

Budget Proposals 2019/20: Mental Health First Aid Training

Consultation Summary Report

Why we consulted?

Over the last nine years we've had to make savings of £60 million as our central government funding, the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), has reduced and the need for social care support has increased. We've done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect your services.

Six years ago, the RSG was worth £24 million to the council and was reduced to just £100,000 last year. In 2019/20 there will be no grant and our costs will exceed our income. As a result, we'll need to find a further £7 million in savings or income generation. Much of this will come from becoming a more efficient council, however, 14 proposals, amounting to approximately £300,000, have been identified from services that will impact the public.

It was these proposals that made up the Budget Proposals 2019/20 consultation.

Approach

We published all the public facing proposals on our website on 12 November 2018 with feedback requested by midnight on 23 December 2018.

Respondents were directed to a central index pageⁱ, which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to each of the individual proposals on our Consultation Portalⁱⁱ.

Each individual page included further details on the specifics of what the proposal contained and what we thought the impact might be, along with any other elements we'd taken into account. Feedback was then invited through an online form and a dedicated email address. Hard copies of the proposal documents and surveys were also made available on request.

As well as publishing the consultations on our website, we also emailed members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 400 people) and members of the West Berkshire Mental Health Forum, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions. Heads of Service also made direct contact with those organisations directly affected prior to them being made publicly available.

Finally, we issued a press release on the 12 November 2018, and further publicised our consultations through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also placed posters in our main offices and other council properties e.g. libraries, and made them available to WBC Councillors and Parish and Town Councils to put up in the wards/parishes.

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Proposal Background

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)ⁱⁱⁱ courses help people to learn how to assist someone with mental health issues. They give people the confidence to have supportive conversations around mental health, and the knowledge to signpost individuals, who may need to recover or manage their symptoms, to the appropriate treatment. In doing this, mental health issues can be addressed sooner, which can prevent symptoms from getting worse.

We've funded MHFA courses for staff, school staff and voluntary sector organisations since 2014, and have trained over 600 people. Annually, we subsidise the programme at a cost of £8,500, which covers instructor costs, room hire, teaching materials and refreshments.

Legislation Requirements

There is no legislative requirement to provide this service.

Proposal Details

To cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500 and to deliver the training through a 'West Berkshire Wellbeing' traded service^{iv} from 1 April 2019.

All delegates will pay for courses. The cost of each course is as follows and includes course materials from MHFA England, refreshments and onsite car parking:

- Mental health awareness (half day course) - £100 per person
- Mental health champion (one day MHFA course) - £190 per person
- Mental health first aider (two day MHFA course) - £290 per person

This will provide a more sustainable option and allow the service to continue.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 9 responses were received.

One of the respondents identified themselves as a user of the service, seven as residents, one as a Parish/Town Councillor, one as a partner organisation and two as other.

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Summary of Main Points

Of the nine responses, seven either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal to cease subsidising the current mental health first aid training.

Overall, there was a feeling that cutting this funding seems to contradict the work that the Health and Wellbeing Board is doing around mental health, especially as mental health is currently one of their top priorities. One respondent commented that by ceasing the funding, it appeared that WBC are not interested in reducing mental health stigma or supporting people with mental health issues.

A voluntary sector organisation commented that they are supporting residents that have been sign posted by the council in order to save money. They have a view that the council are asking the voluntary sector to pay in order to support people who receive help from the council.

One respondent suggested that there is a collective, social benefit to be gained from the mental health first aid courses, which includes reducing costs in other parts of the system (e.g. other parts of the council, health service, criminal justice system etc.), which therefore justifies a subsidy for the provision.

There was a general comment about local government cuts to services which have affected those most at need the hardest, and that savings should be found elsewhere.

One person agreed that people should pay to attend courses.

Summary of Responses by Question

1. Are you...?

(N.B. respondents were able to tick more than one option)

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Or anyone you care for, a user of this service	1	8.3%	11.1%
A resident of West Berkshire	7	58.3%	77.8%
Employed by West Berkshire Council	0	.0%	.0%
A Parish/Town Councillor	1	8.3%	11.1%
A District Councillor	0	.0%	.0%
A service provider	0	.0%	.0%
A partner organisation	1	8.3%	11.1%
Other	2	16.7%	22.2%

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2. **How far do you agree with the proposal to cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500, and to deliver the training through a 'West Berkshire Wellbeing' traded service from 1 April 2019?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	1	11	11.1
Agree	1	11	11.1
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0	.0
Disagree	2	22	22.2
Strongly disagree	5	56	55.6
Total	9	100.0	100.0
Not answered	0	.0	
Total	9	100.0	

3. **What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others?**

Some respondents recognised that mental health conditions disproportionately affect certain vulnerable groups (such as people with learning disabilities, BME groups, LGBT groups, homeless people etc.).

