

Becky Brooks – Director 3G – statement to Corporate Panel 23rd January 2024

As the Infrastructure organisation supporting and advocating for the Third Sector in B&NES, 3SG is extremely concerned about the proposed savings to the budget for both Children's services and Adult Community contracts.

We were disappointed with the timing of the consultation period being held over Christmas and New Year, this meant a loss of vital days with which organisations had to galvanise themselves and respond in a measured and appropriate way.

The details of the required savings provided by the Council has been limited and has left the sector feeling insecure and vulnerable with a lack of certainty around future provision. Third Sector organisations across B&NES support tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people and employ thousands of staff, many of whom are local citizens contributing to the local ecosystem. This is now at risk. It is a challenge for the sector to make any meaningful plans for 2024/25; organisations do not know whether they can continue to provide essential services and whether they are able to commit to employing staff.

The wider impact of these savings on sector partners such as primary care and mental health trusts cannot be overestimated; service providers who currently rely on an end to end care and support pathway in order to support people to stay healthy and well and live their best lives in their community. The core values of the Council and ICB focusing on the wider determinants of health and early intervention prevention will be significantly undermined by this proposal if we lose these vital services.

The Third Sector in B&NES employ skilled, dedicated individuals who provide essential cost effective community provision which support statutory services; we are not all about volunteering and making tea. Without us these systems will fall down; they are already under extreme pressure.

The sector is continually asked, and has been asked, to do more for less for an unsustainable period of time. One of the challenges is the many years of zero or significantly below inflation contract uplifts, resulting in significant real terms cuts in funding. This lack of inflationary uplift is not something our statutory partners will be able to sustain. With both the cost of living and need rising, it is essential that the

Third Sector is invested in, and so easing pressure on local authorities, on primary care and emergency services.

The Third Sector is in a unique position with the ability to access a range of external funding streams. However, we cannot rely solely on these funding sources in order to meet an ever increasing funding shortfall, these are in limited supply with greater demand and cannot be guaranteed.

We are fully aware of the financial challenges the Council face, however, we implore decision makers to provide more information on these proposals and to actively involve the Sector in such decisions. Third Sector partners need to be at the table rather than have decisions made for them. The Sector knows its services and can work with Council colleagues to develop creative solutions which will ensure minimum disruption, remove service duplication, reduce the risk of job losses, which will ultimately increase the Council and statutory sector's costs. Councillors need to take some time to examine the submitted social impact reports which demonstrate real value for money.

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Becky Brooks

Director | 3SG (she/her)

Supporting Charities & Social Enterprises in B&NES