



Amaze
Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton BN1 3XG
Mobile: 0798 4433232
Office: 01273 234020
Email: rachel@amazebrighton.org.uk
Web: www.amazebrighton.org.uk

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Dear Mary,

Re: Possible cuts to Early Intervention Grant (EIG), Disabled Children's Services and youth employability service

I first want to thank you for putting the budget papers out for consultation earlier than normal, and for setting out a 2 year plan. I understand difficult choices will need to be made in order to balance the Council's budget over the next two years, but I ask that you reconsider the needs of some of the most vulnerable families in Brighton and Hove.

We estimate there are about 7,000 children and young people in the City with special needs, 3,400 have a significant disability and whilst they live across all wards, a disproportionate number live in the poorest wards. Over half of disabled children are living in (or on the margins of) poverty and we know it costs three times more to bring up a disabled child than one who is not. 43% of parent carers in touch with Amaze, tell us they haven't had a single day's break from caring for their disabled child in over six months, 25% have never had a day's break. 27% say their caring role has contributed to a relationship breakdown and 84% feel isolated, or sometimes isolated, with 20% feeling unwelcome at venues and amenities across the City [source: Parent Carer survey Dec, 2011].

As such these families already face incredible challenges and I am concerned that, whilst individually the cuts are relatively small, the affect on these families will be cumulative, disproportionate and unacceptably high. Some proposals will directly impact on these families ability to cope and short term savings now are likely to result in higher costs later if families go into crisis and their child needs residential care. I understand that the average annual cost of just one family falling into crisis and needing a residential placement for their disabled child is £180,000.

In addition, national research indicates disabled children are three times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children and locally there has been a significant and marked increase in disabled children having a child protection plan (source: BHCC EIG on budget p.41) to the point where the City is now 3rd highest in the country. Can you please provide us with these trend statistics?

As such, the importance of intervening early and investing in support for parents or carers of these children is vital. The administration proposes protecting investment to support carers of adults and I would like your assurance this can **protection can be extended to investment in the support for parents and carers of children with disabilities**. These carers need access to regular short breaks and I **would like your assurance that investment in short breaks is protected**.

Other key proposals which Amaze believes will disproportionately impact on vulnerable families with disabled children and impact their ability to cope are tabled below. Please see my questions, or requests for further information, in the last column.

Page	Description of saving	Saving IDied 2012/13 '000s	Concern	Questions
Children's Services				
51 & 54	Reduce educational welfare service to statutory minimum & Attendance strategy	£217 & £20	No capacity to monitor attendance city-wide nor support schools to work with families where attendance is an issue. This will lead to more exclusions and ultimately impact on YOT and NEETs especially if you link this to the CAMHS reductions... a lot of young people that are having problems will lose out on the necessary support to turn situation around.	This cut will disproportionately affect families with child with special educational needs (more at risk with attendance problems) – how will this be addressed in the EIA?
52 & 57	Youth Employability service	£30 & £120	Significant cuts made last year and team not had chance to recover! Reduction in posts by 10 fte – big impact! Research highlights the transition to adulthood for disabled young people is often the most negative and stressful time for young people and their families. We would question that there will be enough capacity to fulfill its statutory requirements to all the young people in special schools, mainstream schools, out of county placements and colleges and further cuts here will lead to an increase in the NEET figures.	The Council has a statutory obligation to provide moving on advice to young people with SEN in transition. Will the Council be protecting the 2 LDD advisors that are left within the team?
53 & 58	Home to school transport – strict implementation of allocation for SEN children	£100 & £28	Fewer children transported to school will add to pressures of parent carers. Need to be involved in the EIA. Community Transport's contract ends in 2012 and concern that the social value added of their provision might be lost e.g. CT currently provide transport to Extratime after school clubs etc.	What is the total school/home transport budget ie. What proportion is being cut? Will eligibility criteria be changed again? Need to understand the impact on proposal to change the eligibility of home-school transport for children travelling to faith schools and whether this affects children with SEN.

