

CABINET
27 FEBRUARY 2019
MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Question 1

Youth Services Budget for 2019/20 (received from Cllr Andy Boddington)

No information has been provided on funding for youth services after the end of March 2019.

We hear daily about the strains on young people. We read frightening statistics on growing mental health and self-harm among teenagers. We understand that there is a growing need for young people to have the emotional support from early life and through to adulthood.

There is excellent work underway in Shropshire to support young people through Shropshire Youth Association, local groups and GPs. Shropshire Council has a significant role in enabling this. But we have no information on whether any projects to support young people will have single penny after the end of March.

In Ludlow this is vital. We have launched Ludlow Young Health with the Children's Society. Shropshire Council is one of the foundation sponsors through the LJC. We have the absolute backing of local GPs because we can reach youngsters in a different way. The project is aimed at promoting mental health and wellbeing among young people. This is one of the biggest issues of our age. Our team of professionals and volunteers helped 47 drop-in clients in the first three hours of the project launch in Ludlow.

The Ludlow junior youth club is one of the successful projects we run. This is not just about children playing and eating pizza. It is not about damping down antisocial behaviour. Our trained youth workers are constantly working on safeguarding and providing support for mental and sexual health and wellbeing. They give young lives a boost that is often so needed and encourage children with different backgrounds to work together as a community.

We have two very successful youth projects that are helping young people. But we cannot run projects without money to pay for expertise and safeguarding.

- 1) What is the youth budget for the each of the LJC's for young people in 2019/10?
- 2) What schemes is the council planning to support to promote positives activities for young people over the next three years?
- 3) What support does the council sponsor for mental health and wellbeing advice in the market towns?
- 4) How much will Shropshire Council charge Ludlow Young Health for use of the public owned Ludlow Youth Centre in 2018/19?

Response

Responsibility for the oversight and delivery of youth provision is in the process of transitioning from the Place Directorate to the Children's Services Directorate.

We will ensure that youth provision is an integrated element of the Early Help offer, and enhance our holistic work with families, focussing on vulnerable young people, and capitalising on the contribution of the wider Early Help Partnership.

This creates an opportunity to reassess need based on current data and to be able to re-think our policy and practice, explore the role and contribution of the Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector in delivering universal and targeted youth support.

We intend to establish a cross-party task and finish group to work alongside officers to help shape the future direction.

1) What is the youth budget for the each of the LJC's for young people in 2019/10?

We intend to extend the current core offer contracts (currently £157,260 pa) for a period of 9 months, up to December 2019. This equates to a sum of approximately £106,637.

In respect of the rural fund (currently £33k pa), where there are established ongoing and recurring young people's activities currently commissioned via LJC's (i.e. revenue expenditure), we will continue to honour the current level of expenditure on these activities up until the end of December 2019. We are in the process of establishing the value of this activity. This position allows activity to continue whilst future arrangements are considered.

2) What schemes is the council planning to support to promote positives activities for young people over the next three years?

See above context

3) What support does the council sponsor for mental health and wellbeing advice in the market towns?

The Council provides and sponsors support for mental health and well-being in a range of ways:

- Early Help Family Support Workers work with families to support their children's mental health and wellbeing. This might be done via direct face to face support with a family on caseload, which might involve supporting parents to develop their parenting skills to better equip them to understand and support their children's mental health, it might be working with a young person around unresolved grief related to bereavement and loss, family breakdown, self-harm or substance misuse. All of their work focuses on keeping children and young people safe, supporting families around areas such as child exploitation, domestic violence, substance misuse and internet safety, which are all factors which might impact on a young person's mental health. Early Help also offer parenting clinics and groups, which is a universal offer to all Shropshire families. The service works closely with partners sharing a plan to support children and families at home and at school and support families to access more specialist mental health services if required.
- The Public Health Nursing Service (PHNS) has a Lead Specialist Community Public Health Nurse for emotional and mental health. This is a countywide service and can offer support, early intervention and signposting for emotional mental health issues/concerns. The PHNS also offers drop-ins within secondary schools for a variety of issues which will include emotional/mental health. PHNS also have a single point of access telephone number and texting service for CYP and parents/carers. They will also offer support on an individual basis as required.

