

Barnardo's Response to Birmingham City Council's Budget Savings Proposals 2013-2014

Barnardo's recognises the very difficult task faced by the City Council in providing a plan for budget reductions across all services which will appear fair and equitable to all parties.

We attach two detailed responses in relation to the Arch and Amazon services at risk of decommissioning, and the individual impact the closure of these services would make upon Birmingham children and families. We have also contributed to the consultation exercises conducted before Christmas.

Barnardo's Response to proposals:

1. We believe that the funding cuts made to the Voluntary Sector as a whole are entirely disproportionate to cuts made elsewhere within the plan. We are concerned about the detrimental impact upon the Voluntary Sector, the loss of expertise and knowledge at a time when the need for quality services are at a premium within Birmingham, given the recent Ofsted Inspection, and the need for Birmingham to strengthen partnership working, not destabilise it.
2. We would also point out that the return on investment made to the Voluntary Sector by the Public Sector far outweighs the initial outlay. In Barnardo's case we invest over 50% of our own voluntary income in the Arch and Amazon services which will be lost to the City. We are concerned future joint commissioning activity between the City and the Voluntary sector could also be jeopardised.
3. We were heartened that the reduction in funding to Children Centres are in our opinion manageable and allows the City to take forward its plans for integrating its services more effectively. We are also mindful that we are very involved in this work and it remains a key priority for Barnardo's.
4. We recognise that we are faced with an ever changing agenda within the Public Sector and that change is both necessary and desirable. We wish to offer some ideas for solutions to the present predicament:

- More joint commissioning of services which span across the priorities for education, health, the police, the voluntary sector, and social care. This would in our opinion lead to better partnership working between all agencies. It is not always the City's responsibility to fund all services but urge the City to lead this forward.
- We also recognise that what is provided now may not be what is required for the future. For example Arch and Amazon recognise that a merger between these services may be both beneficial and more effective, and we could offer a menu of possible services using the skills and experience across the staff teams.
- Commissioning more work to the Third Sector allows the City through the very tight monitoring of contracts, more control over the outcomes required and greater ability to achieve change in the short to medium term.

Marian Webb
Assistant Director Children services

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