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PRESS RELEASE

Vulnerable older people at risk of homelessness due to cuts in council funding, warns local charity.

Age UK Bristol is worried about the extent of local cuts to essential public and community services and the charity is calling on Bristol people of all ages to join the Mayor's rally against austerity at 12pm on Saturday 9th September at College Green.

The charity works with many voluntary organisations in the city and is concerned about the impact of the cuts on older people in particular. These include cuts to Age UK Bristol's housing support service, which will directly affect some of the most vulnerable older people in the city.

The national charity Age UK warned earlier this year that [social care in England is at risk of imminent collapse](#). Mark Baker, CEO of the local charity Age UK Bristol said: "Cuts cannot be made to local government without affecting health and social care and any cuts to those services will inevitably hit vulnerable older people very hard."

In the recent consultation by Bristol City Council on the budgets that affect Age UK Bristol's housing support service, members of the public were asked to provide their opinions about cutting services. This included asking which services were most important and how funding should be prioritised. Mark Baker said: "We welcome the move to get people more involved in the issues and are sympathetic to the council's plight. However, Age UK Bristol is

concerned that people have been asked to make decisions about cutting services that they do not have the information to make. The council has responsibility for taking these difficult decisions even if reductions to council staff have left them under-resourced to make the right choices. It is their job to understand the services they commission and the impact they have.

Age UK Bristol's housing support service is currently helping 120 older people who have complex needs. Mark Baker said: "The majority of people we are supporting are in significant debt and already at risk of homelessness. Many have mental health problems and are at risk of significant harm to themselves or to other people. They are extremely vulnerable and at risk of harm or abuse. The cost of Age UK Bristol support is only £1,200 per person per year."

Age UK Bristol acknowledges that the council is under pressure, but calls on them to protect and prioritise the people most in need. If Age UK Bristol cannot support these people, it will affect everyone in the city, with more older people made homeless, needing social care and being admitted to hospital. The cost of this will greatly exceed £1,200 per person. For example preventing just one older person going into residential care could save £25,000.

"It is shameful that central government cuts have meant the care of vulnerable older people has to compete locally for funding with the few remaining libraries and public toilets. This is not about party politics, our services provide fundamental, crucial support and we want to see resources safeguarded for key services and public services having clear priorities on protecting older people." Mark Baker said. "For these reasons we encourage people to support the Mayor's rally against austerity."

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For more information please contact Mark Baker (Age UK Bristol CEO)

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Notes to editors

Age UK Bristol

Age UK Bristol is a local independent charity. It is a separate company and charity from Age UK (national charity), but like other independent local Age UKs we have a brand sharing agreement with the national charity.