



CONSULTATION ON ADULTS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLA)

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1. Background and Context

The Adult Social Care department in Harrow has delivered more than £28m of savings from its budget over the last nine years, with £18.5m over the last 5 years leaving a net controllable budget of £52m. A further £9.7m is planned in the current approved Medium Term Financial Savings (MTFS) 2017-18 to 2018-19 taking the total budget reduction to nearly £38m.

Whilst the budget has been reducing the demand in social care to protect the most vulnerable has gone up. The combination of a growing and ageing population, people with more long-term conditions and a challenging economic climate means greater demand on Adult Social Care services.

Adult Social Care faces significant price pressures due to a combination of changes e.g. the living wage that has increased supplier costs in real terms and increasingly difficult market conditions that give providers negotiating power.

There are some services that Adult Social Care is required by law to provide, including assessment of need and support-planning, safeguarding, care packages in a range of settings (in the home, residential, nursing care homes), and equipment and adaptations.

In previous years it has been possible to find savings through reducing or freezing fees paid to providers, making staffing reductions, squeezing other ancillary budgets, and decommissioning non priority/statutory services. However, there is now very limited scope for doing any of these things and this has meant that all non-statutory expenditure has needed to be considered in light of savings proposals.

The Voluntary and Community Sector in Harrow make a significant contribution to the Community fulfilling a diverse range of roles in the borough including support for vulnerable people. There is a strong history of working in partnership with Adult Social Care and these organisations have helped us to shape the vision for the service and have worked tirelessly to support users and carers through many of the changes made in the last few years of Austerity.

We have worked to support these organisations to develop a thriving third sector ranging from very small organisations with no paid staff through to local branches of national charities. As part of the shared vision for personalisation in Harrow we have tried to help develop 'tradable services' that offer an alternative income stream to these organisations. The Council's My Community ePurse technology, which through its partnership with IBM, is a good example of how we have tried to innovate and offer an income through Personal Budgets to Community organisations. With IBM's Watson technology we hope to develop this even further and provide a focus on chargeable preventative services run by the VCS. The Adults team have recently tendered a Community Management Model for clients with a Learning Disability utilising the assets it has to provide opportunities for the sector. We are just about to go to market for a similar Mental Health service, working together to create a sustainable Mental Health Community Centre.

Adult Services want to continue to see a thriving and sustainable community and will continue through officer support to encourage innovation. We acknowledge that a healthy and active voluntary sector provide people with a voice; contribute to Council priorities; provide services that the Council cannot easily provide; fill the gap outside the mainstream provision; and act as a bridge between communities and people, as a glue that hold communities together. However, we are also aware that within the current financial climate we need to think more creatively about how we continue to fund these activities.

2. Consultation

In addition to the formal consultation sessions and avenues to provide feedback, officers from Adult Social Care ran further sessions targeted at understanding the impacts of the changes proposed specifically from the Adult SLA budget.

These sessions were held with targeted service user focus groups and with the organisations directly impacted by the Adult SLA funding proposal. The purpose of these sessions was to gain additional understanding of the impacts on the people that directly use services, which may cease if the proposals are accepted. Officers also attended informal sessions including a physical disability forum, and a learning disability event in order to understand what the services provided mean to the people that provide them.

In order to get a rich picture and understand fully the impacts of these proposals we have; created an online questionnaire designed to capture quantitative data around the number of people impacted and their protected characteristics, talking to the organisations to understand in more detail what this data means and engaging directly with service users in a variety of ways to ensure the picture created is as rich as possible, meaning the Council makes a decision taking into account the full picture.

2.1 Methods

Various engagement methods were used to inform and capture as much feedback and potential risks as possible from residents and stakeholders:

1. Talked to people that used services offered by the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations
2. Talked to the organisations directly to understand what they considered would be the direct impact by the proposals
3. Developed an Adults specific questionnaire to understand the impacts and find out views of the general population in Harrow, although only a few of these were returned.

Specific Activities included:

2.2 Consultation Activity

In addition to the main consultation events, we ran additional sessions:

- Friday 21st October – *Harrow User Group*
- Monday 24th October – *Carers Group*
- Tuesday 25th October – *users from Harrow Mencap*
- Thursday 27th October – *users from Age UK, Harrow*
- Thursday 27th October – *consultation meeting with providers (all 13 impacted, invited)*
- Attendance by Officers at a Mental health group
- Attendance by Officers at a Learning Disability Social club event
- Attendance by Officers at a Physical Disability discussion forum

