

BUDGET VIEWS

Consultation Period Comments

24.12.12 – 30.12.12

Ref	Contact	Date	Comment
BVE131118	External	24.12.12	<p>It is with disbelief that I have learned about the possibility of cuts to the AMAZON counselling service.</p> <p>As a mental health professional I have made many referrals to this service and the feedback from the clients has always been very positive and in some cases I have been told that people would have harmed/killed themselves without the counselling they received there. In addition it helps families cope with the trauma that abuse can cause.</p> <p>In light of the events with regard to Jimmy Savile and others I am also astonished that cuts to this service can even be contemplated. Surely now more than ever we need this service.</p> <p>Yes there are other counselling services but AMAZON is a specialist service with practitioners who understand deeply the effects abuse has and who also offer counselling based on years of professional development and skills.</p> <p>I am aware of the serious financial difficulties that Local Councils have to make but as a Birmingham Community Charge payer, voter and resident I am sure that other more cost effective cuts can be made.</p>
BVE131119	External	24.12.12	<p>As a parent of a disabled child attending Victoria school, my deepest concern is evident at the proposed changes, physically my daughter cannot walk at all, doesn't speak and is higher rate disabled and of the utmost vulnerability, along with the majority of her class/school mates.</p> <p>School is a safe and stimulating environment for her and transport to and from done by the most caring and professional staff, disabled children often find change severely disrupting and months of careful introduction is needed, this system works and the devastation to the families concerned if it were lost is untenable.</p> <p>The financial option of charging parents up to £600 per year is most hard to understand, these children require so much more than a regular child, our budgets are already extended.</p> <p>Our children are in no way responsible for the council's financial short comings and I would urge you to reconsider targeting those most weak and vulnerable within our community.</p>

BVE131120	External	24.12.12	<p>Having worked with a number of different local authorities over the past 2 years, Staffordshire, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell, Worcestershire and Solihull, it is evident where money is wasted. Many authorities embark upon initiatives only to not see them through after spending vast amounts of money. This should cease immediately and only embark upon projects through a 'STAR' chamber and have a chief exec accountable should business cases prove to be over ambitious and should projects fail.</p> <p>This council has better economies of scale than other authorities around the country.</p> <p>What is also equally apparent is the lack of accountability and responsibility by many members of management and staff. Making people accountable has many desired effects without necessarily adding undue stress.</p> <p>Working patterns seem to be done at the convenience of the staff, which can lose valuable project time and add additional costs.</p> <p>To threaten front line services without addressing basic inefficiency and 'stove piping' is not acceptable. I suggest Birmingham City Council seek to be more ambitious in cutting costs without the need to make 'citizens' suffer. From where I sit, you seem to be too cosy and blameless.</p>
BVE131121	External	24.12.12	<p>I am writing in response to a letter i received from my childs special needs school regarding the proposal to stop funding to their after school clubs and summer holiday provision.</p> <p>I would like to express my anger and disappointment at this proposal. The after school club and summer holiday my autistic child spends at the school is a lifeline for us as a family. My son finds it very difficult to adjust after a school holiday and the summer holiday scheme helps him with his routine. During this long holiday it also gives his siblings some respite from his often difficult and violent behaviour. With limited family support we rely on his schools respite where he is familiar with the staff and his surroundings.</p> <p>If this proposal were to be implemented then this would have a negative impact on our son and as a family, and the same for many others.</p>
BVE131122	Internal	24.12.12	<p>Despite 70% cuts to Connexions last financial year and the subsequent targeting of only those most vulnerable youngsters, we are now expected to suffer more cuts, the restriction of our work to bare statutory duties and the probable loss of 32fte staff (out of about 97fte).</p> <p>Nobody does what Connexions does to meet BCC priorities to give, "a fair chance for everybody" and the building of a, "prosperous city built on an inclusive economy".</p> <p>It will complete the destruction of the Service first founded on 16 December 1910 (1), when the City of Birmingham adopted a report to create what subsequently became Connexions via Youth Employment and</p>

