

Sir Gus O'Donnell
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service
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4 August 2009

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Dear Sir,

Single-issue budgets for people with multiple needs and exclusions

We read with interest in the Times about your conversations with the Chancellor on single-issue budgets in the next spending review for themes that cut across traditional departmental boundaries.

We have recently developed a new coalition of four national membership charities called Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM), which is focussing on adults with multiple needs and exclusions.

We have done this because we know that many of the individuals supported by our 1600 frontline member agencies are the same people. These individuals face multiple needs and exclusions because they experience a number of issues that impact adversely on their lives; are routinely excluded from the services they need; and lead chaotic lives.

They move between criminal justice, homelessness, drug treatment and mental health services at significant and unnecessary cost to local and national budgets, but rarely get the overall help they need to make meaningful changes to their lives and engage in the rights and responsibilities of community life. Differing priorities, funding restrictions, targets and organisational cultures mean that they are often excluded from local services or that they receive help with one, but not all, of their needs.

Through MEAM we are highly committed to working with our frontline member agencies and statutory partners to achieve change in local areas.

At the same time there is real potential for government policy to build on recent advances, in particular from the Social Exclusion Task Force, to do much more to support coordinated service delivery to this group. At this

year's party conferences we will launch a short report setting out a five-point manifesto for the next government on tackling multiple needs and exclusions. The report will call for the government to recognise the issue and commit to developing a national policy framework on multiple needs and exclusions.

We firmly believe that this joint focus on policy and practice will help bring about better services and outcomes for people with multiple needs and exclusions.

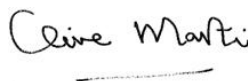
A single-issue, cross departmental budget focussed on people with multiple needs and exclusions could add real clarity and strength to this agenda. In particular we agree with your comments as quoted in the Times that 'in areas where it [is] difficult to get ministerial collaboration you would have an extra central pot of money as an incentive.'

A single-issue budget could also help reduce the vast unnecessary expenditure that a range of departments currently make on this group through their repeated 'recycling' through the systems of criminal justice, drug treatment, homelessness and mental health support.

Of course, focussing on one specific group of people - those with the most severe multiple needs and exclusions - must not exclude others using the services provided by our sectors. But the approach that you are suggesting, in which 'departments would still have core programmes' would ensure that this focus on the wider group of individuals was maintained. The lessons learnt from a single-issue budget focussed on this relatively small group of individuals could then be shared across government and local services, supporting a possible expansion of the funding approach in the future.

We would welcome the opportunity to come and speak with you about this over the summer period. Please contact the Making Every Adult Matter Project Director, Oliver Hilbery at oliver.hilbery@meam.org.uk if you would like to arrange a time for this.

With best wishes,



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