

Comprehensive spending review

Providence Row has expressed serious concern over the government's comprehensive spending review, outlined below.

Chief executive, Jo Ansell has said 'Not only will this affect the poorest in society, it will also affect the most vulnerable. The people we see here at Providence Row are often very fragile, many suffer from mental health problems and some are simply not ready for mainstream services. We work hard to help people become ready for those services but the slightest knock can push them back on to the streets and we are worried this is what these cuts will do'.

The end of lifetime tenancies in council housing and increase of social rents to 80% of the market rate will push people out of their current homes, creating a real risk of long term homelessness. For those that find cheaper housing elsewhere there is the prospect of deteriorating mental health and wellbeing while they are isolated from their family and support networks.

The shared room rate housing benefit will now be the only benefit available to people under 35, forcing them into shared living. This policy will affect over a third of the clients Providence Row sees. Many of the people that come to Providence Row find living with other people difficult as they require greater levels of support and stability and this environment could leave them unable to cope and see them returning to the streets.

Limiting Employment and Support Allowance to one year except for the severely disabled will seriously harm those not classed as 'severely disabled,' who Providence Row suspects will be the majority. These are people with recurring mental and physical health problems and addictions who are not work ready and whose recovery can be a very long road.

Cuts to the Business, Skills and Innovation department mean that funding for adult apprenticeships is the only ring fenced funding for adult education. This is of particular concern for those people who are not ready for such training. Many of Providence Row's clients who need to build more basic work and social skills before entering such education will miss out and never have the opportunity to take advantage of the adult apprenticeship scheme. Providence Row is concerned there will be no money available to provide this essential and basic start on the road back into the workplace.

Providence Row urges the government to take extra care when introducing the Universal Credit system to replace the current benefits system. Many of the people that use their services have very low literacy levels and struggle immensely when applying for benefits – any change needs to be easy to understand to ensure that people do not lose their much needed benefits through incorrect applications.

Jo Ansell said, 'These cuts will affect people that are not resilient like you and I. The coalition has promised fairness and in order to keep this promise they must ensure that services are maintained for the most fragile in society and acknowledge that the journey out of homelessness can be a long one.'