

Council Meeting – 29 October 2015 - Public Question Written Responses

Questioner	Question	Addressed to	Answered by (if different)	Response
Graham Davies	<p>My brother attended A&E at Stepping Hill last year, as he wanted help. He was contemplating suicide and had attempted suicide. Five days later he took his own life. The A&E department is clearly inundated with people who are chronically mentally ill, they need help and the A&E department is not really appropriate, but it is their only option. Consequently when a genuine mental health emergency case presents at A&E they can get 'lost in the crowd' and not given the appropriate help or support.</p> <p>Does the Council accept that the proposed cuts will exacerbate the situation? What work has the Council done to assess the impact of proposed cuts on the A&E department, and on the number of suicides that will occur in Stockport?</p>	June Somekh	Keith Holloway	<p>I write in response to the question you submitted to the council meeting held on 29th October 2015. While you submitted your question to Councillors Somekh and Ganotis, since this service area falls within my executive responsibility it was felt appropriate for me to respond. May I first of all express my sympathy to you and your family for the death by suicide of your brother last year. All agencies in Stockport involved with people experiencing mental health problems are aware of the risk of suicide and there are a range of services available to support people who are at risk of suicide or other self-harming actions. The number of suicides a year in Stockport averages around 25 and unfortunately there are some people who commit suicide where there is no prior warning of any underlying mental health crisis. Services to people in mental health crisis (the Access and Crisis service, what is known as the RAID service and Home Treatment) are primarily health run services including the A&E response. These services are being improved by closer working with other organisations through what is known as the Crisis Care Concordat and action plan. The Council has recently increased its contribution of Approved mental health professionals available to the crisis services.</p> <p>In addition to these hospital-based services, we are in the process of strengthening mental health support available in community settings. We are developing eight Neighbourhood Locality Teams across the borough as a focus for integrated community health and social care services, that will include mental health support.</p> <p>The current support work service consultation is reviewing how to offer both an out of office hours service and an on-call service to ensure we get the balance right and continue</p>

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Page 2				<p>to contribute to keeping people safe.</p> <p>I trust that this response will reassure you that, rather than exacerbate the current situation, we will be able to coordinate a better, community-based, response to people experiencing mental health problems.</p>
		Alex Ganotis		<p>Thank you for your question. I'm afraid that I can't answer it on behalf of the Council as I am not part of the Council's Executive. However I think you raise a very important issue which deserves to be fully considered, and I am happy to provide you with my views on it.</p> <p>No one who needs medial or social care help who is not a genuine medical emergency should be in a position where they have no option but to attend A&E. As you rightly say, it is not appropriate.</p> <p>I am concerned that the proposed cuts and reforms to services have the potential to exacerbate this problem. I'm not sure what work the Council has done to assess the impact of their proposed cuts on the A&E department, but the Executive's health and social care proposals published in August suggest that not enough consideration has been given to this very real problem.</p> <p>I understand that the Council has to make cuts – there can be no doubt about that. However, this must be done in such a way as to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. I would also point out that it is cheaper – and therefore saves public money – to treat and support people with health issues in the community (especially through preventative work) rather than pushing them into A&E and hospitals more generally. Consequently, we also need to be careful to ensure that the proposed cuts don't create false economies.</p>

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				<p>As part of their ongoing consultation and refinements to budgetary proposals I would therefore urge the Executive to work closely with all relevant stakeholders – including community groups – to ensure the problem you outline is mitigated as much as possible. The Executive must also ensure that joined up working with local health bodies as part of ‘Stockport Together’ fully appreciate the importance of – and efficiencies provided by – providing adequate and the most relevant provision for people in the most appropriate setting.</p> <p>My group colleagues who are members of the Health and Adults/Communities scrutiny committees will continue to constructively engage with the Council on these matters.</p>
Thomas Gillespie	What impact has the council assessed of cutting the out of hours mental health support work services to the health economy of the borough, in relation to the anticipated increase in use of crisis service provision at Stepping Hill Hospital and the increased use of acute beds within Pennine Care Foundation Trust?	Sue Derbyshire/ Daniel Hawthorne	Keith Holloway	<p>I write in response to the question you submitted to the council meeting held on 29th October 2015. While you submitted your question to Councillors Derbyshire and Hawthorne, since this service area falls within my executive responsibility it was felt appropriate for me to respond.</p> <p>You suggest that the council is proposing to “cut” the out of hours mental health support work service across the borough. While we are indeed proposing to reduce the funding available for this service, this saving will be achieved by a restructuring of the service, reviewing the balance between out of hours and on call. We will also ensure that the service is supported by a dedicated approved mental health professional service for any situation of crisis or risk.</p> <p>Since the council meeting, consultations have continued, including a very useful discussion with service users and carers. As a consequence of those discussions, we have made some amendments to our business case, while still seeking to maximise the total number of posts – and</p>

