

Step closer to getting quality dementia care

Work this week started on building a £13.7m dementia intensive care unit in Norwich. While the unit will only have 36 beds, its impact on Norwich and Norfolk will be much greater.

Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust is to be applauded for grasping the opportunity to use the new building as a centre of excellence to raise the standard of dementia care across the county.

By offering training for people working with patients with dementia, the trust hopes to lead the way nationally in ensuring employees in the NHS, social services or independent sector all meet the same high standards of care. It wants the training to be seen as a benchmark, so families looking for help in caring for their loved ones with dementia can be confident they are choosing the best care possible.

The number of people in Norwich and Norfolk with dementia is expected to increase rapidly over the coming years, so it is vital for us to prepare to meet this demand.

The new dementia unit, due to be ready in spring 2012, is a positive step in this direction.

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Counting the cost of budget cuts locally

Feared budget cuts would make disabled people feel socially excluded, make work and travel difficult and would end up costing more, according to a new report by Norfolk's Coalition of Disabled People (NOCODP).

Representatives from the coalition released the report and a DVD yesterday which looked at the impact of national budget cuts and tax changes, and at the additional cuts from cash-strapped local councils.

The report, by Dr Chris Edwards for NOCODP, has been submitted to the Big Conversation consultation by Norfolk County Council.

Of Norfolk County Council's proposed £136m cuts in services over the next three years, £45m will have a direct impact on disabled people.

The increase in VAT is expected to add £158 to bills in an average household which means around 100,000 disabled people in Norfolk will see their standard of living decline by a third.

And 45,000 people of working age will lose more than £500 a year because of changes to their disability benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA), according to the report.

Mark Harrison, CEO of NOCODP said: "The cuts discriminate against disabled people who are experiencing double discrimination – cuts in benefits and regressive tax changes from central government and devastation of local services if Norfolk County Council implements its proposals in the Big Conversation.

"They will cut access to work and housing benefit. They are discriminatory and disproportionate."

Kathy Saunders, Chair of NOCODP said: "The proposed cuts would be disastrous for disabled people for many years to come.

"It will put them at a social disadvantage and the total impact has to be assessed. The cuts will cause damage to vulnerable people and families which will be unnecessarily expensive or impossible to repair."

David Harwood member of Norfolk County Council's cabinet said: "We would like to thank everyone who has come forward. We have had a lot of people respond to the Big Conversation. We have heard



Funding fears: Dr Chris Edwards, Kathy Saunders and Mark Harrison launch the NOCODP report and a DVD at The Forum yesterday. PHOTO: SIMON FINLAY

Case study 2

→ **Bernadette Reddington, 42**, pictured, from **Sprowston** has been blind since 1994. She lives with husband, **Marcus, 50**, who is also blind. Two of their children, **Chris, 17**, and **Abbie-Rose, 13**, are also blind, however their daughter **Katie, 14**, is not. Mrs Reddington has a guide dog, **Orla**.

Mrs Reddington said: "I have suffered from severe depression. As a disabled person life is tough, it is not easy to do anything, it is so tiring. When we are faced with difficulties we can fall into depression.

"If I can't provide for my family we will be living in squalor. It is putting a lot of people at risk and it's dangerous. To maintain independence takes a lot of energy. If they cut the services, people will not be able to be independent."

Mrs Reddington's DLA covers the cost of her taxi to and from work as an IT trainer at Action for Blind people in Cringleford. She said: "If they make cuts they will not be able to get people into work.

"I want to contribute to society, I don't want to take and not give. Things don't cost the same for me, but I don't earn more. If it all falls apart I will be back on the state. A lot of people are scared about the changes that could happen in their lives.

"If they are a young person it could be the whole of their life ahead."

problems; the unequal nature of the cuts and the counter productive nature of the cuts. We can do it in different ways – we can tax the rich and we can tax the financial sector."

Carl Grint, communications officer for NOCODP, who lives in Thorpe said: "My Disability Living Allowance (DLA) could be cut. They will definitely cut off DLA for people in care homes. If my DLA was cut I would not be able to get to work. It is not acceptable."

→ Do you think you or your family will be affected by any cuts? Tell us your story. Call reporter **Lucy Wright on 01603 772495**

Lucy Wright

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Case study 1

Shaun Hobbs, 61, pictured, from **Norwich**, who suffers from mental health problems said: "If the cuts went ahead I would be withdrawn from society, I would become a prisoner in my own flat. I would end up going into hospital."

The father of four divorced in 1995 because his former wife could not cope with his illness.

"If they move the criteria from substantial need to critical, more people could be hospitalised through mental illness and the cost is enormous.

"My support pays for me to have a computer to keep in touch with my friends and family so I don't

feel socially isolated. It pays for me to go and see my brother twice a year in Yorkshire and for my exercise classes which have helped me to lose more than five stone. It helps us to be able to do the same things as everyone else. I am about to start saxophone lessons, I have always wanted to learn how to play an instrument."



from about 25,000 individuals and organisations, some of which represent tens of thousands of people.

"We will do the best we can for everyone. We said we will look after the vulnerable and needy and they will be foremost in our thoughts when we make big decisions."

The report explained alternatives to the budget cuts,

which included uncapping National Insurance contributions so they are paid at 11pc all the way up the income scale, which would generate £9.1bn and a 50pc tax on gross income above £100,000 a year (it is currently £150,000 or more) which would raise a further £2.3bn.

Dr Chris Edwards, author of the report, said: "There are two