

Forward

Midlothian

Disabled People

www.forwardmid.org.uk

Forward

Mid

Equality - Diversity - Inclusion



Midlothian Council Budget 2018/19

How It Affects Disabled People

On 13 February 2018 Midlothian Council announced it had approved its budget for 2018/19. This budget aims to address a shortfall of £10.43 million.

The plans to generate additional income, increased charges and transform the way services operate were put out for public consultation [Shaping Our Future] between October and December 2017. As expected, the proposed drastic cuts to services, increases in charges and the introduction of new charges caused a great deal of fear and anxiety to many people in Midlothian particularly older and disabled citizens. This can be summed up in Forward Mid's introduction in their submission to the consultation.

"The project proposals in the Shaping our Future consultation, if implemented, will have a disproportionate effect on disabled people. They have to cope with the same service cuts and extra costs as non-disabled citizens in Midlothian but disabled people will also face cuts and increases in charges for social care services – services that they rely on just to live an ordinary life." FORWARD MID

One thing that was never in doubt was an increase in council tax. From 1 April 2018 this will be increased by 3% raising the Band D equivalent tax from £1,246 to £1,283 a year. Here Forward Mid list the initial proposed savings that would specifically affect disabled people and carers along with comments taken from the public consultation and the Council's final decisions on issues.

Travel and Fleet Proposals:

Stop supported bus grants and reduce community transport support. Reduce the ring and go scheme. Stop the taxi card scheme. ▶

"Isolation is a significant issue for many carers, and it is intensified by the rural nature of Midlothian and the difficulties in accessing public transport in certain areas. The proposals will have the unintended consequence of increasing this high risk of isolation even further. It will also limit the mobility of vulnerable groups including the elderly, disabled or low income families, many of whom may also be carers."

VOCAL

Proposed cuts in transport were rejected. There will be no new budgetary reductions for financially supported bus services, community transport, Taxicards and Ring & Go cards.

Communities and Economy Proposal (1):

Transfer of the Welfare Rights function to external agencies. (As this service is not statutory it could be transferred to external agencies. Savings could also be made by encouraging customers to do more online.) ▶

"Many of our members find online services difficult, for example benefits such as ESA on line can result in sanctions when timescales are not met due to a lack of understanding in using online services."

PEOPLE FIRST ▼

The proposed transfer of welfare rights and advice services has been rejected and instead, council officers have been asked to bring forward proposals to improve access to welfare rights services in Midlothian.

Communities and Economy Proposal (2):

A tailored and informed approach to Reduction in the Large and Small Grants budgets.

“This will be devastating to the local voluntary and community sector. It will inevitably lead to a much reduced service in areas such as youth work, and could lead to the closure of some long established organisations.”

MIDLOTHIAN VOLUNTARY SECTOR FORUM.

There will be no reduction in the large and small community grants budget for voluntary organisations.

Education Proposals:

Reduce learning assistants by 10% overall. This equates to 12 learning assistants.

“This may impact on people with learning difficulties. People First believes that people with learning difficulties should be schooled in mainstream schools.

The right support for this is essential to ensure the person gets the best opportunities in a learning environment”

PEOPLE FIRST

There will be no budget reduction in early intervention and prevention in children’s services, a 10% reduction in the budget for learning assistants in schools, less staff recruited to support a growing population than had previously been planned. The cost of school meals will increase.

Adult Social Care Proposals:

Rebalancing Care – Rebalancing Expectations

Models of care will be reshaped. Options that will need to be considered will include the externalisation services currently delivered by Midlothian Council and closer integration of services teams within health and social care.

5% increase in Homecare/Housing support charges from £10.80 to £11.30(per hour).

100% increase in Telecare and Community Alarms from £3.15 to £6.30(per week).

“Rebalancing Care, Rebalancing Expectations, Models of Care will be reshaped” - very worrying terminology and along with “externalisation of services and closer integration of service teams” - can only mean one thing i.e. decimation of these services and an opt out by Midlothian Council”

INDIVIDUAL RESPONDER.

£4.620 million in adult social care savings planned for the next four years by rebalancing care expectations has been rejected. Although there will be an increase in the charge for housing support, the proposal to increase charges for telecare, which provides security for vulnerable households, will not go ahead.

Customer and Housing Services Proposal:

Have only 1 Midlothian central library, withdrawal the mobile library (a shared service with ELC) and close the branch libraries.

“Library services: it is unbelievable in this climate of improving literacy, sharing resources, improving attainment, community cohesion, community support, up-skilling and re-skilling that Midlothian Council is suggesting that ONE library is sufficient provision to cover such a large county.”

INDIVIDUAL RESPONDER.

The proposal to close branch libraries and withdraw the mobile library service will not go ahead.

