



**Social care in crisis: from the perspective of  
Local Authorities in England**

The Learning Disability Coalition Local Authority  
Survey 2010

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Key facts.....	4
The Financial situation.....	5
The Effects on services.....	7
The Need for further funding.....	8
Next steps.....	10
Further information.....	10
Appendix 1 – The survey.....	11

## **Introduction**

The Learning Disability Coalition (LDC) was formed in 2007 to prevent further cuts to funding for people with a learning disability. We represent 14 leading learning disability organisations. Our aim is to make sure there is enough public funding for people with a learning disability so they have the same life chances and choices as everyone else.<sup>1</sup>

In spring 2010 the LDC conducted a survey of Local Authorities to ascertain what funding cuts have already taken place, how cuts are affecting services for people with learning disabilities and the funding pressures faced by Local Authorities.

The project was supported by the Research Group of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).

## **Methodology**

The survey was sent to 154 county and unitary councils and metropolitan and London boroughs in England. Respondents were given the opportunity to make additional comments offering qualitative as well as quantitative returns.

53 Local Authorities responded to the survey giving a response rate of 34%.

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<sup>1</sup> LDC members are: Association for Real Change, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, Down's Syndrome Association, Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, Mencap, National Autistic Society, The National Forum for People with Learning Difficulties, People First, Real Life Options, Sense, National Family Carer Network, Turning Point, United Response and Voyage.

## Summary

Of the Local Authorities who responded:

- **84%** rated the funding situation for learning disability services as difficult.
- Only **3%** felt that learning disability services were well-funded.
- **74%** are maintaining services through the difficult situation via efficiency savings.
- **10%** percent are already making cuts to services.
- **53%** indicated that supported living services were likely to be affected by budget constraints.
- **45%** thought that services for people with mild to moderate learning disabilities would be affected.
- **42%** felt that support for people with challenging behaviour was likely to be affected.
- **77%** would like to see money spent on supported living services if more resources were available.
- **60%** would like to spend more on support for people with challenging behaviour.
- **57%** would like to spend more on support for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

## **The Financial Situation**

We asked Local Authorities to describe the current situation in relation to Government funding for learning disabilities.

- Only **3%** of Authorities felt that learning disability services were well-funded.
- **13%** of Authorities rated services for people with learning disabilities as adequately funded.
- **84%** of Authorities rated the funding situation for learning disability services as difficult.

One Authority felt ***“in the main, service is adequately funded however we do have difficulties with the growing demand for high cost care packages for people who have complex needs.”***

An Authority who rated their service as currently being well funded commented ***“next year the service will be affected by the current financial situation and efficiencies will need to be found.”***

One Authority who rated their service as adequately funded said ***“the national funding formula beyond March 2011 has not yet been agreed and may impact on level of funding going to authorities. There is also an issue around passporting if the funds are not ring fenced.”***

- 74% of Authorities are maintaining services through the difficult situation via efficiency savings.

Authorities making efficiency savings noted ***“there are also plans to reduce packages of care and 1:1 support by tightening the focus of support”*** and ***“we are due for an overspend this financial year and having to manage vacancies and spending very carefully.”***