2.3 Current Contracts

Organisation	Funding	SLA Detail
Age UK Harrow	£83,461	Core Services, Befriending, Reablement user Survey. Services provided to Harrow Residents aged 65+
Citizens Advice Bureau	£76,854	Welfare benefits advice, outreach and home visits including those in hard to reach communities
Dawn – Yakeen	£61,026	Specialist Counselling for Asian Women
Harrow Association of Disabled (HAD)	£44,699	Support to people with a disability to overcome worklessness, poverty, homelessness and to more lead independent lives
Harrow Carers	£19,079	Core Services to support carers in Harrow including training, respite, day trips and support groups
Harrow Mencap	£42,915	Core Services to support people in Harrow with a learning disability. In particular, employment and volunteering support, outreach and community activities
Hillingdon AIDS Response Trust (HART)	£23,030	Services to support adults and children in Harrow impacted by HIV and AIDS
Middlesex Association of the Blind	£6,373	Part time co-ordinator to manage volunteer in Harrow. Specialist home visiting service to recruit and train volunteers to support people in Harrow who are blind, deafblind and visually impaired
Mind in Harrow	£49,648	Core services, to support people in Harrow suffering from a mental health condition, and the people who care for them. Funding for the Harrow User Group (HUG) providing training around representation and participation for people with mental health difficulties
National Autistic Society	£5,241	Small Support group for people with Autism and Aspergers that meets monthly. Includes outings and trips as well as arranged group sessions
Rethink Support Group	£1,098	Support Group for mental health carers and the publication of a newsletter. Group currently meets at the Bridge and provides volunteer/ peer support to people impacted by mental illness and their carers
Re-Vitalise	£3,046	Provides short breaks for adults with a physical disability in Harrow using 4 accessible holiday centres across the UK
Tanglewood	£3,663	Contribution towards the running of a learning disability group running on a Monday evening with an average of 50 attendees per week

2.4 General Themes

As part of the Adults consultation a number of general themes were identified. These included:

- Organisations, groups and schemes would not be able to continue
- Acceptance and understanding of the financial pressures the Council is currently facing, but a feeling that the Adults budget and VCS funding is not the right place to make reductions
- The organisations impacted provide a good service to the community and should be protected
- How will the Council maintain its statutory services with so many budget pressures and no support from the VCS
- Council decision making over savings proposals did not reflect the Council's own priorities and the wishes of the Community (who want to protect vulnerable people as a priority)
- The VCS stop people coming to the Council's front door services, and to the hospitals – without their services there will be a cost shunt to other parts of the Council and to the NHS
- The capacity of the community and voluntary sector is not fully developed due to the isolated nature of many of the organisations
- The proposals are detrimental to the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people in Harrow
- Access to funding can depend upon developing new projects, which can then threaten core longstanding services and stable organisations
- Users of Voluntary and Community organisations were willing to pay for services that they are currently not being charged for (e.g. helping with paperwork, befriending, handyman, and support groups)
- Capacity within the community and voluntary sector is supported by organisations such as Harrow Community Action.
- Building and sustaining connections between communities is a key to developing a health community and voluntary sector
- The Community and Voluntary sector faces challenges due to the shifting patterns in funding at a national and local level. Alternative charity funders are also facing pressures due to increased demand for them.
- People find the services provided a lifeline, and they stop social isolation and allow people to have a voice

2.5 Crowdfunding Platform

Harrow Council is arranging a Crowdfunding platform with a specialist provider to support access to this alternative funding option and a £25,000 Council Top Up Fund, which will be used to contribute towards Crowdfunding projects and initiatives. Officer capacity will also be given to help skill up organisations wishing to explore this opportunity and other alternatives such as social enterprise or social investment.

This new form of funding provides an opportunity to charities, community groups and social enterprises as it offers direct engagement with funders, ability to select projects and beneficiaries and the importance of creating a community – playing to the strengths of the sector, and bringing real benefits, financial and non-financial.

The recent report by Nesta¹ demonstrates the potential for this platform including the use of donation-based funding, community shares, access to large commercial enterprises with

¹ Nesta, June 2016: Opportunities and challenges for charities, community groups and social entrepreneurs. Jonathan Bone and Peter Baeck.

ADULT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

social responsibility funds, philanthropists, trusts and other investors. Crowdfunding presents a significant untapped potential for the VCS in Harrow to raise money, increase transparency and get more people involved in campaigning and volunteering.

3. Service Specific Feedback

3.1 Age UK, Harrow

Age UK Harrow receive £83,461 from the Adult SLA for the provision of 'Core Services, Befriending, Reablement user Survey.' Age UK also receive Outcome Based Grants. Services provided are targeted at Harrow Residents aged over 65.

3.1.1 User Feedback

Officers attended an established forum to discuss the proposals to a group of around 15 older people that had received support and services from Age UK. Many of them expressed concerns about the financial viability of Age UK Harrow being able to continue without the funding from the Council and highlighted that this was one of the only places they were able to meet and get support specific to their needs. The group raised concerns about the cut to a charity focused on supporting older people at a time when the population of Harrow is ageing.

“We don't want new street lights or perfect parks, we need to support the vulnerable”

There was a lot of discussion surrounding the way in which the Council spend their money. It was felt by many of the service users that the Council had not spent their money in the correct areas and that more funding should be put to support vulnerable clients, this could be at the expense of a reduction in other budgets. Reference was made to the NHS policy to keep the elderly out of hospital, there was concern that this would lead to an increase in older people attending A and E and the Council's front door unnecessarily.

Many of the users did note that they currently receive services from Age UK (eg befriending, form filling and the support groups) that they would be happy to pay a contribution towards these services and help the organisation to remain financially sustainable.

“Age UK Harrow helps keep us safe”

There were concerns raised that Age UK Harrow support people to remain in their own homes and often help with form filing, help to enhance quality of life, and support people to remain independent safely. The users praised the way that Age UK had done appropriate checks on staff and carers coming into contact with them and feel safer coming to Age UK Harrow when they have a problem or they need some help.

“Without Age UK Harrow, I would never have had my voice heard”

Many of the users at the group identified that Age UK Harrow had helped them to have voice in situations where they are unable to speak for themselves. They have acted as representatives, and the users fear the loss of this service to highlight unfair treatment. Officers did reference that Age UK Harrow are part of the consortium providing Care Act Advocacy and other Advocacy services which are not part of these proposed cuts.