- There is a Targeted Mental Health training programme. This is for professionals working with children and young people to raise awareness and help them to support the mental and emotional health of children and young people through early intervention. This includes training such as mental health first aid, reach for the top, managing emotions. They are also looking at rolling out “Seasons for Growth” which is a bereavement and loss programme.
- As part of the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board training delivery the Public Health Service also offer STORM training to professionals (Skills training and risk mitigation) which is around suicide prevention and self-harm mitigation.
- Work is being done with schools to develop Mental Health Services and Schools link networks as a follow up to the national Anna Freud project (in which the Public Health team have been involved) as well as the recommendation within the green paper around children and young people’s mental health.
- The Mental Health Partnership Board (MHPB) feeds into the Health & Wellbeing Board. One of the MHPB key objectives is to develop a five-year mental health partnership strategy and action plan and we are working with them on this, as well as the Children and Young People mental health transformation plan. The STP also has a mental health workstream.
- BeeU is Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin’s Children & Families Emotional Health & Wellbeing Service. The service is a partnership between providers that ensure that children, young people and their families get timely and appropriate support for emotional health and wellbeing support. The service is jointly commissioned by the CCG and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Authorities.
- Children and young people aged 11 and above can access free confidential support and counselling from Kooth, which is an online service, without a referral.
- Children, young people of all ages and parents can access any of The Children Society’s drop-in sessions, called BEAM, without an appointment or referral. Here they can talk to an experienced practitioner who listen to and support them with any challenges facing them regarding emotional health and wellbeing.
- More specialist mental health support can be accessed via the Young People and Families Mental Health Service (previously CAMHS). Professionals and staff working with children and young people can contact the Access Team for a consultation or advise. A specialist mental health intervention may be suggested which might include face to face psychological therapy with a young person, family therapy or a referral to Helios who offer therapeutic support via Skype.

4) How much will Shropshire Council charge Ludlow Young Health for use of the public owned Ludlow Youth Centre in 2018/19?

Ludlow Youth Health will be charged £21.80 per session. This is a casual booking arrangement, there is no lease or tenancy agreement. This is the current charitable rate.

Question 2 – from Councillor Roger Evans

I understand the following is being proposed by the Government. This will effect a number of couples in Shropshire. Will cabinet join me in objecting to this proposal and write to the Government asking that it be reversed.

The Government is planning to change the way benefits are given to couples if there's an age gap between them. It's nothing short of an #AgeGapTax, and here's why this decision should be reversed.

What's happening?

Couples come in all shapes and sizes – and all ages too. Some are the same age as each other and others are at different stages of their lives.

Currently when couples claiming benefits have an age gap between them, this is what happens:

- When the older partner reaches State Pension age, the couple stops receiving working age benefits.
- They start receiving pension age benefits instead.

Pensioner benefits are higher so this makes quite a difference to the couple's overall income, but the Government has decided to change this system – the latest in a long line of cuts to hit older people who are not very well off. If it's allowed to happen it will increase pensioner poverty at a stroke.

If the change is allowed to go ahead many of the poorest older people in the country could be a staggering £140 worse off a week.

Couples on low incomes shouldn't have to face this. It's deeply unfair. We're urging the Government to reverse the decision, and you can help.

What will the Government's changes mean?

As of May 2019, if one partner is of working age the couple will only be able to receive working age benefits – in the future this will mean claiming Universal Credit.

They'll no longer be able to claim Pension Credit and/or Housing Benefit. These benefits are a huge help because they top up their low incomes, taking the couple above the poverty line.

If the change is allowed to go ahead many of the poorest older people in the country could be a staggering £140 worse off a week. That's a drop in income of up to £7,000 a year. A few could lose even more. The change is only supposed to hit new claimants BUT if a couple's claim for Pension Credit is interrupted by just a day, or if they move area, they will lose it forever and suffer this big and immediate drop in how much money they receive as a result.

