

More than £10m cuts to social care as huge funding gap remains

A raft of cuts were agreed by the city's health and social care partnership as opposition cllr claims services in "a critical condition"

More than £10 million of cuts have been made to social care in Edinburgh to help close a huge funding shortfall.

A £35m gap still remains however – and a city councillor has called for "less of the smoke and mirrors" over how it can be closed.

Plans for officials to go away and draw-up further savings proposals have been put on pause by Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board (EIJB) which runs the city's health and social care partnership, as members called for more detail to be made available.

The EIJB, made-up of councillors, NHS staff and people who access social care, met on Tuesday (March 21) to set its budget for 2023-24 with total costs of around £850m.

A raft of cuts agreed to whittle down an eye-watering £47m gap to £35.5m were "on a different scale this year" than previous years, chair Cllr Tim Pogson said.

They included reducing spending on purchasing and prescribing of drugs through "cost effective prescribing" and a move away

from individual taxi journeys for service users towards community transport.

The £11.45m slash to the budget also involved changing some people's overnight care from a sleepover service to a night-time responder model with remote support, and a £1m reduction in community investment.

A report said: "We are faced with a significant disparity between the level of funding available, and the anticipated costs to deliver the IJB's delegated services at an expected level of outcomes.

"The combination of these factors threatens the sustainability of our health and social care system.

"The significant and challenging financial landscape means the options presented may impact adversely on a combination of: service quality; the level of services provided; outcomes for people; and our ability to make or maintain performance improvements."

The board was set to agree that health and social care partnership officers should continue developing plans to bridge the remaining gap, however members said there was a lack of clarity over what these could entail and called for the process to be halted for now.

The cuts come after an inspection of the health and social care services in Edinburgh found "significant" and "structural" failures, which a damning report said had left many not receiving care "at the right time or place".

Conservative Edinburgh Cllr Max Mitchell tabled a motion calling for a report detailing "additional funding options or, if required, further savings to enable the EIJB to set a balanced budget" to be brought to the EIJB's next meeting in May.

He said after the budget meeting: “I feel it was right for the Board to pause and request more information on what balancing the coming year’s budget would look like in addition to seeking more detail and clarity on what shape the financial strategy may take.

“There needs to be less of the smoke and mirrors and much more transparency.

“Health and social care in Edinburgh is in a critical condition. Importantly, those relying on services or caring for someone ought to know what may be coming. This is equally true for staff who are already working in terribly difficult circumstances.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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Max Mitchell Conservative councillor for Inverleith



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