

Council budget – Caring is a top priority



Convener of
Health, Wellbeing
& Housing – Ricky
Henderson

Councillor Ricky Henderson, Convener of the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee, concentrates here on his priority of ensuring there is enough money to go round to look after those who need some kind of care to help them live as independently as possible. Councillor Henderson is the Labour representative for Pentland Hills, where he commands a great deal of respect as a local councillor.

Councillor Henderson writes:

Making sure that people living in Edinburgh are well cared for physically, socially and mentally is a top priority for the Council, and our annual budget is based on this simple foundation.

Of course, demographics are changing and this creates added pressures when we decide how and where to spend, and also, to save. We have an ageing population, with around the same number of pensioners as young people. While the fact that we are living longer is welcome, this presents added challenges, such as an increase in age-related health conditions.

Despite budget pressures, we continue to invest in vital services, which help to protect the vulnerable people who need it the most, such as those with disabilities, or addiction issues. This year we invested additional resources

of £5.1 million in new services for older people and adults with learning and physical disabilities. We also invested an extra £8.7m in preventative services.

This year saw the Scotland-wide introduction of Self-Directed Support, an innovative way of giving people the power to choose how they want their care to be delivered. Looking after carers is also important, and we continue to give one-off payments of £250 each year. Our Volunteernet scheme gives fantastic support to carers through a bank of volunteers.

We are working hard with partners to provide residential care for older people and people with disabilities, and this week we announced plans to build a new £9m care home. Despite budget pressures, we are actively recruiting care staff at the moment. Allowing people to live as independently and safely as possible in their own home or in their local community will remain a priority next year.

Council campaigns supporting mental health in 2014 have included Dementia Awareness, Autism Edinburgh and Speak Up Speak Out. We work closely with agencies such as NHS Lothian and third sector organisations to invest in wellbeing, and on joint schemes such as the Edinburgh Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, which helps us to address the reasons for substance misuse, as well as tackling the effects of it.

You can play your part in shaping the Council's budget for 2014/15 by giving your views through our online planner. We're really interested to hear how you think that we can continue to invest in health and social care, despite increasing budget pressures.

Join in the debate this evening from 7:00pm with the Twitter hashtag #edinbudget and [watch online](#) where our webcasting service will show the debate from the City Chambers.