

## Statement by Rosie Phillips, CEO of Developing Health & Independence (DHI)

We recognise and understand the difficult position the council find itself in and DHI are committed to work with council colleagues to manage and mitigate the impact of cuts. Indeed, we have been remodelling services for years to ensure we can manage in the financial climate we have been faced with since Covid. However, I would like to comment on the current proposals.

The VCSE on the face of it appears to be bearing a disproportionate amount of the cuts. I understand, in part, this is due to the council discharging its statutory duties – however, the VCSE brings much added value, and plays a major role in preventing people needing from needing costly statutory provision.

Within the proposed 21% cut from VCSE, a disproportionate amount of that is proposed to come out of housing and housing related support services (34%) - yet housing is critical to all other outcomes; and we are still suffering the effects of inflation, which have put many individuals and families who would normally cope at increased risk of homelessness; housing being the single biggest cost pressure for most of us.

Having worked for over the 30 years to promote social inclusion among vulnerable and marginalised groups, I know that a safe place to live is a prerequisite to achieving effective outcomes for those with a drug or alcohol problem, those suffering from mental ill health, fleeing domestic violence, for ex offenders, not to mention hard working families on a low incomes and their children. It is an essential foundation for any other intervention to succeed.

The distress that a lack of a settled home can bring is immense. It can cause or intensify social isolation, create barriers to education or paid work and undermine mental and physical wellbeing.

Children brought up in temporary accommodation are much more likely to experience all kind of negative outcomes and we know the trauma brings lifelong effects.

They are more likely to be excluded from school, be a victim of knife crime, use drugs problematically, be exposed to exploitation by adults, and inducted into a criminal lifestyle...thus perpetuating the cycle.

Ensuring people are given support to prevent the very costly business of homelessness, must surely be prioritized, especially at a time when many are seriously affected by the very inflationary pressures the council itself is grappling with.

And Homelessness – which is expensive for the taxpayer, society, and individuals – is increasing.

I urge the council to either delay the cut, giving time for recommissioning and a sensible planned approach to managing reduced resources. [In difficult times such as these I can see the temptation for the council to focus on supply rather than demand..](#) However, prevention is not a luxury, you can afford to do without for 12 months. It is the rational approach to managing demand so statutory services can cope.

However, if a delay and recommissioning is really not an option, I urge the council to rethink the current proposal that puts the biggest burden on housing and housing related support, to find a **better balance**, and to prioritise services that prevent more families and individuals falling into homelessness.