People with mental health conditions could be affected by this proposal, as there will be less people trained to spot the first signs of a mental health condition. This could lead to an increased expenditure as people could seek help at a later stage, when their mental health condition is much more serious, and consequently harder to treat.

One respondent wanted reassurance that there would be no adverse consequences in reducing this funding.

4. **If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal, do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.**

Comments included:

- Advertise spaces that are not taken up for free
- Fund Healthwatch and Eight Bells for mental health to run courses

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- 5. Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.**

Suggestions for funding included:

- Obtain funding from the Better Care Fund, in consultation with partners
- Increase council tax
- Lobby central government. WBC should try to get more funding from the government to enhance the provision of Mental Health related measures.
- Run a local lottery
- Turn off council lights
- Turn road lights when Christmas lights are on
- Charge proportionally for companies depending on number of employees

- 6. If you, your community group, or organisation think you might be able to help reduce the impact of this proposal, if the decision is taken to proceed with it, please provide your name and email address below.**

No responses received to this question.

- 7. Any further comments?**

One respondent questioned whether the Health and Wellbeing Board had been consulted in advance of the proposed cuts.

Another respondent didn't believe that the views of the public would make any difference to the council's decision, and that the government needs to know how cuts are affecting vulnerable people disproportionately.

Officer conclusion and recommendation can be found in the associated Overview of Responses and Recommendations document.

Rachel Johnson
Senior Programme Officer
Public Health and Wellbeing
31/12/2018

Please note: In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.

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The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.

All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.

i <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/budgetproposals>

ii <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/consultations>

iii <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=35650>

iv <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/westberkswellbeing>

v <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/westberkswellbeing>

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 2019/20: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training			Head of Service: Matt Pearce Author: Rachel Johnson	14 February 2019 Version 1 (Executive)	
Proposal:	To cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500 and to deliver the training through a ‘West Berkshire Wellbeing’ traded service ⁱ from 1 April 2019.				
Total budget 2018/19:	£8,500	Initial proposed saving 2019/20	£8,500 (100%)	Recommended saving 2019/20	£8,500 (100%)
No. of responses:	In total, nine responses were received. Of those that responded: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0 identified themselves as users of the service• Seven as residents of West Berkshire• 0 as council employees• One as a Parish/Town Council• 0 as District Councillors• 0 as service providers• One as a partner organisation• 0 as other				
Key issues raised:	Of the nine responses, seven either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal. The main issues raised were: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cutting this funding seems to contradict the work that the health and wellbeing board is doing around mental health• WBC are not interested in reducing mental health stigma• WBC are not interested in supporting people with mental health issues• Lack of take up if courses switch to a paid model• Possibility that subsidising courses reduces costs in other parts of the system• Local government cuts to services affect the most at need the most				
Equality issues:	No issues were raised during the consultation, that were not already included in the stage one Equality Impact Assessment.				

NB: This Overview of Responses and Recommendations paper should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Summary Report and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal. These can be found in the agenda pack or on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response
	Advertise spaces that are not taken up for free	The council are open to the suggestion of providing any unfilled spaces for free to the voluntary sector. However, priority will be given to people who can pay for spaces and there will be no guarantee that free spaces will become available.
	Fund Healthwatch and Eight Bells for mental health to run courses	MHFA instructors receive 7 days of training which costs over £2,000. This means that unfortunately we do not have the budget or requirement to train additional instructors.
Suggestions for saving money or increasing income:	Suggestion	Council response
	Obtain funding from the Better Care Fund, in consultation with partners	The council will continue to work with partners to prioritise how the Better Care Fund is utilised.
	Increase council tax	The raising of Council Tax will be one of the options that Members will consider as part of setting a balanced budget for 2019/20.
	Lobby central government. WBC should try to get more funding from the government to enhance the provision of Mental Health related measures	The council will continue to lobby central government to reverse cuts to the public health grant.
	Run a local lottery	The council is planning to operate a local lottery, which will be launched shortly.
	Turn off council lights turn off road lights when Christmas lights are on	<p>This could leave the council open to a possible claim if an incident were to happen at night and the lighting was switched off. It may also be very unpopular with the majority of town centre users.</p> <p>There would be very little saving in switching a handful of street lights off for a month or so.</p>
	Charge proportionally for companies depending on number of employees.	A tiered pricing structure is something that we can consider as part of the Wellbeing West Berkshire service.

