



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Councillor David Robertson  
Chairman of the Public Service Board  
County Hall  
Oxfordshire County Council  
OX1 1ND

25 June 2010

Dear Councillor Robertson,

### **Supporting People Commissioning Body**

Oxfordshire Supporting People programme commissions essential preventative services for 11,500 vulnerable people who need support to secure and sustain a stable home and lead independent lives for as long as possible.

The programme is governed by the Supporting People Commissioning Body that reports to the Public Service Board via the Health and Well Being Partnership Board. Oxfordshire County Council administers the programme.

Services we fund have prevention at their heart and provide housing and support for, among other vulnerable groups:

- Older People
- Women and children fleeing from domestic abuse
- Young people and offenders
- People with mental health conditions
- People with learning or physical disabilities
- Homeless people including rough sleepers

Commissioning and administrative costs of the programme of £17.5m have been funded through the un-ring fenced elements of the Area Based Grant.

The previous government had cut this budget by 5% per year and planned to continue to do so until Oxfordshire arrived at its destination budget in 2013/14 of just £13,8m compared to £21m allocation made in 2003/04. The partnership has successfully managed these ongoing financial pressures in a planned way whilst minimising adverse impact on essential front-line services.

In the context of the recently announced in-year retrospective cuts to the administration grant for the programme and forthcoming emergency budget on 22 June, the partnership is facing significant challenges in meeting its planned objectives.

The Commissioning Body members firmly believe that these essential services should be protected from any additional cuts and ask the Public Service Board to ring fence the



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programme's allocation of £17.5m in 2010/11 and in 2011/14, in line with the duration of the next Oxfordshire Supporting People Strategy.

This decision will enable the Commissioning Body to continue to meet its strategic priorities and to manage reducing resources in a planned way, until we reach Oxfordshire's destination budget in 2013/14. We are strongly committed to actively seeking and utilising every opportunity open to us to increase efficiencies delivered by the programme, in terms of invest to save and cost avoidance agendas.

If this budget is not ring fenced, essential services would have to be cut in an unplanned way, which would have an immediate and visible adverse impact on the most vulnerable residents of Oxfordshire.

This will result in:

- Increased numbers of vulnerable people becoming homeless across the county and in some areas sleeping on the street
- Increased numbers of women and children being put at unacceptable level of risk in domestic abuse situations
- Increased incidence of crime and more people being sent back to prison

This will also result in significant direct cost increase elsewhere in the system, as the widely recognised preventative benefits of these services would be lost.

For example, breakdown in supported living arrangements for people with mental health conditions would lead to more people using acute health services or requiring more intensive provision in the community – all of which will mean a higher cost for Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Oxfordshire.

To prevent this from happening the Public Service Board should ring fence the 2010/11 and future allocation for this programme and empower the Commissioning Body to manage this challenging situation within these parameters in a planned and constructive way.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Michael Gibbard  
Chairman of the Oxfordshire Supporting People Commissioning Body

cc. Members of the Oxfordshire Supporting People Commissioning Body