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for immediate release

Autumn 2017 budget 'tinkering at the margins' says Women's Budget Group

In response to the 2017 Budget, Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director of the UK Women's Budget Group said today:

'There were too many areas in the budget today where the chancellor chose to tinker at the margins of problems rather than make the systemic changes and investment needed.

With the NHS, education system, care system and family budgets all stretched to breaking point we need decisive action if we are to build a 'stronger, fairer, better Britain'. What we saw today in the main, was a series of relatively minor announcements which failed to address underlying issues.

On Universal Credit:

'£185million a year to address the waiting time for Universal Credit is welcome, but barely addresses the issues with the design and cuts to Universal Credit. Our research with the Runnymede Trust shows that as a result of changes to Universal Credit:

- *Employed claimants will be £1200 worse off per year by April 2021 compared with the original design of UC; unemployed claimants will be £500 worse off*
- *Women on average will lose more than men:*
- *Families with three children with one earner will be £3891 worse off, while families with two earners will be £3287 worse off¹*

On Education:

'Real terms funding for education fell by 14% between 2011 and 2015/16². The additional funding for pupils taking maths, more computer science teachers and £1000 extra per teacher for training, is welcome, but does not address the budget squeeze facing the sector³.

On social care:

'The Chancellor failed to say anything about the continued crisis in social care. Our work shows that:

- *The social care funding gap will be between £2.8bn and £3.5bn by the end of this parliament*
- *17% of men and 26% of women aged 65 or over already have unmet needs⁴.*

On Health spending

¹ <https://wbg.org.uk/news/new-research-shows-universal-credit-failing-just-managing-women-bme-households-hardest-hit/>

² Institute for Fiscal Studies (2017) *Long-run comparisons of spending per pupil across different stages of education* (p. 9) (<http://bit.ly/2zF4pA1>)

³ <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/education-pre-budget-nov-2017-final.pdf>

⁴ <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/social-care-pre-budget-nov-2017-final-1.pdf>

‘£2.8bn over three years is insufficient to deal with the crisis in the health service. We know that in 2015/16 NHS providers were £2.5bn in deficit. The Office for Budget Responsibility has said that spending on the NHS needs to increase by 4% a year above inflation in order to meet increased demands. Women are more likely to need NHS services and are the majority of those working in it.’⁵

On Housing:

‘Housing was the one area where there were more significant announcements. These included some welcome measures, including additional investment in house building, the council tax premium on empty homes, increases in local housing allowance rates in areas where affordability pressures are greatest and action to tackle rough sleeping. The review of land-banking by developers is also welcome and long overdue. However, the continued focus on home ownership doesn’t address the concerns by those in greatest housing need’⁶.

On Social infrastructure

Phillip Hammond repeatedly talked about the need to invest to secure a bright future for Britain. But his plans for investment in infrastructure failed to recognise the importance of social as well as physical infrastructure. Social infrastructure (including health, education, and care) is as vital to the economy as roads, rail and investment in high tech’.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Women’s Budget Group (WBG) is an independent, not-for-profit think tank that has scrutinised the gender impact of social and economic policy decisions of successive governments for more than two decades.
2. WBG has published a series of briefings on different aspects of the budget. These are available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/briefing-papers/pre-budget-briefings-autumnbudget2017/>
3. Our analysis of the problems of Universal Credit is available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/universal-credit-briefing-uk-womens-budget-group/>

Further information

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⁵ <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/health-pre-budget-nov-2017-final.pdf>

⁶ <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/housing-pre-budget-nov-2017-final.pdf>