“All of these cuts lead to a reduction in our quality of life”

Many of the users felt the proposal was very unfair, and feel that cuts and additional costs are coming from all sides of the Council (with reference to the garden waste costs and parking restrictions) they felt the Council was making living comfortably as an older person very difficult, and that social isolation, loneliness and unfair treatment would increase if these proposals were accepted.

3.1.2 Age UK Feedback

Age UK Harrow engaged in the consultation process with representation at the meetings, a letter submitted (included at Appendix 4.4) and by participating in the online questionnaire.

Age UK expressed an understanding for the current and future financial position of the Council and the need to make reductions in spending for the VCS. However, reference a local and national agenda where the VCS *'should play an increased role in contributing both to service provision and the well-being of the community. From our position it is difficult to reconcile these two conflicting impacts on our organisation.'*

Throughout the consultation Age UK Harrow have expressed a deep concern that without the core funding they will be forced to close, meaning that a huge number of older people will not be supported, or prevented from reaching a crisis point. They have also expressed concerns that without core funding additional funds will be more difficult to raise.

3.1.3 Questionnaire Feedback

Age UK identified through the online questionnaire that they are currently in receipt of other grants, lottery funding and agreements not funded through the Council but expressed concern about the ability to maintain these without the core funding arrangement in place. Also responding to the questionnaire and stating that they would be 'very unlikely' to be able to source external funding to a level that would replace the existing SLA.

The letter and consultation feedback also identified the role Age UK Harrow and other VCS organisations play in the *'strategic development of meeting the needs of disadvantaged people in the Borough'* through the Harrow Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) and other strategic groups the reduction in financial support provided will prevent this input being possible and urge the Council to consider some form of funding to allow for this. One suggestion included within the letter is *'you may want to consider giving us premises without the commercial rent'* Age UK Harrow also mentioned within their questionnaire response that premises with a non-commercial rent would support their sustainability. Throughout the consultation events many VCS organisations including Age UK Harrow cited the burden of rent and requested the Council to explore more options around providing more affordable rents/ rents with benefits in kind as a form of mitigation and suggests that *'Putting all the money in information and Advice is not the right move'*.

Another key impact identified throughout the consultation by Age UK Harrow and included within the letter is the increase in the number of older people in Harrow and the rising/ complexity of the needs presenting. Age UK Harrow particularly focuses on social isolation and that without Age UK Harrow and the services covered through this SLA the levels of social isolation in the Borough will increase *'and they will become either critical, or rely more on statutory services which will cost you more in the long run'*

3.1.4 Response

The Council welcomes the letter and ongoing engagement from Age UK Harrow, including support to organise and facilitate the older people's service user group meeting. Age UK have expressed concerns about their ability to exist as an organisation in Harrow and the impacts this will have on Statutory Services and the residents of Harrow. Harrow are keen to work closely with Age UK Harrow to support them towards sustainability, this includes considering viable projects that could be funded through the crowdfunding platform, support to put costed services onto the electronic system My Community ePurse (this would allow them to advertise costed services to people with personal budgets).

In addition, many of the service users we met with suggested they would be willing to pay a contribution towards the services they received, in particular towards befriending and courses;

though it is accepted that this alone is unlikely to replace the full amount currently received through core funding. We recognise that they may only be a small number of people in the position to pay.

3.2 Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

CAB currently receive £76,854 for the provision of welfare benefits advice, outreach and home visits including those in hard to reach communities. CAB also receive Outcome Based Grants. They currently provide this advice to people who are unable to attend the office for support.

3.2.1 User Feedback

“Thousands of vulnerable and low income people their children and hard to reach groups would be deprived of access to independent free, advice which would result in their problems being unresolved which would lead: Increased referrals to social care, Vulnerable people and families in crisis, Increased homelessness - low take up of benefits /services - increased worklessness -increased inequality - - reduced levels of wellbeing - increased dependency on public services. People unable to maintain basic financial existence. Loss of income due to lack of understanding of qualifying benefits spiralling debt”

3.2.2 CAB Feedback

Harrow CAB engaged in the consultation process with representation at the meetings, a letter submitted (included at Appendix 4.3) and by participating in the online questionnaire. The received response from Harrow CAB outlines recognition of the pressures facing Harrow Council and the need for the working relationship between the Council and the VCS to change. The letter notes that *‘demands on the service are already great. Decisions have to be made now about how much can be offered, to whom and when’* the concerns expressed throughout the consultation is the need for the CAB and the level of preventative support provided by the organisation to stop people entering crisis as *‘Having to cut any of these services would be damaging to the clients’ well-being’*.

Harrow CAB have identified that they are not as able to obtain some of the grants and alternative funding sources that other organisations have access to, and cannot charge for the services they provide (unlike many of the other organisations impacted by these proposals) and for these reasons rely very much on the core funding and funding to support those who require advice provided in their own homes.

Without this funding or a suitable alternative the CAB have stated that it is very likely that they will close due to financial difficulties. The CAB letter identifies that the impact of the closure would negatively impact a large number of residents annual statistics included within the letter denotes over 11,000 client contacts in 2015-16 and an excess of 10,000 advice line calls in 2015-16. One of the key impacts outlined by CAB when discussing the cut to the Adults SLA would be the loss of income to the borough and the loss of income to individual service users, causing people to enter crisis and rely on the services provided by the Council. The letter from CAB references *‘increased costs to the public purse’ ‘increased homelessness’ ‘escalating rates for claims to social care both by adults and children as people enter into crisis situations with unresolved issues’*.