			<p>Careers Services.</p> <p>The then City Elders did this because they sought to stop Birmingham youngsters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • going into dead-end-jobs • being under-employed • being exploited by unscrupulous employers • having thwarted life potential, economic progression and social cohesion <p>In a commentary on this newfangled idea, no less a socialist than Sidney Web (Clause 4 & Fabian Society) thought that steering, "our boys and girls during the perilous years of adolescence...was rightly felt on all sides...to be the most vital of all questions in the wide range of social reform". Such was his stature that he's buried in Westminster Abbey close to Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin.</p> <p>Just undertaking "Statutory" work will not offer provision of enough Service Level to assist youngsters to have an increased quality of life, higher economic engagement and assisting in improving Birmingham's skill base. Nor will it help the goal of an inclusive economy for those with Physical and Learning Disabilities. Three areas of Birmingham are in the worst 5 areas for national unemployment. Our service offers both public good, personal and economic benefit to those in our Birmingham.</p> <p>If implemented, those with disabilities will suffer more private pain of what might have been and like NEET, "lead to groups of people who fall between the cracks".</p>
BVE131123	External	24.12.12	<p>I work for Stepping Stones Spurgeons, a voluntary organisation in Birmingham, which has been in operation for 17 years. The charity has the following projects, ARCH, CAMHS and 4 Kids who Care! which are all currently at risk of being de-commissioned.</p> <p>Over the last 17 years we have supported hundred of families, providing support at early intervention stage. We offer a unique service and receive referrals from a variety of agencies including IFST, SC&H, schools, GP's, wider CAMHS service etc all of whom acknowledge that they do not provide the same support and that they need our service to underpin their work.</p> <p>In a previous round of decommissioning we lost our Intense Family Support team and Reconnect project and the need for them is constantly apparent from the amount of telephone calls that are received asking who callers can contact for these services. It is already heartbreaking to inform people that nobody now provides these valuable services.</p> <p>We have a strong track record of Safeguarding children and have highly trained staff who always provide a professional service in looking out for the welfare of children and families.</p>

			I would ask you to SERIOUSLY consider keeping this service open.
BVE131124	Internal	24.12.12	<p><u>Comments on the proposed deletion of the Customer Relations Service</u></p> <p>The Customer Relations Service is a Statutory Service so I was surprised to read that the description of the function of the Customer Relations Service in the Budget paper read as though the sole function was to produce management information. There was no reference to the fact it is a statutory service with a clear statutory function. This in my view is not a true description to enable public consultation.</p> <p>The Customer Relations Service deals with Compliments, Comments and Complaints from Service Users, Carers, (Section 24D) Representatives and anyone who can demonstrate a significant interest in the well being of the service users Section 26(3) e, (3b)Bb) or (3c)(c) of the Children Act 1989. The complaints are about any aspect of service provision, policy, procedure or decision or action of individuals carrying out their duties within Children's Social Care. The Team establishment consists of four posts, one manager and three administrative staff</p> <p>Below is a list of functions and comments which must be considered before the final decision is made.</p> <p><u>Statutory Duties</u></p> <p>The Customer Relations Service has been created through the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the 2002 Adoption Act. The specific pertinent sections of the Children Act are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 24D which enables a person to make a complaint against the Local Authority. • Section 26A which provides Advocacy to assist and enable a young person to make a complaint against the Local Authority. • Part 1 of the 2006 Representations Procedure Regulations cites the provision of an Independent Person, who is neither a member of staff nor an officer of the Local Authority • Part 3 of the Representations Procedure Regulations section 10 (a), every Local Authority must appoint one of their Officers as a Complaints Manager to assist the Local Authority in the coordination of all aspects of their consideration of representations. The Complaints Manager should be independent of operational line management and of direct service providers i.e social work. • Part 3 13 (1) Every Local Authority must monitor the arrangements that they have made with a view to ensuring that they comply with these Regulations in so far as they regulate the procedure for the consideration of representations under section 26 of the Act. The Local Authority must keep a record of each representation, the outcome of the representation and where there was compliance with the time limits specified in the Regulations • Part 3 13 (3) For the purpose of such monitoring every Local Authority must compile an Annual Report • Part 4 refers under 14 (1) to the process to be followed with times scales attached for Local Resolution.

- Part 4 17 (1) which states that the Local Authority must appoint an Independent Person to consider the complaint where either resolution has not been reached under Part 4 14 (1) or if the complainant has refused for the matter to be considered under this section or made a direct request for matters to be considered under 17 (1) Stage 2.
- Part 4 18 (1) the complainant if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the process under 17 (1) then they may request that their complaint is looked at under 18 (1) Independent Review Panel
- Part 4 19 (2) the Review Panel will consist of three Independent people, one of which will be a chair person.
- Part 4 20 (1) the panel must produce a report on their recommendations to the Local Authority within 5 working days and the Local Authority must produce a response to this within 15 working days.
- Must provide training.

