

14<sup>th</sup> December 2007

Melanie McGinnis  
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Dear Melanie

**Re: Consultation on Draft Programme for Government and draft Budget**

I am writing on behalf of Lenadoon Community Forum to draw your attention to the consultation underway in respect of the Executive's draft Programme for Government and draft Budget. This consultation continues until 4 January 2008.

You may already be aware that the Executive and in particular the Minister for Health & Social Services wish to encourage the widest participation in this consultation.

Many people will be seriously disappointed that the impetus of the Bamford Review into Mental Health and Learning Disability is not reflected in the above documents and that the promise of substantial improvements in services appears to have been lost.

The projected growth investment of £18m pounds across the region, over the next three years, falls far short of the recommendations of the Bamford Review. However, when considered with the Executive's target for efficiency savings that net result will in effect mean significantly less resources being available for the provision of services to these vulnerable client groups.

The Belfast Trust under the draft Budget would expect to receive growth in the order of £1 million pounds in each of the next 3 years for mental health and learning disability services. Over the same period the Trust expects to be required to surrender from the existing budget for these services, approximately £3m pounds per annum in efficiency savings. There is no ring fencing of these savings for reinvestment in mental health and learning disability services. It is hard not to be sceptical about statements indicating priority for these client groups when the draft budget suggests that there will be less resources to meet need.

The Expert Board on Bamford which was established earlier this year by the Minister has issued a press statement expressing 'outrage' at the proposed level of investment in mental health and learning disability services.

Melanie, I would also like to draw your attention to the cut in the D.S.D. Regeneration budget. As a Neighbourhood Renewal Area who submitted their Action Plan for approval in August 2007 we are eagerly awaiting responses from Government Departments and Agencies to those Actions prioritized in the consultations that led to the Action Plan. The response that we are receiving at present is that, in light of the proposed cuts in the Draft budget to Health, Education and Regeneration that Departments and Agencies will be unable to implement the identified priorities.

The N.I.H.E. have informed us that housing refurbishment Schemes planned for the Neighbourhood in the new financial year are unlikely to proceed if the budgetary cuts are implemented. The Youth Service have informed us that they have been instructed to make a 4% cut to their budget and therefore will not be providing funding for the Neighbourhood Renewal priorities. The 3% efficiency savings in the Belfast Trust budget means that they are unwilling to commit funding to Projects identified in the Action Plan.

B.R.O. who are currently funding core salaries under D.S.D. Neighbourhood Renewal funding are indicating that they will be under financial pressure as a result of the cuts to the Regeneration budget under the terms of proposals in the Executive Draft Budget.

It is the belief of Lenadoon Community Forum and its twenty member groups that the budget allocated to Health should be increased and adequate funding should be ring-fenced for Suicide Prevention, Mental Health and Parenting Services. We believe that a separate Neighbourhood Renewal budget should be allocated from the efficiency savings in the various Government Departments and this funding should be ring fenced for the implementation of the key priorities identified in the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our proposals further with members of the Executive. Melanie, we look forward to receiving a response to this submission.

Yours Sincerely

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Michael Doherty  
Chairman