Some of the mitigations outlined by CAB were considerations around colocation, to reduce rental costs; this is a recommendation made by a number of the organisations impacted by the proposals. The letter also highlights the equalities makeup of the service users for 2015/16 which demonstrates that those people impacted by the cut are more likely to be those with protected characteristics; this is for a host of reasons but in particular *‘These clients experience higher than average rates of unemployment, debt and homelessness’*. The CAB expresses concerns about the ability of these individuals being able to access quality information due to their needs.

3.2.3 Questionnaire Feedback

There were 4 responses to the questionnaire related to CAB. From the responses received the main comments included: "We have exhausted most the majority of trusts which fund projects for three years and therefore are unable to re-apply until a number of years have elapsed."

"Citizens Advice is unable to charge for its service due its membership terms and conditions."

"Due to the aforementioned reasons CAB would no longer be financially viable and would face closure."

3.2.4 Response

The Council welcomes the letter and ongoing engagement from Harrow CAB, and will explore possible options around co-location and many of the suggestions made by CAB have been factored into the information, advice and advocacy strategy specification, which has been co-produced and co-designed with the VCS. This specification will include a requirement for a provider(s) that can offer advice and information on issues such as welfare benefits, debt and homelessness. As with all of the organisations impacted by these proposals this is not an indication of the quality of service delivered by CAB Harrow, but a reflection of the unprecedented financial pressures faced by Harrow Council.

3.3 Diwa Asian Women's Network (DAWN) Yakeen

DAWN currently receive £61,026 and provide specialist counselling for Asian Women and have recently expanded to provide support to Asian Men and families.

3.3.1 User Feedback

There was no opportunity to directly consult services users as the sensitive nature of the counselling service for vulnerable Asian women.

3.3.2 DAWN Feedback

DAWN – Yakeen have engaged in the consultation process with representation at meetings and specific Adult SLA session and by completing the online questionnaire. DAWN have expressed a number of concerns about the ability of the organisation to continue without this core funding though they are actively sourcing funding from external sources, including; Big lottery and Social Responsibilities. The organisation expressed concerns about the loss of expertise, the service is highly specialised with a number of highly qualified Counsellors and academically qualified staff with specialist cultural and practical knowledge. They expressed a concern that this would be lost if the proposal was to be accepted. The organisation expressed concerns about the mental wellbeing of Asian women and their families that currently benefit, and would benefit in the future of this service.

One of the suggestions put forward by DAWN was to provide 12 months 'interim' funding to allow the organisation to transition into the full funding cut. This suggestion was made due to the level of funding that will be cut should this proposal be accepted. This is due to a concern from the organisation about the time it can take for funds to enter organisations once bids have been applied for and won.

The responses to the online questionnaires show that while DAWN are working to try and access funding from a variety of sources and are keen to work with the Council to bring in additional funding they feel it is '*quite unlikely*' that they will be able to source funding to the same level they currently receive.

3.3.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire received from DAWN.

3.3.4 Response

The Council welcomes the engagement from DAWN – Yakeen and appreciates the role they currently play in providing culturally sensitive and appropriate support for Women and families from the Asian community. It is hoped that DAWN will be able to source funding from elsewhere with support from the Council (where appropriate and possible) they are also encouraged, if this proposal goes ahead, to look into the Crowdfunding solution and the sale of services through the MyCeP platform on CarePlace.

3.4 Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD)

HAD currently receive £44,699 to support people with a disability to overcome worklessness, poverty, homelessness and to more lead independent lives. HAD also receives Outcome Based Grants.

3.4.1 User Feedback

The Council offered several slots for user engagement but HAD were unable to respond within the timescales permitted to confirm a suitable date.

3.4.2 HAD Feedback

Harrow Association of the Disabled people engaged in the consultation process with representation at the meetings and an alternative proposal submitted and included at Appendix 4.2. HAD also expressed a recognition for the financial struggle the Council currently faces but expressed additional concerns around the current proposals and associated materials first issued as part of the consultation process. One of the key messages put forward by HAD is that the relationship between the Council and the VCS needs to change in particular in relation to the tendering, regulation and monitoring of VCS organisations with a move towards self-regulation.

Specifically regarding the adults proposals, HAD expressed concern over the long term viability of this proposal in that it saves £420,000 for 2017/18 but would cost more in the subsequent years and the impact on other budgets over that term would make the exercise not cost effective and as such have labelled it a '*false economy*', they felt this was lacking a clear strategy and direction of travel pertaining to the role of the VCS and the Council for the future. They would like to be involved more and be able to discuss budgets as whole rather than '*at the margins only*'.

HAD have also identified a '*Cumulative impact of Council departmental decisions*' citing that the Council has not taken full account of other departmental decisions, including the increase of service charges by Estates at the same time as ASC.

3.4.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire was received from HAD.

3.4.4 Response

The Council welcomes the responses and alternative proposals submitted by HAD and have explored the suggestions put forward in the report in the main body of the report. Harrow take on board the cumulative impact and have designed this piece of work to prevent this happening again. This consultation is a good example of how the Council has worked in a cross departmental approach that ensures a joined up solution to VCS funding arrangements and future strategic working.