The Customer Relations Service provides a consistency of approach and quality assurance in dealing with complaints. If dealt with locally, not only is this an additional task to existing managers who will need to quality assure complaints but there is a significant risk of not achieving consistency across the city. There is a particular risk when complaints progress to the Local Government Ombudsman as the LGO will look at the entire complaints operation.

One of the main functions provided by the Customer Relations Service is the provision of a skilled mediation service, which is successful in preventing complaints escalating to the next stage.

Public Image

The Customer Relations deals directly with Service Users, Carers and Representatives and are contacted by people who are angry and have lost faith and confidence in the Social Workers and Managers they deal with. There is an air of distrust about Social Workers and Managers. The Complainants do make allegations of corruption and have no belief that Managers will find any wrong doing in their investigations against their services at the informal level. To not have an arms length service with the ability to provide the required Independence at stage 2 and 3 of the complaints process will add to their belief and be damaging to the Local Authority's public image. That belief is perpetuated with a high profile child death (serious case review BSCB1 2008 -9/2) where a complaint was sent directly to the service area to deal with, who did not inform the Customer Relations Service of it's existence or deal with it appropriately.

If complaints are not dealt with according to the Statutory Process and timescales, this will lead to more complainants going to the Local Government Ombudsman, which will lead to more costs in compensation being awarded and adverse reports against the local authority being issued. There is a further potential for more cases going to Judicial Review.

Enablement

One of the primary focuses of the Customer Relations Service is try to rebuild the relationship between the

Local Authority and the Service user, this is done through early identification of need and the enablement and empowerment of Service Users to complain about the service received and actions of workers. This is done through the use of Independent Advocates, the use of interpreters, translation services and signers. Complaints have been received about Children's Social Care where the lack of enablement is a feature.

Partners

Local Government Ombudsman

The Customer Relations Service provides a link between Children's Social Care and the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman not only scrutinises whether Integrated Service areas have followed their legislative, policy and procedural requirements but also whether this service has done so also. There is a danger that by deletion of the Team, that maladministration may be found in the handling of complaints resulting in the publication of adverse reports and monetary fines.

The lack of an arms length Service with the provision of the required Independence at stages 2 & 3 of the processes will result in more referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman by service users, carers and representatives.

Economics

As part of an alternate dispute resolution process as permitted by the Regulations, The Customer Relations Service provides a mediation service. From May 2009 to present day the service has chaired and minuted 237 mediation meetings, of which 45 escalated to stage 2 which saved the Local Authority the cost of going to Independent Investigation. This was a potential saving of £288,000 – £576,000.

The Customer Relations Service has pools of Independent People which are used at different stages of the complaints process. The cost of our own Advocates is less than

Those provided by outside services such as VOICE of the child. The Investigating Officers and Review Panel Members have been capped at the same fees for the last 4 years, whereas other local authority's pay more either in fees or mileage.

Process

It may be beneficial to share some of the figures involved as again by statute each outcome to each aspect of a complaint needs to be recorded so that an annual report can be published and learning shared.

From the Annual report 2011/12, there were:-

397 complainants with 1095 aspects of complaint at stage 1

121 complainants with 1285 aspects of complaint at stage 2

38 complainants with 622 aspects of complaint at stage 3

34 Local Government Ombudsmans complaints with 334 aspects of complaint

48 mediations were held with 348 aspects of complaint (24 included in stage 1)

In total there were 603 complainants with 3491 aspects of complaints recorded with their individual outcomes

Statutory Annual Report & Management Information

The Customer Relations Service has a statutory duty to produce an annual report for Scrutiny on the numbers, nature, trends, equalities and learning. Since becoming part of CYPF in 2009, three reports have been produced.

Reports have also been produced for the Ofsted inspections of the Directorate, including the individual inspections of Adoption and Fostering.

Reports are produced on a quarterly basis for the Performance Board, with a monthly update.

Reports are produced quarterly for the Assistant Directors on numbers, learning and compliance

Reports are produced monthly for the Assistant Directors on active complaints and the number of chases made for a response.

Reports are also produced on an ad hoc basis per performance area.

Excluding the annual report a total of 56 reports have been produced this year and 70 for the previous year.

Training

Part of the Team's statutory functions is to provide training to staff on the management of complaints. Since the Team has moved to CYP&F in 2009, it has provided training to individuals and Teams, to Managers and Independent People:-

2009/10 11 training sessions with a total of 179 people

2010/11 7 training sessions with a total of 87 people

2011/12 8 training sessions with a total of 179 people

2012 to date 7 training sessions with a total of 16 people

+ training for the Independent Advocates, a total of 5 people.