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Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Conclusion and recommendation:

We have invested in MHFA significantly since 2014 and we are proud that we now have over 600 people trained in MHFA. There is still work to be done in terms of raising awareness, reducing stigma and preventing mental health problems and we will continue to work with our partner organisations, the Mental Health Action Group and Public health England to ensure that this work will continue.

In light of the responses, **it is recommended that this proposal is progressed.**

ⁱ <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/westberkswellbeing>

NB: This Overview of Responses and Recommendations paper should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Summary Report and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal. These can be found in the agenda pack or on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Stage One Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA 1)

What is the proposed decision?	To cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500 and to deliver the training through a 'West Berkshire Wellbeing' traded service from 1 April 2019.
Summary of relevant legislation	The promotion of mental health and wellbeing is a discretionary component of the Public Health Ring Fence Grant
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the council's key strategic priorities?	No
Name of budget holder	Matthew Pearce
Name of Service and Directorate	Public Health and Wellbeing, Communities Directorate
Name of assessor	Rachel Johnson
Date of assessment	24/10/2018
Version and release date (if applicable)	V1. 12/11/2018

Is this a...?		Is this policy, strategy, function or service...?	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Existing and being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Changing	Yes
Service	No		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To reduce spending in line with ring fenced grant reductions and council savings
Objectives:	To achieve council savings
Outcomes:	Reduce the budget aligned to the mental health cost centre
Benefits:	Savings of £8,500 per year

2. Which groups may be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?		
Group affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	None identified	
Disability	People showing the first signs of a mental health condition may not be supported earlier and their condition might deteriorate	
Gender reassignment	None identified	
Marriage and civil partnership	None identified	
Pregnancy and maternity	None identified	
Race	None identified	
Religion or belief	None identified	
Sex	None identified	
Sexual orientation	None identified	
Further comments		
<p>We do have a wide pool of people that have already undertaken mental health first aid training. Mental health first aid courses will still be available through the public health traded service for people who are willing to pay.</p>		



3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
The MHFA courses will still be available for people who are willing to pay.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
The MHFA courses will still be available for people who are willing to pay.	