3.5 Harrow Carers

Harrow Carers currently receive £19,079 for Core Services to support carers in Harrow including training, respite, day trips and support groups. Harrow Carers were also awarded the Care Act Carers contract with a value of £207k until March 2017.

3.5.1 User Feedback

Officers from the Council invited a number of carers to attend a meeting at Wiseworks, where the proposals were explained, along with some of the pressures facing adult social care. The carers expressed concerns about the proposals and the impact this will have on carers in Harrow as a whole; there were concerns that the reductions would result in additional and unmanageable demands on carers and a lack of support services available for them.

“Carers save Harrow Council and statutory services more money than will be saved with these proposals”

There were concerns expressed by the carers in the group that these proposals would have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of carers in Harrow and this would have a cost shunt over to the Council and the NHS. The strongest argument from this group was that this proposal was not cost effective for the future.

“We would rather see a slight increase in our Council Tax than the services for the vulnerable cut” The group felt that the needs of vulnerable people and their carers had not been properly addressed through this proposal and that the Council needed to source alternative funding to ensure the vulnerable were provided with adequate levels of care and support. Officers did explain that there was a precept for social care available to local authorities, but the demand on Statutory services was so high that non-statutory support still needed to be considered.

“Building more houses is going to make the problem worse”

The group were very critical of the regeneration plans and proposals to build more houses in Harrow, there were concerns that an increase in the number of residents would lead to an increase in the demands on statutory and non-statutory services, with service users and carers at an even bigger disadvantage than they are currently. They would like to see a reduction in the funding attributed to regeneration and an increase in funding put forward for services provided directly to vulnerable residents, with certain funding ring-fenced and protected from savings.

“The Charities need to come together and do more to make the money go further”

The group discussed the current state of the VCS in Harrow and suggested that there needed to be better communication and better partnership working within the sector in Harrow to ensure that funds are spent in the right places and that there was not duplication across different organisations.

“Money should be spent on ensuring the quality of mental health, physical health, learning disability and older people support services.”

Many people in the group felt that the role of the Council should be to monitor how the money was spent to make sure there was no duplication or allocation of funding unnecessarily, there was also suggestions made that funding should be moved around. The group felt this would be a better way to save money than to cut the non-statutory VCS support services.

“Statutory Services are underfunded and not provided adequately”

Many of the carers in this group felt that the statutory services provided across the different agencies were not provided to a high enough standard and that this was probably due to a lack of resources or a poor allocation of resources to particular departments.

The carers felt that the VCS very often ***‘pick up where statutory cannot’*** particularly in terms of appealing decisions and understanding rights. Many of the carers felt that the pressure was on them to find out information about important changes or their rights as the people they care for very often were unable to do it for themselves, they felt the Council should be doing more to; engage with the VCS and hard to reach people, not reducing their funding and reviewing their internal spending to ensure that support was provided to those most in need.

3.5.2 Harrow Carers Feedback

Harrow Carers engaged in the consultation with representation at meetings, and supporting the Council to arrange a carers engagement session. Harrow carers currently receive £19,079 in core funding (this is not included within the Care Act Carers contract, which is protected from cuts).

The key concern expressed by Harrow carers was the impact it will have on the social care economy within Harrow as a whole and the people who are desperate for support but unable to access it due to budget pressures. They fear the proposals will put additional demands to an already stretched statutory service making life incredibly difficult for people who are already suffering; be it carers or service users.

Harrow Carers see their reduction to be relatively low in comparison to the other cuts, but state that they already struggle in terms of cash flow and the need to chase up payments and administration costs. This in turn is likely to cause a compound impact at a time when other budgets are also being cut and grants reducing. *‘Collectively carers are the largest providers of support in the community. They are providers much more than they are recipients of support. By reducing support for carers we would effectively be jeopardising a huge free resource to save a small amount of money in the short term. The result will inevitably be higher demand on services with more statutory costs.’*

Harrow carers praised the efforts of the Council, in particularly the infinity plans to make the Council and the third sector sustainable, and believe the way to do it is working more collaboratively with the VCS and the Council coming up with commercial and innovative ideas.

3.5.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire was received from Harrow Carers.

3.5.4 Response

The Council welcomes the responses and support from Harrow Carers to arrange the Carers consultation event and appreciate the backing around project infinity. The role of Carers is not underestimated by the Council and we will continue to work together to meet our statutory duties around Carers including their right to an independent Care Act advocate and a right to support in their own right under the Care Act.

Adult services are working with the regeneration team to ensure that plans for future building includes social housing that is accessible by a wide range of people including the elderly, disabled and people with mental health problems.

Adult services working with other departments have already carried out a review of payments and other issues that increase administration costs. This has led to a number of changes in the way payments have been processed in the past including reduced payment terms (down from 30 days) for VCS organisations.

Carers attending consultation meetings were reassured that funding through the Care Act contract awarded to Harrow Carers would mean the impact of the proposals on Carers should be limited and the Council would help through the use of the Crowdfunding platform potential access to other income streams and a pool of investors to support initiatives such as Homeshare.

3.6 Harrow Mencap

At present Harrow Mencap receives £42,915 to fund Core Services to support people in Harrow with a learning disability in particular, employment and volunteering support, outreach and community activities.