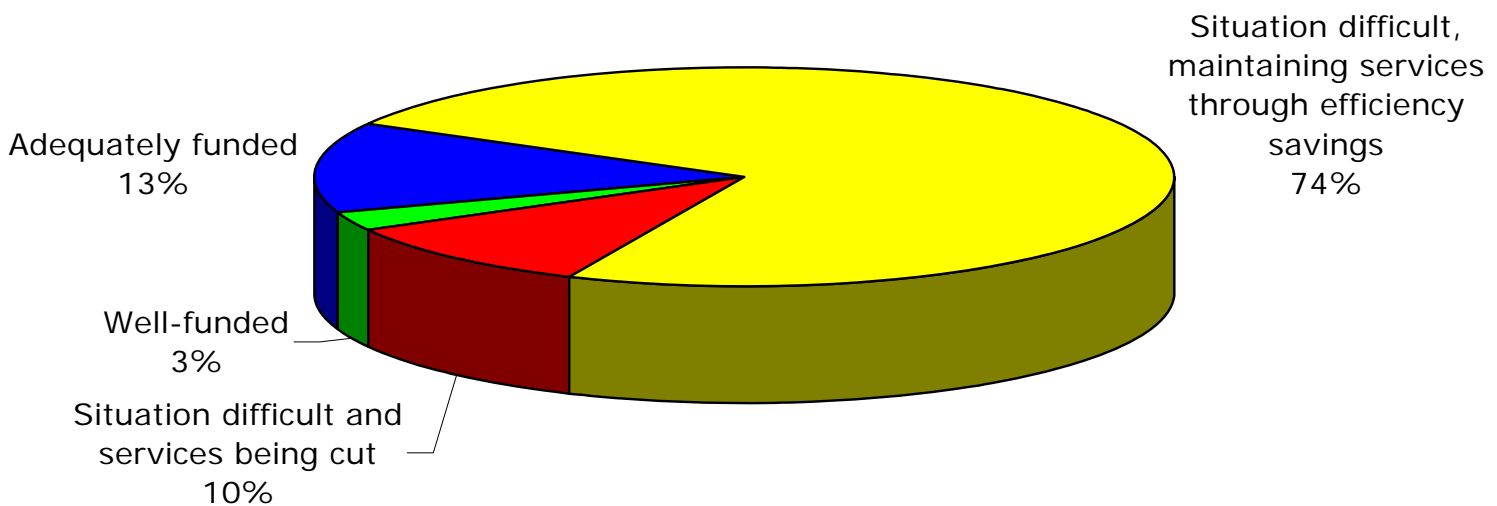
Other Authorities currently maintaining services via efficiency savings said ***“we could be heading towards service cuts”, “the situation from 2011 onwards would indicate cuts in services”*** and

*“savings requirements are now such that although we may be able to maintain services for 2010-2011, current planning assumptions indicate that we will need to cut services from 2010 onwards”.*

- 10% percent of Authorities are already making cuts to services.

One said *“our 4 year medium term financial strategy is scored on 20-25% savings given projected shortfalls in government funding. This cannot be achieved by efficiency savings.”*

How would you describe the situation in relation to Government funding for learning disability support in your Local Authority?



## **The Effect on Services**

We asked Local Authorities which learning disability services are most affected by cuts.

- 53% of Authorities indicated that supported living services were likely to be effected by budget constraints.

One Authority commented ***“moving people with support needs into supported living can be expensive in the short term... when money is short it is more cost effective for them to stay in residential care”***.

- 45% of Authorities thought that services for people with mild to moderate learning disabilities would be affected.

One Authority said ***“our eligibility criteria targets those with critical and substantial needs, therefore individuals with mild and moderate needs are often screened out”***.

Another commented ***“FACS is applied at critical and substantial which often means that people with mild to moderate needs are not supported”***.

- 44% of Authorities indicated that day time activities (other than employment) would be affected.

One Authority noted ***“it is likely that non-statutory services will be the first to feel the impact of the difficult financial position”***. These services include activities such as leisure support.

- 42% of Authorities felt that support for people with challenging behaviour was likely to be affected.

An Authority responded ***“challenging behaviour support services provided through the NHS are key to supporting providers to better manage people with challenging behaviour. Without clear support plans & guidance additional staffing is being used to help keep people safe resulting in extremely high and unsustainable unit costs”***.

## **The Need for Further Funding**

Local Authorities are at the frontline of adult social care. The Local Authorities who responded recognised the importance and long term benefits of providing adequate support for people with learning disabilities. Many Local Authorities see the benefits of providing better support but are constrained by lack of adequate funding.

The survey results paint a stark picture of a frontline service in crisis. Local Authorities are without appropriate funding to enable them to decommission outdated models of services and to come up with innovative and creative services, solutions and ideas that will provide people with a learning disability with the same choices and chances as everyone else.

Authorities commented on the need to shift services to new, person centred service models. However, they noted the difficulties in making this happen without sufficient funding.

One Authority said ***“Valuing People Now and Putting People First requires a significant shift in how services are being provided... in the current situation with many local authorities struggling with their budgets ... the opportunities to develop these further are being held back as other priorities can take precedent”***.

Another Authority stated that ***“in order to move from the 'traditional' services such as day services... some new pump priming/transition monies are often needed to set up new arrangements whilst older ones are decommissioned”***.

