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for immediate release

Budget promises 'jam tomorrow' but little real change - Women's Budget Group

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

This was supposed to be the end of austerity budget. But for many of those hit hardest by austerity the Chancellor's speech promised 'jam tomorrow', but not enough real change to improve their lives today.

The NHS, education system, care system and family budgets are all stretched to breaking point. What we saw today was a series of relatively minor announcements which failed to address underlying issues. We were promised more in next year's spending review, but the Chancellor's promise of 1.2% increase in spending in real terms will just cover the promises made on the NHS and leave nothing over for other public services.

Even the weak growth projections are dependent on achieving a good Brexit deal, which is by no means certain.

On health

The additional £20bn a year in five years has already been welcomed, but as the Kings Fund has pointed out, does not come close to the amount required to improve services after years of underfunding.

Additional funding for mental health is sorely needed but the focus on crisis services, doesn't address the cause of an increase in people with mental health problems presenting at A&E, which is the continued underfunding of community based services.

On social care,

Additional funding for social care is focussed only on the impact on the NHS. It does nothing for the 1.2million who are receiving no help at all with their care needs. 40% of local authority spending goes on social care, so without action to tackle the underfunding of local government it will be impossible to address the social care crisis. Again, social care has been treated as a non urgent problem that can wait for an ever delayed Green paper.

On Universal Credit

We welcome the increase in the work allowance, which will benefit low paid women. However nothing has been done to address the benefit freeze, the two child limit or the cuts to Local Housing Allowance that are pushing families into poverty

On tax

There were a series of tax cuts that will largely benefit men. The continued freeze to fuel duty will cost £9bn by 2021/22, cuts to alcohol duties will cost £175m by 2021/22, the freeze to personal tax allowances will cost £1.4bn a year by 2021/22.

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. Our pre budget briefings are available at <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/autumn-budget-2018-pre-budget-policy-briefings/>

Further information

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