+ 4 presentation slots on the CYPF Induction programme with approximately 50 people

In total over 500 staff, managers and Independent People have received training excluding the numbers on the Induction programme.

Conclusions

			<p>It is my view that the service which is small, as it stands has the required knowledge and skills to deliver the local authorities statutory duties. It delivers value for money in the mediations performed and prevents many complaints from escalating to the next stage or the Ombudsman, which would have economic and public image consequences. It is cheaper or comparative with its Independent arm than other Local Authorities. Should this service be absorbed internally then it is my view as born out by experience and quality of responses seen, managers do not have the time or in some cases the ability to perform this function objectively which again will lead to an increase in the number of complaints escalated.</p>
BVE131125	External	24.12.12	<p>I am a consultant community paediatrician and designated doctor for safeguarding. I am very concerned to hear that Amazon counselling service is under threat of closure. I regularly refer children and young people to Amazon following sexual assault and feel it is vital for their future health and wellbeing to have the correct provision of support and counselling.</p> <p>I have also recently been involved in the work looking at developing a regional Sexual Assault Referral Centre and one of the main issues considered by the group was the importance of after care and counselling for victims of sexual assault. It is known that the psychological impact of sexual assault can last for many years after the actual assault. For those who present early it is important to provide the holistic care they need to try and prevent long term issues.</p> <p>I feel it would be detrimental to this group of patients if the service was cut.</p>
BVE131126	External	24.12.12	<p>I received counseling for a year at barnardos and feel that i owe them my life. Before i began my course i didn't want to live any more. I felt as though no one could n would ever understand what i had been through n the emotions that i was feeling. I was taking drugs and hated myself, i was still a teenager and wanted to give up. I didn't believe that talking to someone could make me feel human again. I began my course as i felt it was my last option but i now don't think i would be here today to write you this email if i hadn't been offered the help. I still use what i have learnt from counselling in my day to day life and people often comment on how level headed i now am. Its amazing what a difference it had made to me, i have completely turned my life around and know whoever is lucky enough to get the help that i did would be able to do the same. This is all down to my counseling. I have raised money for barnardos and would do anything in my power to keep this counseling service going. It would be devastating to know that people who have been in my situation are left to suffer from the actions of other people.</p>
BVE131127	External	25.12.12	<p>I have briefly scanned the budget proposals. Can I suggest that we stop translating everything? - that would save a lot of money and resources.</p>
BVE131128	External	27.12.12	<p>Seems good to me</p>

			<p>It seems you can save most of the money without having much effect. I would have expected more compulsory redundancies and sales of council held land and property for example as well as stopping some services altogether eg leisure, cuts to useless health and safety as well as decreasing interference in families and jobs.</p> <p>What is this about a living wage when there are so many unemployed, Better to offer low paid work to all than good wages to a few and nothing but homeless provision for the rest,.</p>
BVE131129	External	28.12.12	<p>I think it's a DISGRACE, I have worked ALL my life, FULL stamp, my daughter catches Pneumococcle Meningitis in an NHS hospital which gives her brain damage and puts her in an SEN school, which is no better today than in the 50s. I have Breast Cancer grade 3 which coupled with █████ ailments prevents my continued work within HMPPrison Service. If I do not recieve the CONTRIBUTION towards Diesel █████ will not have an excellent Attendance record, as she will attend when I can afford to send her!!! What an absolute disgrace this country has been bled to, not only Beauracrats with hefty pay packets but the misappropriate use of Indiginous National Insurance Contributions!!! How dare anyone treat these children and there families in such an offhand manner, even more dismissal for us? The people that actually save YOU money by looking after our own and never asking YOUR SORT to help with the life long commitment WE have chose to deal with. We have no Professionals to help/ advise us and now you stop Education for our Children.</p>
BVE131130	External	29.12.12	<p>There is massive scope for cost savings & expenditure reductions. Why not have a weekly suggestion box for BCC employees & residents, with small prizes for suggestions, sponsored by local businesses (theatre tickets, meals in restaurants, etc)?</p> <p>Some suggestions -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover the roofs of all BCC properties with solar panels, sponsored by the energy companies, in exchange for a mention in publicity & evaluation of efficiency. 2. Fit every room used by BCC with PIR devices, so that lights are only on when someone is present, sponsored by energy companies or electricians. examine whether this simple principle could be applied to street lighting. 3. Set up an in-house employment agency, as a register for temporary staff, to avoid paying agency fees, which often double staff costs, or more. 4. Provide every office with its own shredders, rather than outsourcing this service. Ask the stationery companies to sponsor these. 5. Switch off lights in parks, public toilets, etc. overnight.