3.6.1 User Feedback

A group of service users with varying degrees of learning disability were invited to a meeting at the civic centre where the current proposals were explained (with some of the documentation then made available in easy read format) the meeting was held with support from Harrow Mencap. There was some upset and concern about whether these cuts included the individual care packages they are currently receiving and how they will cope if these services are cut.

There was concern around the need for appropriate support on issues like benefits advice and information being delivered in an appropriate manner depending on need. There were some additional concerns about the indirect impact of making reductions of this nature and whether there would be a domino effect for people who are supported in multiple ways by many of the organisations impacted by these proposals.

“The cuts will leave us more vulnerable” the service users felt that the cuts would mean they would not receive care packages they currently do and as such would need more support from statutory services which are already not providing the best quality of service.

3.6.2 Mencap Feedback

Harrow Mencap engaged with the consultation through attendance at the consultation meetings, submitting an online questionnaire and facilitating/ arranging a service user engagement event.

Mencap expressed that due to the history of funding reductions over the last few years they as an organisation have been preparing themselves for this cut, but suggest that the cut as a whole is far more detrimental than Adult Social Care and the Council have realised. Particularly around specific statutory definitions, many of the services provided by Mencap and other VCS organisations are not directly statutory but do support statutory functions. They felt there was a lack of vision with these proposals, and echoed some of the organisations concerns about the future plans when there is nothing left to cut and stated that *‘The reduction in this funding will impact on the support services for the statutory services we provide’*

3.6.3 Questionnaire Feedback

Harrow Mencap completed the online questionnaire and indicated that they are in receipt of funds from a host of other sources including the selling of services through the MyCep and Careplace option detailed above. Examples of the ways they have sourced additional funding includes trusts and the use of specialist fundraisers and bid writers. Fortunately Harrow Mencap have stated it is 'very unlikely' that these proposals will impact upon the financial viability of the organisation. But that their service users will be impacted by the proposals due to *'diminished Seed funding to develop sustainable services that promote wellbeing...diminishing non-statutory services will mean a loss of a holistic approach to people care and support'*

3.6.4 Response

The Council welcomes the responses and support from Harrow Mencap to arrange and facilitate the learning disability group. Adult services provided an easy read guide to the proposals to users that attended the consultation (and was made widely available as part of the wider consultation). We are very grateful to Harrow Mencap in its assistance developing the guide and at the consultation event to ensure that all attendees could understand the proposals.

Most of the users were concerned about the individual care packages that they received. Officers attending the consultation were able to reassure service users and carers that these proposals did not include any change to care and support they received through their personal budget. Users understood and were reassured that the Council were protecting statutory services and this included their individual care packages. They also appreciated that this meant difficult decisions about non statutory services.

Although it was not possible to provide seed funding directly it is hoped that the VCS organisations will be able to access a range of funding and new investors through the crowdfunding platform, which is particularly suited to getting new initiatives off the ground. The Council through officer support and project infinity would also ensure that its new emarketplace solution through its partnership with IBM will include the ability to promote new services and match people to things that interest them most in the Community.

3.7 Hillingdon AIDS Response Trust

Currently HART receives £23,030 to provide Services to support adults and children in Harrow impacted by HIV and AIDS. They provide specialist support not provided by any other organisation in Harrow (the organisation provides support across Harrow and Hillingdon) this proposal would see the financial support provided for Harrow ended entirely.

3.7.1 User Feedback

There was no opportunity to directly consult services users as the sensitive nature of the service for people impacted by HIV and AIDS.

3.7.2 HART Feedback

Hillingdon AIDS response Trust engaged with the consultation through attendance at the consultation meeting and by submitting an online questionnaire. The VCS and particularly HART feel they provide a value for money service and a strong preventative service stopping people entering crisis and entering the front door of adult social care.

Many of the organisations noted that Harrow is not alone in reducing the funding provided to the VCS meaning that competition for available grants and funds are oversubscribed and difficult to access. HART stated '*we have experienced recent austerity measures applied to local authorities has meant that grant giving bodies are under pressure from a growing number of applicants*'.

An alternative suggestion made was to consider using the tapered fund to support the transition between local authority and alternative funding while still providing quality services.

3.7.3 Questionnaire Feedback

HART through its questionnaire indicated that it currently employed one single part time welfare officer to provide information, advice and advocacy for Harrow HIV positive residents. They suggested that if their SLA was reduced or ended they would not be able to continue to fund this post unless alternative funds were found. This would mean the only HIV support service for HIV positive Harrow residents would cease.

3.7.4 Response

The Council welcomes suggestions and points raised by HART, in particular reference to the more specialist types of support that are provided in a very sensitive and specific way based on the client group. This proposal could result in a loss of this specialism in Harrow, and the needs of the people would need to be met by more general organisations.

The crowdfunding platform we hope will give HART and other similar support groups in Harrow access to a larger pool of potential investors and beneficiaries that can help support the vital work in this area provided by the organisation.

3.8 Middlesex Association for the Blind (MAB)

MAB currently receive £6,373 which funds a Part time co-ordinator to manage volunteer work in Harrow. This also contributes to a specialist home visiting service to recruit and train volunteers to support people in Harrow who are blind, deafblind and visually impaired.

MAB support people living in the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Harrow, Haringey, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond.

Grants from City Bridge Trust and the Big Lottery have enabled MAB to continue the Employment Service and Rapid Response Service. Big Lottery funding has also enabled MAB to introduce a Mobile Advice Unit which began operation in July 2015.

