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Cutting Supporting People programme would be ‘dangerous and counter-productive’, says Centre for Social Justice

The scrapping of the Supporting People programme by local authorities would be dangerous and counter-productive, according to leading independent think-tank the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ).

Building on its two recent reports – *Outcome-Based Government: How to improve spending decisions across government* and *The Forgotten Age: Understanding poverty and social exclusion in later life* – the CSJ shares concerns that local authorities’ cuts to Supporting People, a housing-related programme that provides crucial support to over 800,000 older people, would undermine the aspiration of effective and targeted social expenditure.

The Supporting People programme provides a great example of one occasion when government *has* properly evaluated the impact of its expenditure.

Launched in 2003, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned official assessment of the programme at regular intervals. These have found that the programme was delivering highly impressive social and economic results at a local level. By postponing or deferring altogether an older person’s need for a more intensive form of intervention (e.g. placement into a care home) literally billions of pounds were being saved annually.

In its report *The Forgotten Age* the CSJ warned of the devastating impact a reduction in funding would have on what has been proven to be a lifeline programme. Given that the previous Government had removed the ring-fence on Supporting People funding in April 2009, we noted the real risk of that funding disappearing into other budgets

administered by local authorities. Today it seems this is exactly what threatens to happen.

While the Coalition Government committed to retaining Supporting People funding during the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), many councils look set to re-allocate their own contributions of the grant.

Yet the research suggests that if this key preventative programme is scrapped, local authorities will only face far more substantial costs in the future, running into billions of pounds. This could be either in the form of increased demand for health and social care or as a result of tenancy failure and homelessness.

In response to this Gavin Poole, Executive Director of the CSJ, said:

“Such local authority reductions would be dangerous and counter-productive. They threaten to undermine the services that protect the most vulnerable in our communities. This funding is essential in not only supporting the elderly but also in preventing excessive costs being stored up in the future. This only serves to reinforce our view that government, both national and local, needs to adopt a more outcome-focussed approach to decision-making to ensure that cuts are not being mortgaged for the future.”

The CSJ’s Older Age Review, which will outline a comprehensive strategy to tackle pensioner poverty and social exclusion, will be published in June 2011.

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published *Breakthrough Britain – Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown*. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP stood down as Chairman of the Centre on his appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in May 2010 and is now the Founder and Patron.

For more information about the CSJ's Outcomes Based Government report, please visit:

http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/downloads/CSJOutcomeBasedGovernment_final2_WEB.pdf

And for the Forgotten Age report please visit:

http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/downloads/20101122_Publications_Older%20Age.pdf