

How the old, the disabled, children with Additional support Needs and the poor in South Lanarkshire are to pay for the economic crisis – South Lanarkshire Council’s cuts in services.

An analysis of South Lanarkshire Council’s budget proposals by Stephen Smellie, Secretary South Lanarkshire UNISON.

South Lanarkshire Council need to make £27,709,000 worth of savings in their expenditure in the coming financial year (2011/12). Whilst the Council has tried to identify as many savings from reviews of management, efficiencies, savings in fuel etc., amongst the list of proposals, drawn up by Council managers for Councillors to consider, are many cuts in services and increased and new charges which will hit older people, disabled people, children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in Education and the poorest families in South Lanarkshire. At the same time we know that the banks continue to pay out billions in bonuses. Nothing illustrates clearer that David Cameron’s claim that “we are all in this together” is a lie. This is the reality of his government’s policy – make the poor and weakest pay for crisis while the rich are protected.

South Lanarkshire Council’s proposals for older and disabled people include:-

Proposed saving or charge	Saving or income from charge
Introduction of charges for over-60s to use Leisure facilities	£0.300m
Discontinue Christmas grants to community groups	£0.298m
Introduce charges for the Care of gardens scheme. An average charge of £290 a year	£0.334m
Reduction in Day Care placements of 62 places a week, closing one Day Care Centre	£0.150m
Home Care reablement where home care packages are reduced or withdrawn following re-assessment of need	£1.500m
Increase the cost of Meals-on-wheels and Lunch Clubs to £3.10 from £1.23 and for frozen meals to £2.47 from £1.56	£0.172m
Reduce funding to the voluntary sector for services for adults with learning disabilities and mental health problems	£0.480m
Introduce charges for applications for a Blue Badge (for disabled people’s parking)	£0.080m
Charge for the maintenance of equipment for disabled people	£0.151m
Withdraw transport for voluntary organisations	£0.257m
Increase the charges for bereavement services	£0.324m
Sub total	£4.046m

Other cuts will impact directly on disabled children within schools:-

Removal of Play Therapy budget for Additional Support Needs (ASN) children	£0.018
Target reduction in External Additional Support Placements	£0.200
Target reduction in budget for Inclusion Service transport which provides transport for children with ASN	£0.170m
Removal of 6 posts within the ASN provision	£0.255m
Removal of 5 school support assistant posts impacting upon ASN provision	£0.095m
Sub total	£0.738m

Other cuts and charges will either target directly or impact greatly on the poorest people in the community. These are:-

Remove extension of free school meals provision	£0.220m
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Remove footwear and clothing grant for children of families on benefits	£0.200m
Reduce education budgets which support vulnerable families	£0.059m
Reduce support for children of the Gypsy Traveller Community	£0.033m
Withdrawal of 6 School Crossing Patrols which will impact greatest on families who cannot afford transport to schools	£0.070m
Reduction in level of services for homeless people from external providers	£0.334m
Sub total	£0.916m
Total cuts aimed at older people, disabled people, children with ASN and poor people	£5.700m

Therefore of the total savings the Council are making, 20.6% are targeted directly at the most vulnerable in the community

All of these cuts in services and increased charges which will impact on the most vulnerable in society are in addition to other cuts and charges which will impact across the community. Some of these will impact hugely on these same vulnerable groups, such as:-

Charges for uplifts i.e. where the Cleansing Department uplift old furniture, garden refuse etc. at a charge of £36 a time	£1.875m
Charge for residents parking permits (where parking restrictions apply near town centres in East Kilbride and Hamilton) £30 per permit	££0.145

Taken together these cuts represent a huge attack on the standard of living, security and opportunities of the most vulnerable in our community.

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