Although the Council’s Budget is not as painful as it might have been, some of the decisions made will have a severe effect on disabled and older people. Firstly, the increase in charges for Homecare and Housing support has risen by 5%. Since 2014 the cost of these services which allow disabled and older people to live ‘normal’ lives has increased by an astonishing 19%. This is particularly galling for disabled people who receive a direct payment from the Council to employ their own personal assistants (whose pay rates are set by the Council). These PAs haven’t had a pay increase since 2008 – a full decade.

Secondly, the 10% reduction in learning assistants is an area of great concern. As highlighted by People First, an organisation for people with learning difficulties, equality of opportunity for those who need this support will be significantly reduced with this cut. This could result in some people being denied an education in mainstream schools.

In this article Forward Mid only covered areas that specifically affect disabled people. We have not listed any of the other decisions the Council made in this budget that will have an effect on all the residents of Midlothian. The full details of Midlothian Council's Budget 2018/19 and the responses to the Shaping the Future consultation can be found by following this link: www.midlothian.gov.uk/news/article/2398/council_approves_budget_and_council_tax_increase_for_201819

If you have a chronic lung condition have you ever thought of singing?

Research has shown that regular group singing can help with your breathing, provide you with tools to help manage your condition, help to reduce anxiety and depression and provide peer support through meeting regularly with others with a similar condition.



The Warblers is a singing group specifically for people with chronic lung conditions which began meeting at St Anne's sheltered housing in Newtongrange in January 2017. The group is part of the British Lung Foundation singing for lung health project which supports similar groups all over the UK. Singing for lung health is a specific approach based around a series of exercises to develop a more natural pattern of breathing using primary rather than secondary support muscles, to develop relaxation and body awareness and to learn new breathing habits and develop stamina. Songs are chosen carefully with a focus on gradually extending the length of the phrase sung.

Participants say that the group is uplifting and enjoyable. Quotes from singers include:

- **It is a fun way of exercising my lungs**
- **I look forward to it every week**
- **It is such a positive experience**
- **I don't feel so stressed**
- **It's giving me more confidence**

They say that attending the group has helped them with breathing in everyday activities; enabled them to sustain their breath for longer and helped them to breathe properly. Nearly all members have commented on the friendly nature of the group and have said that they would recommend it to others.



We believe that everyone can sing – you don't need to be able to read music or have any previous experience at singing, just a willingness to give it a go! All songs are taught by ear in a relaxed and fun environment.

Last November the group were invited to sing in Parliament at an event for world COPD day. It was a really uplifting occasion and we managed to get the Minister for Public Health, consultants, civil servants, GPs and others joining in with gusto!

The Warblers meets in Newtongrange every Tuesday afternoon from 3 to 4:30 PM except the first Tuesday of every month. We ask for a small donation of £4/£2 or whatever you can afford but money should not be a barrier to anyone attending. There is also a similar group that meets in Musselburgh every Monday.

You can find more information on our website www.warblers.org.uk/ If you would like to come along and give it a go please contact Jane Lewis Tel: ☎ 07519 582130, email: ✉ jane@gn.apc.org or just turn up (please check dates on website). We are also happy to come along and run a taster session for a group or to run an awareness session for a staff team.

House, But Not A Home

Scotland's next generation of affordable houses will be too small for many disabled people who rely on wheelchairs or other mobility aids, according to the Government's own research.

Ministers have committed to invest £3bn in building at least 50,000 new properties by 2021, with the aim of tackling the nation's chronic housing shortage.

"Being unable to buy or rent a sufficiently accessible home can leave disabled people trapped" **Dr Sally Witcher,**

"Being unable to visit friends and relatives will leave disabled people isolated in the community they live in", Marlene Gill

But research commissioned by the Government says many will be unsuitable for disabled and elderly people, as the standards being followed do not allow sufficient floor space for wheelchairs.

The oversight was highlighted by the charity **Inclusion Scotland** after an investigation by **IS** revealed that **almost 10,000 disabled people across the country** are waiting for more suitable council houses.

Figures from 26 of Scotland's 32 local authorities showed that some have been waiting for decades to move, with one disabled person in Stirling first requesting a change of property in 1969.

Inclusion Scotland said a lack of accessible housing around the country was leaving disabled people "trapped" in their own homes, describing the situation as "unacceptable". Although 35,000 of Scotland's 50,000 planned affordable homes are being built to construction guidance called "Housing for Varying Needs", this does not take into account the extra floor space needed by people who use wheelchairs or mobility aids.

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government from architects Anderson Bell Christie highlighted the problem, but Inclusion Scotland it had still not been acknowledged by ministers.

'Confusion and complacency'

In their report in May last year, the authors said the Housing for Varying Needs guidance will improve the accessibility of most homes, but added: "None of these 'barrier-free' standards offer full accessibility for wheelchair users, as this would involve a significant increase in floor area."

They continued: "While there are 'pockets' of expertise in housing for wheelchair users, there is confusion and some complacency as to what constitutes wheelchair design standards.

"Often homes designed to accessible, barrier-free design standards are seen as suitable for wheelchair users without an understanding of their greater space requirements." **Inclusion Scotland** is calling for ministers to set a national target for new build developments, with the aim of making at least 10 per cent of their properties wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable.

