

EXETER HOMELESSNESS FORUM

c/o St Petrock's, 10 Cathedral Yard, Exeter EX1 1HJ

To Devon MPs:

3 April 2023

Dear (name)

RE: DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSED HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION BUDGET CUTS

You may be aware that Devon County Council is proposing to cut its adult [homelessness prevention budget](#), which will result in a significant increase in the numbers of people being forced to live on the streets through the closure of services that this fund supports.

Cutting this budget represents a loss of approximately £1.5m - money that currently supports some of the most vulnerable people across Devon, and funds services that have suffered repeated real terms cuts in funding for over a decade. The proposed cuts will result in the complete withdrawal of all funding to the remaining services, with a major increase in homelessness across Devon being the inevitable outcome.

The removal of this funding will bring about the loss of vital skilled and professional support, which enables people with complex needs to establish and maintain accommodation after a period of homelessness. This money also underpins the delivery of valuable responsive and preventative services which prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

According to the Devon County Council's own impact assessment this could trigger the **closure** of 'five hostel provisions' across the county, creating an inevitable and significant increase in homelessness and rough sleeping. This is in addition to a very large number of people who are homeless but hidden from view – for example sofa surfing or in B&B accommodation – many more of whom are likely to end up rough sleeping without these services.

The cost-of-living crisis and repeated funding cuts have already resulted in the closure or reduction of many services in Devon for people experiencing homelessness, and pushed other services to the brink of closure, leaving remaining provision often overwhelmed by rapidly increasing numbers of people desperately needing support. The ending of all DCC funding for these services will simply exacerbate an already failing system, as witnessed by the steady increase in rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness.

We recognise that homelessness prevention is not a statutory requirement for Devon County Council and acknowledge the serious financial pressures on its budgets, which are mirrored across the country.

However, as stated by DCC's own impact assessment, the county council does have a clear statutory duty for adult social care and reducing health inequalities, and given that the vast majority of those who will be affected by the proposed cuts face multiple health and social inequalities including poor mental and physical health, and substance addictions. In consequence, there will inevitably be a major impact on other DCC budgets which are likely to outweigh the savings made.

These proposed cuts will inevitably place further strain on other key services such as the NHS, the Police and the City and District Councils. As [The National Housing Federation](#) reported this

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month: *“The cost to the public purse of long-term homelessness has been estimated at over £40,000 per person per year.”*

The proposed removal of the Homelessness Prevention budget will render the Government’s much-publicised flagship policy of ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament as completely – and very visibly - unachievable in Devon.

Indeed, these cuts are most likely to result in a substantial further increase in rough sleeping in the county, in addition to the rises already seen since the policy was announced in 2019, completely reversing the progress made by the Government initiatives to end rough sleeping over the past three years.

Clearly, if this proposal goes ahead it will end up costing other services such as district councils, the police, NHS and social care, significantly more in the medium to long term.

The personal cost and hardship that so many more people will have to endure will be extreme. No funding cut should result in a “risk to life” as recognised on page 8 of Devon County Council’s [impact assessment](#)

Given Devon County Council’s challenging financial position, we believe it is critical that our local MPs are fully informed of the impact on their constituencies of this proposed removal of funding and ask you to lobby ministers to provide the desperately needed funding to avoid DCC precipitating a homelessness crisis in Devon.

Yours sincerely



Peter Stephenson, Chair of EHF and Director - St Petrock’s (Exeter) Ltd

Penny Blackmore, CEO - EDP Drug and Alcohol Service

Fiona Carden, CEO - CoLab Exeter

Nicola Greenfield, Head of Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing - BCHA

Debbie Hall, Area Manager – Sanctuary Supported Living

Katie Holland, CEO - Exeter Community Initiatives

Si Johns, Joint Chief Executive – YMCA Exeter

Andy Moreman, CEO - Young Devon

Martin Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homelessness Prevention – Exeter City Council

Josh Stunell, CEO - bthechange CIC

Kim Whittle, Operations Manager (Housing) - Exeter City Community Trust

Roanne Wootten, Strategic Partnerships Director - Julian House

CC:

Local media

All Devon County Councillors

Devon County Council Chief Executive

Devon District Councils’ Chief Executives and Leaders

Devon and Cornwall Police Chief Constable