4. Next steps	
EqlA 2 required?	No
Owner of EqlA 2	
Timescale for EqlA 2	



Number of responses: 9

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500, and to deliver the training through a 'West Berkshire Wellbeing' traded service from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
1	Strongly disagree	Making MHFA training harder to access by adding additional costs will affect its up take and is in direct contravention of the Health and Well Being Board targets to improve the outcome of those suffering with MH issues. It is also add odds with national policies to help reduce stigma and effectively shows MH does not matter to WBC	The mentally ill will be adversely affected by reducing the awareness of those trained to recognise the signs of MH before it reaches a crisis. It could result in more deaths and sue of acute MH services.		Pay for it from BCF but consult with partners formally in first place	
2	Strongly disagree	<p>The Health and Wellbeing Board, a statutory body in its own right and also a sub-committee of the Council Executive, currently has two priorities, one of which is mental health. Since these cuts apply in 2019-20, does that imply that mental health will then be no longer a priority? Is it considered that it will all have been dealt with by then? Is there any shared understanding of what is meant by 'priority'? This is not a rhetorical question. 'Priority' can mean a number of different things such as an ordering of expending time, money, or other resources, or the selection of some things to be done to the exclusion of others. In what sense was mental health a priority? That more money should be spent on it, time and attention devoted to it, or something else? How is this cut to be understood in that context of the answer to that question?</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Board has set up a sub-committee, the Mental Health Action Group. Its predecessor body, the Mental Health Collaborative produced a strategy. Broadly, it proposed moving from treating symptoms to prevention of problems in the first place. To break into the circle of increasing the effort on prevention without initially reducing spending on much needed services, it proposed making more use of the resources that exist within the community. Mental Health First Aid training does exactly that, in two ways: it helps reduce the stigma attached to mental health, which is a major barrier in being able to deal with it; but it also provides people in a range of voluntary and professional services with the skills to help people, in some cases preventing problems getting worse or signposting them to services where their problems can be nipped in the bud. This proposed cut therefore goes in completely the wrong direction: it is likely to exacerbate problems rather than preventing them and increase costs rather than decreasing them. The argument that the people and organisations will be able to pay for the courses misses the point that there is a collective, social benefit to be gained from them (including reducing service costs for the council, health service, criminal justice system etc.) which therefore justifies a subsidy for the provision.</p>	Mental health disproportionately affects particular, typically vulnerable, groups. That includes people with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. People from ethnic minorities have up to five times more risk of psychotic disorders than the white British population according to research published in the journal Schizophrenia Bulletin (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28521056). Non-heterosexual adults were twice as likely to report symptoms of poor mental health (such as anxiety or depression) as heterosexual adults in a pooled analysis from five different surveys involving over 94,000 adults, of whom 2.8% were non-heterosexual (http://www.nationalelfservice.net/social-care/equality-and-diversity/queer-in-the-head-do-lgb-people-in-the-uk-have-poorer-mental-health/). 45% of trans pupils have attempted suicide and 84% have self-harmed, while 9% have received death threats at school, according to a survey of 3,700 lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people by Stonewall. Other groups susceptible to mental health problems include looked after children, carers, abuse victims, homeless people, those with substance abuse problems, isolated frail elderly and people with complex and long term conditions.		I do not have sufficient information about the workings of the rest of the council to be able to suggest any better area for cuts. More general options for increasing income would be to increase council tax, holding a referendum, as required by central government, if necessary. The council might also wish to lobby central government and inform them of the harm being done by their cuts. It could also lobby, directly and through the LGA, for a fairer, more sustainable and more decentralised system for funding local government, which increased the extent of local control. One way of reducing costs longer term would be by reducing demand on services through investment in prevention, which is the opposite of what these cuts are doing. The council should be considered social costs more broadly and working more effectively with other bodies, including health, criminal justice etc. to pool resources and invest for longer term benefit, particularly in prevention.	I understand that the Health and Wellbeing Board wasn't consulted in advance about the proposed cuts. Was that an error or an indication of the regard in which other parts of the council regard that body? What does it say about having a joined up, strategic approach?
3	Disagree	It seems like the wrong thing to be doing, but without details of the "West Berkshire Wellbeing" service WBC propose the small saving of £8500 is difficult to judge.	WBC need to swear that no-one will be worse off as a result of the proposed change of provision.		WBC should try to get more funding from the government to enhance the provision of Mental Health related measures.	

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to cease subsidising the current Mental Health First Aid training programme at an annual cost of £8,500, and to deliver the training through a 'West Berkshire Wellbeing' traded service from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
4	Strongly disagree	prohibitive prices for charities in such a vital area Charities are likely to be increasingly supporting clients signposted to us to save LA's money at the same time grant funding is decreasing. You are asking us to pay to support your clients.	will reduce training in a vital areas and puts barriers in place	- advertise spaces that are not taken up for free	no	
5	Strongly disagree	Particularly cutting the mental first aid courses	the cost benefit of providing mental first aid courses	Fund Halthwatch and Eight Bells for mental health to run courses	local lottery turn off council lights turn off road lights when Christmas lights are on	I really don't believe that public views will make any difference to what the council will do. It is time that the members stood up and backed an over budget spend en masse or resign. The Government needs to know how the cuts affect disproportionately vulnerable people.
6	Strongly disagree	You have already made huge and sustained cuts to many support services over the last few years which in many cases have hit the needy the hardest. It's time to stop this, and to focus limited funds on those who need them most. I cannot support any of the above cuts and urge you to find savings elsewhere or re-allocate funds from areas that will not impact the disadvantaged.				
7	Agree	This seems like a good proposal to charge for training courses,.			Charge proportionally for companies depending on number of employees.	
8	Disagree	I am most in favour of many services whereby they assist people who by no fault of their own have a dependency or rely on another service to get through daily life				
9	Strongly agree					