



Barnet Joint Trade Unions Press Release:

Budget proposals to delete Welfare Rights Unit & and Sheltered Housing.

12 January 2009

The Council's Cabinet Committee agreed consultation on a number of budget proposals which could have a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable members of our community

Welfare Rights Unit

The Joint Trade Unions submitted a paper to Cabinet and General Functions Committee requesting:

The Welfare Rights Unit is not deleted.

A comprehensive review of the Welfare Rights Unit is carried out to establish:

- The impact on the financial position of the Council and the Borough
- Whether that impact can be improved
- How any improvement can best be achieved

The Unit raised almost **£1.8 Million** for disabled and sick children and adults in the borough in the financial year 2006/7. This money will be lost to residents and the local economy if the Unit goes. In the time of Credit Crunch this will make things even harder than it might otherwise be for the people of Barnet.

It is vital that service users and the voluntary sector are included in the consultation process. To date we have seen no evidence as to how these services will be provided in the event the Unit is deleted. In these stark economic times it is imperative that service users are able to access the Welfare Rights Unit to ensure they receive their full entitlement.

In light of what is another poor financial settlement it makes no sense to delete a service that helps maximise grant and subsidy income from central Government through impacting on the PSS budget (whereby the number of recipients of DLA impact on the formula spending share)

“the extra burden the loss of this team will put on Social Work staff is immense- they are invaluable in their knowledge, advice, representation etc- and in maximising client income and advising SW staff” (a social worker)

Social Workers across Adults & Children's services have condemned the proposal which they see as a serious cut to a frontline service.

Loss of Sheltered Housing support for 500 residents

The budget proposal looks to save **£950,000** by removing sheltered housing scheme provided by Barnet Homes. The Sheltered Housing Scheme provides a service to approximately 500 residents all of whom will need to be consulted. There is a potential loss of 30 Sheltered Housing Wardens.

1. The Joint Trade Unions have asked that a full assessment of residents needs takes place.
2. Details of the proposed new provision and any associated costs to service users and the Council is published before any decisions are made.

Ends

1. The Joint Trade Union report can be found online here
http://www.barnetunison.me.uk/sites/default/files/Joint_Trade_Union_Welfare_Rights_Final-Version.pdf
2. To view messages of support from adults and children's services can be found online here
http://www.barnetunison.me.uk/sites/default/files/Messages_of_Support_Welfare_RightsV2.pdf
3. View Council Budget proposals online here
<http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/reports/reportdetail.asp?ReportID=7612>