49	EIG review	£192	Much of this document refers to the need to invest in early intervention /preventative services to avoid high cost interventions later – so why cut the EIG here? Key evidence suggests cuts to early intervention services are short term, false economy.	How can such a large saving be made with no impact on posts? What did the EIG review show, where are proposed cuts to be made? Please share results of this review urgently.
49	CAMHS – reduced work with children and professionals in schools to raise awareness of mental health	£107	We know mental health issues in children are increasing (Compass database shows almost 200 CYP with mental health problem). 40% rise in referrals last year! Particular problem in West Hove and Aldrington. Brighton has one of the highest rates of suicides in under 25's in the UK. Early intervention is key here especially in training people what the warning signs are. Cuts here are a real concern.	What % is £107k from total CAMHS budget for schools? Where would cuts be made – what elements of service would no longer be delivered? Need to increase awareness/training for teaching staff of mental health issues, not decrease!
??	Disabled children's services – voluntary sector service redesign	£120	Not clear how such big savings can be made through changes to contracting without huge impact on level of service and redundancies and ability of VCS organisations to survive. Need to understand that once this funding is taken away from the VCS , services will be gone as impossible to find other funders to replace statutory income. Need to stress that lots of work done in 2010 to develop Disabled Children's Needs Assessment and Commissioning Strategy. Any proposed changes should be in line with priorities set out in this.	Why are VCS being singled out for savings here? What proportion of total VCS budget is this? Proposed savings to in house services are only £50k, but against much larger budget. Impact therefore will disproportionately impact the VCS.
56 + 51	Children Centres	£642 & £50	Biggest impact on most vulnerable families and worse outcomes for them. Children with disabilities live across all the areas of the City. If some CC close, will families with disabled children be supported to access venues further afield?	Can we see breakdown of services provided which might be at risk and who currently access these? Can CC evidence that their current service offer has been helping the poorest families (closing the gap?)? Can we have profile of current users of

				children's centres e.g. % living on benefits, % with special needs/disability, % single parents etc. Is idea to retain CC in areas of highest deprivation?
51 & 56	CC nurseries, Childcare quality	£140 & £80	Reduction in funding for workforce development for early years providers will reduce quality of provision. Again concern that reduction in quality of early years provision will impact on closing the gap of achievement in key stage 1. Reduction in quality of early years provision and less choice esp in disadvantaged areas (where we need to be doing more to encourage parents to return to work)	
50	FIS	£50	Suggests providing more information on-line.	Need to ensure that some written information can be made available for those families who do not have access to the internet.
	Youth services	+£300	Amaze has fed into the Youth Services Commissioning strategy and review process and have lobbied for more investment in more inclusive and welcoming youth services as well as investment in specialist youth service provision.	How will the £300k investment be prioritised? Will there be a commitment to encourage universal youth services to be more inclusive and welcoming (20% of Amaze families state they feel unwelcome at City's amenities and venues)
<u>Housing Services</u>				
p.64	Housing – squeezing Supporting People contracts			
	Changes to benefits for those in temporary accommodation		6% of families which Amaze helped to access DLA families in 10/11 are currently living in temporary accommodation.	I would like some more information about whether families with disabled children living in temporary accommodation will be required to move out of the City.
p.64	Putting up rents and service charges in social housing		Biggest impact on most vulnerable families and worse outcomes for them. 52% of families which Amaze helped to access DLA families in 10/11 live in	How much will rents increase by? It is understood water rates will increase by 9% and service charges by 20% - this will lead to a real cut to families living standards.

			social housing, The recent Amaze survey shows 58% of parent carers are already struggling to cope with debt, are making ends meet by extending their overdraft or using credit cards. 14% have taken out a loan.	How does this proposal sit alongside the Child Poverty Strategy desired outcomes?!
<u>Infrastructure</u>				
	Closing public toilets		11% of children on Amaze's Compass database are incontinent as are some of their parents and carers and would struggle to go the extra 200m or so to the next nearest public toilet. Whilst the 'use our loo' initiative is a good idea, we understand not many shops have signed up to this as there is no incentive for them to do so. Also these might not be accessible.	Please can you provide a map of the public toilets which would remain and the 'use our loo' providers (marking those which are 'accessible') so we can circulate this to families for comment?
	Less investment in road markings, pavement repairs and street lighting etc		This will disproportionately impact the visually impaired and families with a disabled parking bay outside their home.	Commitment to continue to invest in road marking for disabled parking bays etc

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss any of these issues at your convenience and extend you another invitation to visit us and meet some of the parent carers we work with. Alternatively I would really welcome a reply with some of the additional information I have requested as soon as possible so that we can help the parent carers we are in touch with what the proposals are in more detail.

Best wishes and season's greetings

Rachel Travers

Amaze, Director
(I work part time on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays)
Rachel@amazebrighton.org.uk
0798 4433232