MAB were invited to attend the consultation events and Adults specific consultation with VCS organisations but declined the invitation. No questionnaire was received.

3.9 Mind in Harrow

Mind in Harrow receive £25,843 for core services and £24,735 for the Harrow User Group. MIND also receives Outcome Based Grants. The Harrow User Group is also match funded by Harrow CCG for NHS service user involvement. The group supports a range of people, with a gender split leaning more towards female users 59% female to 41% male, a range of ages, ethnicity and disability. More detail about this is included within the EQIA included at Appendix 1.

3.9.1 User Feedback

ADULT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Officers attended the Harrow User Group meeting to discuss the funding proposals, many of the service users have been involved in a number of Harrow consultations in the past including (but not limited to); the fairer contributions policy change, the Health and Wellbeing strategy, Take Part, the Bridge closure and service redesign and many more. The user group felt that this proposal, which would see the Council funding to HUG (50% Council funded 50% health funded) cut would mean that the Council would fail to meet its requirements around Consultation and engagement of a vulnerable group who otherwise would not be able to engage fully.

The group suggested that a review of all VCS funding to ensure there is no duplication or assessing where costs could be reduced, this would be a better solution than making such a significant cut.

“We are losing faith in our Council, Harrow used to be better than this

There was a discussion in the meeting about mental health becoming a national and local priority, the prevalence within the news about mental health and the need for parity between mental and physical health support services. The group felt this proposal was not in line with Government or Council priorities around mental health.

“HUG stops people going back into hospital”

The group had concerns generally about a reduction in the VCS budget to statutory only support and were concerned that the service would not be able to continue supporting the volume of people requiring help without the Council’s funding. Many of the reps stated that Council and NHS services were already stretched and without the VCS to support it, the pressure on the statutory services would be significantly higher, stating specifically that the number of people experiencing anxiety and depression would increase as would the number of people being admitted into hospital.

“Harrow Mind looks beyond the diagnosis and at the person holistically to empower and inspire” there was a concern that without the core funding and funding for the Harrow User Group people would not be able to communicate their concerns or have their voices heard. While we assured that statutory advocacy services were not included within these proposals there were concerns about the full picture and the wider service user voice being lost. ***“HUG reps act as community activators”*** reference was made to the training the representatives receive as part of becoming a HUG rep and how this has made a difference not only to the individuals who receive it, but other people they come into contact with, and the people who are not well enough to join at the moment but may be in the future.

“It gives people hope, there’s a unity within the group and is working very well”

The group are keen to source alternative funding should the proposal go ahead, but worry that the focus of the group will make it difficult to source grant and other funding, however welcome any support the Council can provide to source funding from philanthropic sources or other income streams. Officers assured the group that the proposals were not a reflection of the quality of services provided or the quality of representation or dealings held with the HUG reps or any other VCS group who spoke very highly of all staff they had come into contact with across the VCS.

3.9.2 Mind in Harrow Feedback

Mind in Harrow elected not to respond to the consultation online, but submitted a separate formal response to the proposals, this is included at Appendix 4.1 the document outlined the concerns expressed by the organisation and the users it supports, and many of the concerns contained therein linked back to the views expressed at the consultation meetings.

Mind in Harrow have stated that *‘the withdrawal of Council funding for the project would inevitably lead the project to close.’* The detailed reasoning behind this is included within the

full document, but Mind in Harrow felt they would struggle to receive additional funding for this user group due to the nature of the service provided and the benefit to statutory services in allowing the voice of mental health service users to be heard. The report details the impact the organisation feels the proposal will have on the Council and outlines that without the service the Council will not have the *'capacity to properly consult mental health service users'* and goes on to state that *'we believe from several years of evidence provided below that Harrow Council does not have the in-house capacity to fulfil this function, owing to reductions in commissioning and contracting staff'*.

The report also goes on to outline the impact the proposal will have on the service users, and once again refers to a potential breach of equality legislation and common law duties to consult that may happen should the service be cut as part of this savings proposal.

The feedback from Mind in Harrow goes into additional detail around the proposal to cut the core funding of £25,843 and explains that this was reduced last year by £27,000 and that the NHS have cut £40,000 while the organisation faces additional costs (including rent and legal compliance). The feedback outlines that this core funding has paid for engagement with statutory boards including the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and many other forward planning/ service changes within the Council. Mind in Harrow state that without the Core funding the organisation will not be able to continue operating and this will in turn create a cost pressure for the Council and make it difficult for the Council to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Care Act 2014.

Furthermore, the feedback suggests some mitigations, including; more affordable office space, working with the Council to review the housing pressures, and collection boxes to be situated in the Council offices. Further detail of this is included within the full report included within Appendix 2.

3.9.3 Questionnaire Feedback

MIND in Harrow has chosen not to follow the questionnaire format of the consultation paper, as they considered that many of the questions did not properly address issues raised in the consultation and they suggested were merely designed to gather information.

3.9.4 Response

The Council welcomes the detailed report put together by Mind in Harrow and included at Appendix 4.1 and appreciates the efforts within the report to look at alternative ways of working together and alternative ways the Council can support the VCS. It is unfortunate that Mind in Harrow feels the HUG group would close without the funding available; however hope that by a combination of crowdfunding and access to other pots of money that the group will be able to continue.

