



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

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Dear Secretary of State

Ahead of the budget statement and the Prime Minister's promise that money would be directed to where it is most needed I am sure you will be making an urgent case for long term sustained investment in local government. There is a growing level of uncertainty as the cliff edge of 2020 approaches due to Government's clear prioritisation of other public services over local government. This is not sustainable and leaves councils with the demanding task of balancing its legal fiduciary responsibilities with the other legal obligations that go with providing the full range of local authority services and complying with the council's public sector equality duties.

By 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion over the preceding decade. In the last eight years councils have lost 60p out of every £1 the Government had previously provided to spend on local services. I hope you will agree with me that local government has suffered disproportionately large reductions in funding in comparison to other parts of the public sector, and in my constituency the bottom line is that services such as social care, children's services and homelessness support are under unbearable pressure.

Adjusted for inflation, in 2010 before austerity kicked in, Brent Council spent the equivalent of £1070 per person per year on essential services and facilities, but after eight successive years of government cuts they now spend roughly £650. Changes to the local government finance system make it impossible for the officers at Brent Council to place an exact value on the budget gap they face over the next few years because it will not be until Spring 2019, with the expected publication of the Spending Review and not until the Fair Funding review in autumn 2019, that any budget forecasts can be regarded as truly authoritative.

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Housing

The London Borough of Brent is amongst the most income-deprived local authorities in the country. Rental costs in the borough account for 75% of average earnings and we have the largest proportion of ethnic minorities in London with 71% of the population from an ethnic group other than white British.

As of this week there were **3,745 households in high priority need on the housing waiting** list and there is an estimated six year wait to find them places to live. As a result **2,715 households are in temporary accommodation** and last year **294 were known to be sleeping rough in the Borough**. The Chancellor has committed to increase funding for our National Health Service and he should take note that according to Public Health England the cost to the NHS of poor housing lived in by older people (55+) is £624 million a year and the Kings Fund has estimated that **every £1 spend on improving homes saves the NHS £70**.

Public Health Services

In 2013, the responsibility for delivering public health services was transferred to councils, despite this, councils' spending on prevention continues to be reduced because funding is not available to both invest in prevention and deliver existing statutory services at the same time. This results in increasing unmet need for services such as social care and children's services. These short term cuts are false economy. If councils are unable to fund sufficient support for older people, more of them will end up being admitted to hospital.

In the London Borough of Brent spend on adult social care budgets represents **nearly a third of Brent's net budget** and the long delayed green paper on social care funding means it is impossible for the authority to predict with any reasonable confidence the longer-term impact set against population growth (**Between 2010 and 2020 London's population will have risen by over 15% more than double the rate of growth across the rest of England 7%**) and a rise in demand for the number of people aged over 65 in need of care.

Children and Families

There are currently 50,972 children enrolled at Brent schools and this represents a 5.4% increase on the 48,335 registered in 2014.

In primary schools in Brent 68.7% of pupil's first language is something other than English - nationally it is 20.1%.

The prevalence of pupils with special educational needs is 9.9% and the number of children with Education Health and Care Needs Assessments has increased by over 14% over the last three years. This cohort has been labelled children with SEND. But that labelling is not helpful. It creates a neat pigeon hole into which some of the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and helpless children in my constituency have been placed without taking other factors into account.



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In the London Borough of Brent **10,166 or 32% of all children live in poverty**. Overcrowding is a big problem in Brent, 18% of all homes are classified as such which makes us the 2nd worst in London. Free school meal claimants have been adversely impacted by welfare reforms and the number of young people known to the Youth Offending Service has increased by 31% in the last two years.

On behalf of the children and young people, their families and the support staff who are struggling to cope with children with special educational needs and ahead of the budget I urge you to convince the Chancellor to unlock investment into prevention and early intervention. These children are all victims of a squeeze on funding.

From the information I have set out above I hope you will understand there are various factors that influence the cost of delivering services in different areas that are related to local circumstances and simply distributing funding on the basis of a single measure will not reflect the unavoidable difference between local authorities in the demand and cost of providing services. **Brent is the 39th most deprived borough out of the UK's 326**. The government appears to be driving the council towards a "core services" offer. I am clear that this would be the worst case scenario for my constituents and for the communities that make up the borough.

This unsustainable position must be reversed and even at this late stage I ask you to call on the Chancellor to commit the resources local authorities need to provide the highest standard of care to all those who need it most and to highlight to him the failure to properly fund these services puts the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable residents at risk and this cannot go on.

Councils have innovated, reimagined and changed the way they work and delivered significant savings and efficiencies but if they do not receive additional funding it is difficult to see how social care, children's services and homelessness support can continue to meet the minimum statutory standards and requirements.

Please look beyond the bare figures and consider the human cost of eight years of reductions across public services.

Yours sincerely,



Barry Gardiner
Member of Parliament for Brent North