

Social care – the continuing crisis

The Learning Disability Coalition Local Council Survey 2011

Easy Read



Introduction



The Learning Disability Coalition was formed in 2007 to stop cuts to funding for people with learning disabilities. We have 14 groups.



In 2010, the Learning Disability Coalition wrote a report about money for social care in local councils. It said that there was a crisis in funding for social care.



Over the last year, the Government has made a lot of changes and has reduced public spending.



The Government has reduced the money that it gives to local authorities by a lot.



It has given local councils £2 billion each year for social care support, but not all of this money is new. Some of it was already being given local councils for other things.



The Government says that it has given enough money to local councils so that they do not have to make cuts to support services.



But local councils say that they do not have enough money. They are making cuts to services.



We wanted to find out how the changes in the amount of money being given to local councils had affected social care support for people with learning disabilities.



There are 152 local councils in England who provide social care support. We asked all of them to reply to a survey. 61 councils answered.



We also asked people with learning disabilities, their parents and carers to tell us how their social care support has changed over the last year. More than 300 people replied to our survey.



We have taken the results from our two surveys and used them to write this report.

Local council funding for support for people with learning disabilities in 2011



We asked local councils to describe how much money they have for support services for people with learning disabilities.



More than 8 out of 10 of local councils said that the funding situation was “difficult.”



More than 6 out of 10 of local councils said that they were making big savings.



2 out of 10 local councils were reducing or stopping support services.



Less than 1 out of 10 councils said that their social care services had lots of money to spend.

Lots of councils said that they were finding it hard to support everyone who needs it.



They said that there are a lot of young people who need support from the council when they finish their education and go from school to college, or leave college.



There are also a lot of older people with learning disabilities who need support. This often because their parents are getting too old to care for them.

Social care support is very important to people with learning disabilities. This is what some people told us about why social care makes such a difference to them:



“Please do not stop my funding as I cannot cope with living my life without it.”

“I want to be like everyone else...and do what they do, but I need some help. Without this help I will be left indoors by myself while everyone is enjoying their lives.”

How has the amount of money changed between 2010 and 2011?



We asked local councils if there had been any change to the amount of money that they got from the Government between 2010 and 2011.



9 out of 10 local councils said that they had less money than last year.



Only 1 out of 10 local councils said that they had more money or that there had been no change to the amount of money that they get from the Government.



This means that most local councils have less money, but still have to give support for lots of different people. Local councils have some very difficult choices to make.

How have the spending cuts affected support services for people with learning disabilities?



The Government has decided to cut public spending. This is because the country owes a lot of money.



The Government is expecting local councils to make very big savings in their spending over the next four years.



Local councils say that they cannot make such big savings without making cuts to their services.



2 out of 10 local councils said that they are already cutting services.



2 out of 10 councils said that they will have to give less support to people with mild to moderate disabilities.



3 out of 10 councils said that they either had to or were thinking of increasing charges for their services.

We asked people with learning disabilities, their parents and carers if their council had told them about any changes to their support.



Nearly 2 out of 10 people had been told that they will get less money.

2 out of 10 people had been told that their hours of care would be less.



One person told us:

“My sister, who has a...severe learning disability, has had ALL her care stopped, because of funding cuts. It is not possible for the family to replace this care, as well as the support the family were already providing. We are also not trained to give the services she needs. My sister is now suffering from serious harm certainly due to funding cuts.”

We asked local councils to tell us which support services they thought would be worst affected by the cuts in funding.



4 out of 10 councils said that services for people with mild to moderate learning disabilities would be affected.



Small amounts of support for people with mild to moderate learning disabilities can make a big difference to their lives. People need a lot more care in future if they don't get the support that they need now.



More than 3 out of 10 councils said that residential homes would be affected by the cuts.

This is worrying, as lots of families who replied to our survey said that if they had less support from the local council, it was more likely that their children would go into residential home.



Nearly half of the councils who replied told us that day time activities would be affected by cuts.



People with learning disabilities and their families are worried that this might mean that people do not have enough to do during the day. They may end up at home and feeling very alone..



One family member told us:

“My brother wants to have a routine where he can feel valued and part of a real community. Walking round shops or visiting leisure centres is not good enough.”



Nearly 4 out of 10 local councils said that employment services for people with learning disabilities were likely to be cut.

This is worrying, as very few people with learning disabilities are in paid jobs and most would need some level of support to find and stay in a job.

What would local councils like to spend more money on?



We asked local councils if they had more money to spend, what would they like to spend it on.



4 out of 10 councils said that they would spend more money on support services for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.



Local councils said that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities need lots of support close to the area that they live in. They also said that there are more people with profound and multiple learning disabilities than in the past who need support.



More than 3 out of 10 councils would improve support for people with behaviour problems.



Local councils said that if people with behaviour problems were supported properly, they would be less likely to reach a crisis situation.



More than half of local councils would like to spend more money on services to help people find a job.



Local councils said that helping people with learning disabilities into work is very important, as many people with learning disabilities would like to work.



2 out of 10 local councils would give more money for advocacy services. Advocacy services are important because they help people to speak up for themselves.



Local councils say that advocacy services are very important for people with learning disabilities. Social care support is changing a lot, and advocacy services help to make sure that people get the support that they need.

Conclusion



The Learning Disability Coalition is very worried that local councils have been given less money by the Government.



This has led to many local councils having to make cuts to important support services for people with learning disabilities.



We think that people with learning disabilities have the right to live independent lives with the support that they need.



We will continue to campaign to make sure that the Government provides enough money so that people with learning disabilities have the same choices and chances as everybody else.