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Page 4				<p>frontline posts specifically – while minimising the impact on service users and carers. In particular, the amount to be found from the Support Work Services has been reduced to £89,000, with the remaining savings to be found from the removal of a team manager post from elsewhere in the service. In addition, a Supported Living Team will be provided, including an out of office hours service up to 8pm. And the On Call system for the Support Work Service will remain at 8pm to 8am. Some changes in management arrangements will also be needed. Consultations will continue, including the involvement of staff to identify any anticipated additional demand, and also looking at the nature of the calls to ensure that there is no increased use of crisis services at Stepping Hill Hospital.</p> <p>In addition, we are in the process of strengthening mental health support available in community settings. We are developing eight Neighbourhood Locality Teams across the borough as a focus for integrated community health and social care services, that will include mental health support.</p> <p>In these ways we are aiming to enhance access to mental health support within community settings, reducing demand on crisis services at Stepping Hill and elsewhere.</p>
Brian Preece	<p>What costings has the council undertaken in terms of the mental health care management budget, for the proposals to cut the out of hours service that the supported living teams provide to the most complex need and vulnerable mental health service users in the borough, when over a third of their work is undertaken out of working hours and weekends?</p>	Sue Derbyshire	Keith Holloway	<p>I write in response to the question you submitted to the council meeting held on 29th October 2015. While you submitted your question to Councillor Derbyshire, since this service area falls within my executive responsibility it was felt appropriate for me to respond.</p> <p>You suggest that the council is proposing to “cut” the out of hours mental health support work service across the borough. While we are indeed proposing to reduce the funding available for this service, this saving will be achieved by a restructuring of the service, reviewing the balance</p>

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Page 6				will need to respond to.
Sue Pattinson	Homelessness has increased by 147% in Stockport in the last year. The council proposes to cut £140,000 from the mental health support service. This means that some supported tenancies could be returned to general let and that service level agreements with housing providers could be broken. What impact assessment has been undertaken regarding the risk of homelessness for these vulnerable mental health service users?	Sheila Bailey		<p>Thank you for your question which raises a number of very important issues. Whilst the Labour Group do not currently run Stockport Council, we do frequently raise concerns about the impact of proposed changes when these are likely to be detrimental for residents.</p> <p>Working to safeguard the future of the Wellbeing Centre on Chestergate is one recent example of where we have publicly and consistently opposed the proposed closure of a facility that provides information, support and social activities for many of Stockport's most vulnerable people.</p> <p>Specifically in relation to homelessness, the trend you illustrate in your question can be attributed to a number of complex factors but welfare reform, implemented by the Government since 2010, has certainly been a contributory factor, as have cuts to mental health support services for those who need them most.</p> <p>As Chair of the Adult Care Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee I have raised specific concerns about supported tenancies. I am assured that although the support work service is being reduced, it is not the intention to withdraw a service from people in tenancies who require support. Support workers will be targeting their time to those people who need it with a view to maintaining independence.</p> <p>As such, where the Council has an SLA with a housing provider to provide ongoing support to tenants, this will remain in place but the support offered may be differently and more efficiently organised. It is this aspect of the proposals that we will be watching very carefully to ensure that vulnerable tenants are not left without support. An impact assessment is being undertaken as part of the</p>

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				<p>consultation and will form part of the Business Case when this goes to the various Scrutiny Committees in December.</p> <p>I agree that there is currently not enough support for residents with mental health issues and I, and the Labour Group, support all those organisations that are lobbying to raise awareness and improve services.</p>
		Cllr Derbyshire	Keith Holloway	(Answered at the meeting)
Janet Glover	Why do you think homelessness has tripled in Stockport between 2013 and 2014 according to the Wellspring?	Cllr Oliver Johnstone		<p>Thank you very much for your question at the last full council meeting. I apologise that there has been some delay in my responding. I have been sourcing as much information as possible in order to provide you with a comprehensive answer, given that your question is about a very serious and complex issue. I was also keen to listen to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in case there were any further developments on homelessness or housing policy that may be of use to this discussion.</p> <p>As you will re-call, my colleague Councillor Lloyd referred your question to Councillor Peter Burns who provided you with an answer on behalf of and in the context of his work with the Wellspring. As I do not wish to speak on their behalf further and given that Cllr Burns' answer was reasonable and in my opinion, relatively detailed, I will focus on the work the Council does and other developments on the issue of homelessness.</p> <p>In your question you argued that homelessness in Stockport had tripled since 2013/2014 and this was rebutted by Cllr Burns. I would also like to draw your attention to a report that was submitted to Stockport Council's Adult Care Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 21st September 2015 entitled, "Homelessness Report and</p>

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Page 8				<p>Discharge of Homelessness Duties Using Private Sector Accommodation”. This report clearly shows that total homelessness decisions had been steadily increasing over the past couple of years but sharply fell to just over 300 in 2014/2015. This contrasts dramatically with the peak number of homeless decisions in Stockport which was in 2005/2006 with over 700. Even during the increases seen in recent years, the peak in 2005/2006 is significantly greater than that in 2013/2014. We see similar trends when looking at full duty acceptances in Stockport Borough. In 2014/2015, a figure of 146 was recorded, relatively consistent with recent years. Again the highest figure over the last 10 years was recorded in 2005/2006 which recorded 378, well over twice the figure for last year.</p> <p>From the evidence in this report, we can conclude that the idea that homelessness has tripled in Stockport is unsubstantiated. Furthermore, we can see that figures for homelessness decisions have decreased from the peak levels seen prior to the economic downturn, under the last Labour government.</p> <p>Despite this, however, I would like to stress that we should not be complacent about homelessness in Stockport and across the United Kingdom. I believe that any person forced to sleep on the streets is one person too many and I imagine from the nature of your question, you share this belief too. You will no doubt be as pleased as I was when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £10 million fund for local councils to tackle homelessness in the Autumn Statement. Furthermore, working families have been protected from having their tax credits cut and the Chancellor announced plans for 400,000 new homes to be built in England. This is excellent news for anyone who would otherwise be forced into homelessness due to poverty or lack of available housing. We must also not forget that the</p>

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				Conservative Government and the previous Coalition have consistently increased the threshold at which we all begin to pay income tax allowing all of us to keep more of the money we earn. It is reassuring to know that the Government is proceeding to get a grip on our nation's finances whilst also providing vital support to the most vulnerable in our society.
		Cllr Lloyd	Cllr Burns	(Answered at the meeting.