			<p>6. Recruit an army of retired volunteer gardeners, to help with maintenance of public spaces & parks. These people should receive civic recognition & awards for their services, local medals, maybe?</p> <p>7. This could be expanded to other professions, where appropriate, teachers, health workers, etc. Maybe mentoring youngsters?</p> <p>8. Ask road users for suggestions on how traffic flows, parking, etc. could be improved.</p> <p>9. Make available public buildings, such as museums & the Council House available for hire to private companies, for events.</p> <p>10. Sell off all non-essential city-owned assets, such as shops, stakes in airports, exhibition & conference centres, etc.</p> <p>11. Get out of all non-statutory responsibilities for such things as schools; let them become academies, where appropriate.</p> <p>12. Set up a voluntary committee of local businessmen to consider & evaluate such suggestions</p> <p>These are just a few ideas, which took a few minutes to compile. I'm sure that, given the natural ingenuity of Birmingham citizens, there are far more & probably much better proposals available.</p>
BVE131131	External	29.12.12	Why not install turbines in all city rivers, to generate electricity, sponsored by energy companies?
BVE131132	External	29.12.12	<p>Given all the trauma that has been exposed since Jimmy Savile's abusive behaviours have come to light, it is the height of irresponsibility to even consider decommissioning the Amazon Counselling Service at this time. The Amazon Counselling Service is the only support for young people who have been abused in the Birmingham area. Given the fact that virtually all adult abusers were themselves abused as children but were unsupported through and after their experiences and that with appropriate help we can support abused young people to come through such traumatic experiences and develop into caring, responsible adults, it is absolutely essential that we put money into support services for young people and break the on-going cycle of abuse.</p> <p>I trust you will take suitable note of all the support for the Amazon Counselling Service and reconsider any reduction in their funding.</p>
BVE131133	External	29.12.12	I write to ask Birmingham City Council to continue to fund Home-Start in Stockland Green/Erdington. They do

			<p>vital work with families and I'm sure their early interventions actually save the Council money further down the line. Lots of good people give their time as volunteers working within a well structured organisation.</p> <p><i>Please continue your support for them !</i></p>
BVE131134	External	29.12.12	<p>I understand that the City proposes to cease financing the Amazon project. I confess I found it so hard to believe that at first I put the news down to rumour. Current scandals & ongoing investigations have brought the issue of child sexual abuse right into the public awareness and yet is nothing to be learned from this?</p> <p>Clearly the likes of Jimmy Saville are exceptional cases but what is hugely significant is that so many of the abused remained silent about their experiences which continued to affect the quality of their daily lives. Have you any idea how hard it is to tell others that an adult, who is supposed to protect you, is abusing you for their own sexual satisfaction? This is then frequently exacerbated by other loved ones not believing them. Had projects like Amazon been readily available many of the abused may well have had the confidence to speak up knowing that they would be somebody they could trust to talk to.</p> <p>Sadly child sexual abuse is common with many of the abused keeping their secrets throughout their lives and suffering unearned guilt and shame along the way, In my work with adults, including short term therapy, it is not unusual for clients to identify that sexual abuse many years ago has continued to blight their lives. Sometimes I am the first person they have ever told.</p> <p>People need to talk about these experiences and the earlier the better. Amazon has offered this opportunity and it is not easy to find it elsewhere. Other voluntary organisations that offer counselling to children and young people are already snowed under with demand. Please reconsider. Surely the young should be our first priority!</p>
BVE131135	External	30.12.12	<p>I am in the privileged position of being a teacher in an inner city Birmingham school. Every day I work with young adults, the future of this country and our city, who have faced difficult situations and experiences that are difficult for us to comprehend. Finding help for these students can be difficult and it was my desire to help a number of teenage girls who had experienced unthinkable things that led me to contact Barnados. The support that this agency offered to these students was fantastic and undoubtedly had a lasting impact. One student who they worked with for three years has now left school with nine a - c GCSE grades, she is currently studying for her a levels and considering what university to study at. Do I think that she would have been able to emotionally coped without the help of barnado's? No. When I initially contacted them I wondered, as did her father, what would become of her. Yet the support that was provided for this student gave her a safe outlet, it helped to restore her. Since then they have helped support other students, this is essential support because they have a positive impact on young people who have already been through too much. We have a responsibility as adults to provide young people with support and guidance, we can't take the most essential</p>

