

# Council cuts spell the end for 'People First' care providers in Edinburgh.



The council's Finance and Resources Committee met earlier this week to discuss, among many other items on a lengthy agenda, a report on home-care services for the elderly and disabled.

The report proposed to the committee recommended that the council approve the award of what is known as a Multi-Provider Framework Agreement for the provision of services for older people and adults with disabilities living at home. Eighteen providers were suggested both on the grounds of quality of service and price tendered. The reworking comes as part of the Council's cost-saving Forward Planning Process, as current care service contracts run out this year.

One such contract that will not be renewed is that of People First, a user-led home-care organisation (the only one of its kind in the country) with over a thousand members throughout Scotland.

Before the council discussed the report, a deputation was presented to the committee by Monica Hunter, one of the Directors of the organisation.

Hunter described how council cuts to funding were effectively destroying the user-led organisation which "gives a voice to people with learning disabilities across the capital city", something she maintained would be a "huge loss" for its members.

Hunter also expressed her "anger and disappointment" in the way the process had led to their current situation, claiming

that it had been badly managed and “confused from the beginning”. Hunter reminded the council of a review made by a council officer after a meeting with People First members, which stated that it would be “very difficult to recommend any cuts be made to this organisation”, something she said had clearly not been reflected in the report. The People First Director also accused the council of not being sufficiently clear as to the extent of the cuts throughout the process.

When asked what benefits a self-advocacy organisation had over other types of care services Hunter explained that it gave people with learning disabilities in Scotland the ability to speak and make decisions for themselves, maintaining that the people with the greatest understanding of what it is to live with a learning disability are those who are themselves affected.

However, despite the committee recognising the benefits of the organisation, and conceding that there would be some time and cost involved in the transition of services, it nevertheless approved the report.

The Council based the decision on the facts that certain statutory requirements for user-led organisations had been drawn up in the report, and it was reminded that the tendering process had achieved the significant goals of increasing the number of hours of provision, reducing the overall cost of care and providing home-care services to those who previously did not have them.

Councillor Paul Edie, Health Leader for the City of Edinburgh Council, said:

With the expected increase in demand for home care services I am confident these new contracts, together with our in house home care and re-ablement service, will help us meet that requirement.”

People First maintain this will be a great loss for its 115

members throughout the Capital, suggesting that none the proposed plans for implementing user-led services came close to providing disabled adults with the same level of user control that People First provide.

The organisation will continue to operate elsewhere in Scotland and the UK.

Also discussed at the committee meeting was the discussion over the Smart City initiative dealing with Workstyle Transformation designed to enable an efficient approach using modern technology to do the work and communicate with co-workers and customers. The changes, which were approved by the committee, are predicted to save nearly £19m from the Council spend.