"Being unable to buy or rent a sufficiently accessible home can leave disabled people trapped – in their own homes, in hospital, or in residential care against their will. This is simply unacceptable in today's society," said the charity's chief executive Dr Sally Witcher.

"Put simply, we are not building or adapting enough houses in Scotland to keep pace with the current housing needs of wheelchair users and those who use mobility aids, let alone enough to anticipate the projected growth in these needs of an ageing population.

"We need more homes that are built to more generous wheelchair accessible standards and we need them now."

'Truly shocking'

Scottish Labour's housing spokeswoman Pauline McNeill said it was "truly shocking" that ministers had apparently ignored the advice of their own commissioned research.



"Every disabled person deserves an accessible home, but under the SNP that is further away than ever," she added.

Not only do we have almost 10,000 disabled people trapped on housing waiting lists for suitable accommodation – but the SNP's own research now shows that even the homes it is building won't be suitable.

"The SNP government must come forward and explain what action it is going to take to redress this as a matter of urgency.

"A house-building target is not enough. The Government must have a plan to build the right kinds of homes for the people who need them."

Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said: "We want disabled people in Scotland to live life to the full in homes built or adapted to enable them to participate as full and equal citizens.

"Our Disability Delivery Plan, launched in December 2016, set out a number of housing related commitments that support this ambition. "Work is underway to develop guidance for local authorities and other stakeholders on the need to set a realistic target for the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures.

"This will be incorporated into the Local Housing Strategy guidance, which will be reviewed later this year."

Read more at: <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/scotlands-new-accessible-houses-small-wheelchairs/>

Absolutely, we really need to encourage developers and our planners to think about our whole community and supplying a variety of different homes for people.



Councillor Kenneth Baird Midlothian Council

Do you Have your copy?

Forward Mid has Launched their 2018 disabled persons directory with Midlothian Elected councillors.

The event proved very popular and it was very well attended by most of Midlothian Elected councillors.

The event was informal with all the councillors asking important questions and better still getting important answers. This has brought about invitations for Forward Mid to present what they do to groups around Midlothian.

Please make sure you either download a copy from Forward Mid Website or Contact Eric Johnstone.

Where can you pick up a copy?

All midlothian libraries, MVA office in Dalkeith. You can request a copy by writing to Eric Johnstone at 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE, or Email eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or Phone 0131-663-9471

I prefer an Electronic copy?

Then download it from www.forwardmid.org.uk/directorypage1.html you will find two copies the smaller size is for phones and tablets, the larger size is print quality.



Getting into shape

A exercise workout regime for wheelchair users and those looking for gentle seated exercise brought to you by darebee.com/. They say it is a :-

“An energy-boosting routine for wheelchair users that helps to increase upper body strength and ease joint stiffness.”

Chair Exercise Workout

3 sets with up to 2 minutes rest between sets



20 Chest Expansions



20 Side Arm Raises



10 Dives



10 Raised Arm Circles
5 clockwise/ 5 anti-clockwise



20 Overhead Punches



20 Punches

Brought to you courtesy of www.wheel-life.org/

Self-Directed Support

Forward Mid are proud to announce the launch of its self-directed support booklet, until now many people are still unaware of what self directed support is or what can be done with support that you can apply for.

Self Directed Support lets you take more control over the money available to meet your agreed care and support needs. It allows you to make choices about your support based on the things that are important.

- To you, and to goals you want to achieve,
- To help you stay safe and well.

Since 1 April 2014 – the commencement date of the Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 – all local authorities have a statutory duty to give people who are eligible for social care more choice about how they receive support – they must offer self-directed support.

There are four options within self directed support for you to choose from:

Option 1 – The person receives a direct payment and arranges the support themselves, often with the support of an advice and support organisation.

Option 2 – The person chooses how their individual budget is spent while the local authority or a third party (such as a support organisation or service provider) manages the money and arranges the support on their behalf.

Option 3 – The person asks the local authority to decide and arrange the services and support they receive.

Option 4 – A combination of two or all of options 1, 2 and 3. For example, the person may choose to use part of the budget as a direct payment to employ a personal assistant and another part to receive a service decided and organised by their council.

Find your copy on the Forward Mid hub in Main libraries, at the MVA 4-6 White Hart Street Dalkeith EH22 1AE or Tel: Eric Johnstone 0131-663-9471



Self Directed Support Booklet



Alternative Publications

Please like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/forwardmid/ 

Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print on request from Eric Johnstone Tel: 0131-663-9471 or email eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk write to him at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request. Electronic copies can be found on www.forwardmid.org.uk. The latest Firefox browser has the reader symbol  in the address bar, click and select narrate from left menu. The latest Safari Browser has the reader symbol  but does not read aloud. These only work on websites without errors. If you require help please contact Forward Mid and we will arrange to help you.

Edited by Iain Tait for Forward Mid