not make sense to any regular person a link like _____ is vital for the prevention of homelessness" **Service User**

"If my support stops, I won't be able to carry on my journey into independent living. I value the time and effort my support worker puts in to helping me with my bills and benefits and would be lost without her" **Service User**

This organisation has been invaluable for our family. My brother is currently living here and has been for the last 6 month. Due to difficult circumstances he found himself homeless and with the help of our local council was recommended here. They provide him with a safe home which is clean and warm. It is not just this though, various life courses are run to help people get back on their feet. Most of these people are vulnerable and do not have any other support. There are people here who look out for them and other residents to converse with. Some of these people have never had anyone to guide them in life, through which you and I might think are normal tasks and behaviors. This is there only life line, it is much more than just a roof over their heads." **Family Member of Service User**

"I have been having support from Southdown to support me to move from a hostel to a housing association property. I struggle with reading and writing and my support worker helped me complete forms and apply online for universal credit. I would not have been able to do this myself. I am having support to set up new home and utilities and to budget my money so I won't go into debt. If the service wasn't was there I would not have been able to do the move and this would have put me and my children at further risk of homelessness. It is a valuable service for vulnerable people to help them in times of crisis and support them to become more independent." **Service User**

"I was struggling to pay bills, manage my housing benefit (big arrears), understanding my benefits and maintaining my tenancy. _____ accepted me onto their supported housing scheme which provided me with the support I needed to get myself back on track. They did this by helping me fix my benefit situation - helping me start my universal credit claim, this then affected my housing benefit which Southdown helped me get started again and backdated. Also Southdown have helped me understand my tenancy e.g. responsibilities, upkeep and by helping me access the _____ (Food Bank) when I was struggling with money." **Service User**