

## **College statement on austerity agenda**

### **Social work, people who use social work services, and the cuts**

The public sector faces an unprecedented level of spending cuts. As nearly all social work is provided by - or commissioned by – local authorities, the NHS and other government funded organisations (like CAF/CASS), the cuts will have a severe impact on the services provided by social workers and thus on those who rely on their support.

TCSW exists to speak up for social work and to defend the interests of those served by social workers. The range of social work services – for children and families, for those with mental health problems, for vulnerable adults and for all the other groups of disadvantaged and marginalised people who need social work support – is under threat.

We know that cuts in social work services are beginning to have an impact on these services and it seems likely that things will get worse. It is also the case that some cuts may yield short term savings at the expense of long term cost increases; this is particularly true of cuts in preventative services.

We call on government, both local and national, to seek ways to protect people who use social work services at a time of national austerity. Especially in hard times, a civilised society should seek to support the most vulnerable members of the community – indeed, they are likely to suffer most from cuts in employment opportunities and benefits and in welfare provision and thus are likely to need social work support all the more.

We will call on college members to tell us about the impact of cuts in their local areas so that we can draw this to the attention of decision makers and of the media. Local services can be differentially affected by nationally imposed spending cuts and government needs to know about the variable impact, and the unintended consequences, of their decisions.

We also have in membership social work managers, researchers and academics and we will wish to support them as they struggle with the dilemmas which arise when they have to face up to the job of finding ways to meet financial targets imposed on them while remaining committed to the interests of those they manage and of those using services. They will remain committed to implementing the reform programme and improving initial and post-qualifying education.

Social workers expect employers to provide them with the resources and support to enable them to deliver high standards of service. This means - amongst other things - regular supervision, time for reflection, training and development opportunities, and administrative and technological support. Social workers will take responsibility for their own ethical and professional practice but it is not reasonable to expect services to be delivered to the high standards they wish to see, if employers and commissioners do not play their part.

TCSW will support members who insist on the appropriate resources to allow them to ensure that the people they support get the services they need and are safe. We will collaborate with other organisations committed to this aim.