

Equality impact Assessment for Council Budget 2012 – 13 Response by Brighton and Hove Speak Out

Brighton and Hove Speak Out welcomes the opportunity to feed into the council budget proposals and the impact that they will have on people with learning disabilities.

We have scrutinised the budget proposals 2012 – 2013 and commented on potential negative impacts to the learning disabled community. Given the size of the budget document and the broadness of the document, it has been difficult at this stage to judge the impact with great accuracy.

Adult Social Care – Centralising Transport

- People with learning disabilities often have very specific support needs. Removing specific transport for this group could result in people not getting the support they need from people who know them well.
 - To minimise risk, there is a need to provide a consistent staffing who understand client's needs.
- A centralised service carries a risk of being more disjointed and less reliable. This could be compounded if people are living in more independent settings and have less staff support to manage any routine changes. People might become agitated or upset presenting difficulties for themselves, staff and other passengers on the transport.
 - Good planning (with good knowledge of passengers needs) and enough resources is essential to minimise this risk.
- Some people with learning disabilities do not want to travel on minibuses as their main form of transport and want to learn to travel independently on public transport which offers more choice and control and is less institutionalised. There is not enough investment at present in travel training (ie travel buddies).
 - Could some travel budget be put aside to train people, therefore reducing costs in the long run?

Learning disabilities Accommodation

- Speak Out broadly welcomes the move to review accommodation however people might be denied the right to choose where they live and who they live with. The implication of these plans is that some people might have to move, even if they are happy where they are. This could cause distress, poor mental health and behaviours that are difficult to support which will cost more money in the long run.
 - We know that people with learning disabilities find it difficult to challenge decisions from authority without support to do so advocacy provision needs to remain in place.
- People might be denied the choice of who supports them and how they are supported, having to move from one support package to another which is unfamiliar.
 - The council needs to work alongside people with learning disabilities in order that they understand the need for change and are given time to work out what they want to do and have good choices available to them. Making sure people have adequate time for this is essential.
 - Money should be made available to make sure that people with learning disabilities can get help to challenge decisions so their rights are upheld.
- The possible consequences of in **house services focussing on people with higher support needs** are that more independent people with a milder learning disability may be more at risk of social isolation, health and mental health problems should they move to accommodation with less staff and support. This risk increases if people are subject to unplanned for events such as illness, accident or bereavement that are not catered for in their care package.
 - Care providers need to make sure that there is contingency funds available to help people cope with unplanned for events in order to prevent bigger crisis’.
 - Providers and the council need to make sure that people are supported to find social opportunities and build friendships and links with their communities

- **Lack of employment** could further increase risk of isolation for people who do not access day care options. (as above)
- People moving to **more independent accommodation** will be more vulnerable to financial, physical and other abuse from the public as well as other difficulties, for example neighbour disputes, money management etc
 - People will need good support and training on staying safe and good back up support should they feel worried, under threat or in other difficulties.
 - Support workers will need to be more aware of other support services available (ie money advice)
 - People living in more independent accommodation will need increased support to understand tenancies, money management etc
 - Care packages will need to be regularly reviewed to make sure that they are up to date and provide the necessary support
- Use of **assisted technologies** might be appropriate for some people with learning disabilities. It is unclear whether this is what is being proposed. However, the use of such technology needs to be balanced with people's needs to see other people in order to reduce risk of isolation and mental health issues.
 - People with learning disabilities talk a lot about wanting to see friends more. Proposed changes to the council budget need to make sure that social opportunities are increased, not decreased.

Adult social day care services

- **Less building based services** could lead to increased social isolation. People with learning disabilities have told us that they value day services because they get to see their friends. We know that many people already say that they do not see their friends enough at present and are not supported to do so by some staff. This plan could increase this problem.
 - In order to minimise this risk, community based day opportunities need to include the social element as a key part of the planning process, not just as a by product.

- Less centralised (building based) support could result in people's care packages/Person Centred Plans lacking coordination and not working properly. This is already happening (so we've been told) as day services have become less building based leading to lack of clarity about lines of responsibility.
 - Services need to make sure that Person Centred Planning is well coordinated so that people's plans are meaningful.
- It is important to get people out in the community as suggested by the **Embrace model**. For this to work with people with learning disabilities there need to be good, accessible information and signposting available. People with mild learning disabilities tell us that they find it intimidating to go to different departments/offices to get information. People have not heard of the Access Point.
 - The council needs to find creative ways to get information to the learning disabled community so they know what opportunities are there and feel confident to access them. This sort of outreach is possible through organisations that already support people with learning disabilities and in the voluntary sector.
 - Mainstream services need learning disability awareness training so they know how to support people with learning disabilities well

Housing

- **Re rent and service charge increases** to people with mild learning disabilities who are not in receipt of full housing benefit. It is unclear how many people with learning difficulties this will affect. At least 5000 are estimated to live in Brighton and Hove, although other estimates range to 7000. Learning disability services only know about 1,000 who have a learning disability, leaving many unknown and unsupported. Many of these live on low incomes and/or rely on benefits and do not have equal access to employment and training. The EIA lists only disabled people with a physical or sensory disability as being affected by increase in rent, although we can estimate that this figure will also include people with a learning

disability given the above statistics. 85% of people with learning disabilities nationally are unemployed (83% locally) and statistically others will be on a low income.

It is difficult for people to get out of the poverty trap and these actions will affect them more negatively than other groups.

Parents with learning disabilities often live on benefits. There is a likelihood that these actions will impact on their ability to look after their children as well as themselves.

Advice and signposting is often difficult for this group to access due to the need for accessible and simple information.

Re moving housing offices. There are likely to be more council tenants with learning difficulties than 1.4% (see above)

- Improved knowledge of numbers of people with learning disabilities in the city would help to minimise risks better to this group as better plans to protect them could be made

Regulation and city infrastructure

- People with learning disabilities on **subsidised bus routes** will be less likely to access city services therefore increasing the chances of social isolation (less likely to benefit from the 'Embrace' model). It is not clear where these routes are so difficult to comment more.

Planning and public protection

- Many people with learning disabilities have additional mobility issues. Less access advice on major planning proposals will result in less access to new buildings.

Infrastructure

- Many people with learning disabilities have additional mobility issues and have spoken about problems they already experience with **pavements in poor conditions** resulting in less confidence to walk and travel independently. As we understand it, city plans are for maintenance work on pavements/ roads to be carried out in response to concerns from the public, not as planned activities. A vast majority of

- people with learning disabilities could not independently contact the council and need external support to do so.
- The council need to make that that there is support from either themselves or existing community/voluntary sector groups to enable people to contact them
 - Council could decide to check pavements around day services and other places known to be populated by people with learning disabilities to ensure their safety
- **Street lighting** is an issue identified by people with learning disabilities as having an impact on their decisions about whether to go out independently, thus limiting people's choice. Good lighting is important in order that they feel confident to travel.
 - Less impact will be felt if reductions in street lighting are from 11pm onwards when people are likely to be at home
 - **Public toilets** closures could result in people not being able to access all areas of the city as they might have less confidence to go out,
 - Toilets closures need to be planned and well spaced out to ensure most people can access them if needed
 - Citywide signage needs updating to reflect proposed closures
 - **Reduction in quality of life**
 - Planned spending cuts will have an impact on how the city feels and looks. People with learning disabilities often perceive threats and danger based on this. There is likely to be more poverty, homelessness and disrepair in the city. This is likely to reduce the confidence of the learning disabled community to go out independently. They are more likely to feel threatened.
 - Work needs to continue to support people to understand key messages about safety and to educate them about the need for cuts locally.