**MOTION TO STOP THE PROPOSED CUT TO THE CHILDRENS AND ADOLESCENTS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE’S BUDGET IN 2021/22**

Lewisham Council will meet on 3 March to approve the budget for 2021/22.  The budget is nowhere near the level it should be at due to continual cuts to finances by successive Coalition and Conservative Governments.  One reduction in particular is of huge concern to many parents, young people, NHS staff and Lewisham residents and has been the subject of a campaign by the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign (SLHC).

There is a proposal to hold back £250,000 from the Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Horizon Team on the grounds that additional CAMHS money from other sources can offset the Council’s reduction.  The Council says it wants to prioritise early intervention to prevent mental health problems developing. In response to pressure from the Children and Young People’s Committee councillors, who opposed this cut, other councillors and the SLHC, it has been proposed instead to use this £250,000 to set up a contingency fund which could be used if and when significant child mental health need is identified.

**Rationale for motion:**

1. The need for additional CAMHS support support is already clearly identified as significant, especially in the light of historic underfunding, the trauma of Covid 19, lockdowns, missed schooling and tragically for many, bereavement.

2. Due to well-documented increasing incidence of mental health problems for children and young people, it is far too late sadly for Early Intervention for many.  The threshold for access to services was too high for too long and many Lewisham children have been waiting far too long already. We know that the need for specialised intervention is there already and should not be counterposed to Early Intervention.  This is a false economy as this will lead to greater family breakdown and all its terrible social and economic consequences.

3. Well overdue recent increased investment and hard work by CAMHS staff has meant waiting lists for initial assessments are much shorter.  **However, they are still too long as many parents have told the Campaign.  Also many are waiting many months for specialist assessment and therapy after their initial assessments.**  An estimated 200 children are waiting after initial assessments.

4. The Lewisham Mental Health Support Team (MHST), valuable though it is, has clinicians in only 1/5 of Primary schools and just under 1/2 in Secondary schools. This service alone cannot meet the volume or the complexity of need in school children.  They will refer back to the Horizon Team where there is risk or complexity.

5. A greater demand for services is yet to come, as identified by numerous surveys and research, the Children’s Commissioner for England and the Royal College of Psychiatrists referred to a coming ‘tsunami’ of need.  Yet the Executive Director for Children and Young People acknowledged that the Council had not risk-assessed the impact of these cuts given the impact of the latest lockdown on children and their mental health needs.

6. The Lewisham Community - parents, young people, NHS staff and residents- do not want less money to be spent on CAMHS. Both CAMHS and MHST services should be increased.

**This Ward/ union branch resolves:-**

1. To ask the Mayor of Lewisham to reconsider the decision of last week’s Mayor and Cabinet meeting,  in the light of all the concerns expressed so far and will continue to be made, and change the recommendation in the 2021/22 budget in respect of holding back the CAMHS £250,000.
2. To ask the Mayor and councillors to campaign with the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign , other London Boroughs, the Local Government Association and the Labour Party nationally, on the dangers to life and health generally from the impact of all Government cuts to Local Authority budgets.
3. Any campaign should demand that the Government fully reimburse Lewisham, and all Local Authorities, for the additional expenditure incurred on Covid 19 measures and services, over and above the specific allocations made Government.