If this is not possible, the Council do not underestimate it's duties under the Equality Act and the common law duty to consult, if the proposal is accepted the Council will ensure that officer capacity is used as it does for all other client groups to prevent unlawful discrimination be it direct or indirect on the basis of any protected characteristic.

These proposals are not an indication of the quality of service, representation or input provided by Mind in Harrow either through the HUG or through participation with the HSAB and other strategic groups but a reaction to unprecedented demands placed on statutory services meaning that all non-statutory services need to be considered.

Future statutory responsibilities around the engagement of mental health service users will need to be carefully considered as will engagement with all service user groups to ensure the Council meets its duties.

3.10 National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society receives £5,241 funding towards a small support group for people with Autism and Aspergers that meets monthly. This funding also contributes towards outings and trips as well as arranged group sessions.

3.10.1 User Feedback

A participant at the Carers forum highlighted that these cuts and the added uncertainty about support in Harrow would translate into further challenges for adults and young people with autism.

3.10.2 NAS Feedback

NAS did not respond to requests to provide any feedback on the specific proposals.

3.10.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire received from NAS.

3.10.4 Response

Although NAS did not participate during the consultation we continue to ensure that meeting the needs of people with Autism remain one of our key priorities and will be reflected in the new Strategy for People with a Learning Disability or Autism to be published next year.

3.11 Rethink Support Group

Rethink Support Group currently it receives £1,098 and provides a support group for mental health carers and service users and publishes a newsletter. The group currently meet at The Bridge day centre and they provide volunteer/ peer support to people impacted by mental illness and their carers.

3.11.1 User Feedback

The group have assured Harrow Council that they will still continue to operate but the ability to post out newsletters will be diminished. The group urged the importance of these newsletters for people who may have no contact with other people.

3.11.2 Rethink Support Group

Rethink Support Group have engaged with the process by attending the meetings specific to carers and the meeting for the organisations impacted by the Adults SLAs directly.

The amount of money outlined for this particular organisation is very small, and respondents suggested that this was used for posting newsletters to the people who are unable to come to the meetings/ unable to fully engage with wider support services.

3.11.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire received from Rethink Support Group.

3.11.4 Response

The Council welcomes the points raised by Rethink Support Group, and accepts the point about social isolation which could be an impact as a result of these proposals.

Officers from the Council were pleased to be able to attend and provide support for the recent fund raising evening for the Rethink Support Group, which raised over £2,000 in the evening.

It is also possible, especially as this service only requires a small amount of money it may be possible to further fund the group through crowdfunding.

The recent decision by the Council to develop a sustainable mental health community centre at the Bridge also ensures the group continues to have a safe place to meet and provide the opportunity for people with mental health problems to socialise and meet other people with similar experiences and difficulties.

3.12 Revitalise

At present Re-Vitalise receive £3,046 and provide short breaks for adults with physical disabilities in Harrow using one of four holiday centres across the UK.

3.12.1 User Feedback

Due to the limited options for engagement with users of the service it was not possible to arrange a specific consultation event.

3.12.2 Revitalise Feedback

Re-Vitalise have engaged with the process by attending the meetings specific to Adult Social Care reductions and submitting an email and an online questionnaire.

Re-Vitalise stated in the consultation response that it was '*very unlikely*' that these proposals will impact upon the financial viability of the organisation as a whole (mainly because it operates across a number of different local authority areas).

Re-vitalise have fundraisers to assess the available funding relevant to the organisation and apply for it, the organisation are exploring alternative funding sources at present to maintain the holidays provided to the Harrow clients.

3.12.3 Questionnaire Response

In their questionnaire they stated '*The grant funding received by Revitalise from Harrow Council directly benefits ten disabled guests from the area each year. As an organisation we are reliant on fundraising in order to keep the costs passed on to our guests as low as possible. Being able to keep the costs of our breaks low means that more people are able to access the service.*' If these proposals are accepted this will not be able to continue for the residents of Harrow.

3.12.4 Response

The Council welcomes the points raised by Revitalise and their aims to source funding elsewhere to ensure that support is still provided to vulnerable clients. The organisation will still continue to operate, but it will be an additional VCS organisation that does not provide support to people specifically in Harrow.

3.13 Tanglewood

Tanglewood current receives £3,663 contribution towards the running of a learning disability group running on a Monday evening with an average of 50 attendees per week

3.13.1 User Feedback

Officers from Adults were invited to the Tanglewood Monday club, whilst attending the group we had the opportunity to ask questions about the things they liked about the group and the people they attend with. The users had very mixed needs with some suffering physical and learning disabilities. The general consensus was that they were very happy at Tanglewood and would find themselves very isolated without it. This fear was echoed when Officers met with a physical disability users group when asked what they would do if something happened to their centre they stated they would be '*stuck inside 4 walls*'.

3.13.2 Tanglewood Feedback

Representatives from Tanglewood engaged with the consultation by writing a letter outlining the impacts, this is included at Appendix 4.6 the concerns outlined within this letter are the changes in funding over the years and the challenges faced over time. '*The plain fact of the matter is that we cannot survive without some financial input from Harrow Council.*'

3.13.3 Questionnaire Feedback

No questionnaire received from Tanglewood.

3.13.4 Response

The Council welcomed the opportunity to attend the Monday Club and were warmly greeted by representatives and users of the service. The Council will support Tanglewood to look at opportunities such as Crowdfunding to support the valuable service.