A different Authority stated ***“[The] problem is that the returns for [investment in line with the priorities of Valuing People Now] are in too long a time frame to make them attractive to decision makers at a time of severe financial constraint”***.

- **77%** of Authorities would like to see money spent on supported living services if more resources were available.

One Authority felt ***“we need to change how we spend money on Learning Disability services. For example, we need to use less residential care and spend more on supported living”***.

Another Authority noted ***“supported living offers opportunity for long term benefits by maximising independence. This is particularly the case for younger people leaving home”***.

Authorities felt that financial restraints currently hindered this becoming a reality.

One Authority said ***“access to all services is getting tighter and the pace of change, e.g. from residential care to supported living is slower than could be delivered with greater investment and assessment in case management”***.

- **60%** of Authorities would like to spend more on support for people with challenging behaviour.

One Authority commented that ***“services in the local area for people whose behaviour challenges are limited. For people with high needs, both challenging behaviour and multiple disabilities, more services such as supported living services, would greatly reduce the reliance on residential care services”***.

- **57%** of Authorities would like to see more money spent on employment support.

One Authority said ***“we want to develop additional employment support and transform existing day services. Additional funding would allow us to pump prime innovative projects”***.

- **55%** of Authorities would like to spend more on support for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

One Authority said ***“the complex needs of users are increasing as is the cost of specialist placements. Alternatives to specialist placements in line with personalisation are very expensive due to support required”***.

When 84% of councils say that the funding situation is difficult, when 74% of councils are managing budget cuts through efficiency savings, and when we continue to hear of desperate cases of people with a learning disability, family and carers cut out of a system which for many, is their only life line, it is time to take the funding crisis seriously.

## **Next steps**

The Learning Disability Coalition is concerned to find that the majority of Local Authorities who responded to our survey are experiencing a difficult funding situation for adult social care services. 10% of Authorities are already making cuts to services for people with a learning disability; and many others have indicated that they envisage having to make cuts to services in the next financial year.

Since the survey was commissioned there has been a dramatic change in the political climate, with a new coalition Government formed between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. The country faces a dramatic reform of public spending and Local Authorities are now under more pressure than ever to make further cuts of 25%. However, the new Government has promised that cuts will only be made to 'non-frontline services'<sup>2</sup>. In response to this the Learning Disability Coalition is launching a campaign called 'Protect the Frontline' which aims to hold the Government to its promise and prevent further cuts to social care budgets. It is now more important than ever to work together to protect vulnerable people with learning disabilities and ensure they have access to the support they need.

## **Further information**

To find out more about funding cuts for people with learning disabilities and what we are doing to prevent them please visit our website [www.learningdisabilitycoalition.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilitycoalition.org.uk)

## **Thanks to**

Sue Williams and members of the Research Group of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services  
The ADASS Learning Disability Policy Network  
The local authorities who responded  
Emma Skingsley, Irene Permaul and Jacqueline Maher for the administration and analysis of the survey

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<sup>2</sup> The Coalition: our programme for government

**APPENDIX 1**

**Learning Disability Coalition survey of funding of learning disability services**

**Question 1: How would you describe the situation in relation to Government funding for learning disability support in your local authority?**

Well-funded	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately funded	<input type="checkbox"/>
Situation difficult but maintaining services through efficiency savings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Situation difficult and services being cut	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments (optional)	

**Question 2: If the situation is difficult, which services/aspects of learning disability support are most affected? (please tick all which apply)**

Residential care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supported living	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day time activities (other than employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for people with mild to moderate needs	<input type="checkbox"/>

Support for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for people with challenging behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments (optional)	

**Question 3: If more resources were available, where would you like to see the money spent? (please tick a maximum of 3)**

Residential care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supported living	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved support for people with profound and multiple needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved support for people with mild to moderate needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved support for people with challenging behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day time activities (other than employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain why:	

**Question 4: What type of local authority are you?**

Metropolitan district	<input type="checkbox"/>
London borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other unitary authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
County council	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 5:**

For approximately how many people with learning disabilities do you fund out of area placements?	
In most cases, do you feel that these placements meet the needs of those people:	

Well?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all well?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain why:	