

ALLIANCE NEWS

MAKING SURE VOICES ARE HEARD

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Edinburgh Breaks Promise On Choice

When Edinburgh Council started its Care And Support tender the promise was made to service users, if you want to keep your existing providers you can apply for a direct payment.

Leading councillors Paul Edie and Norman Work (on behalf of the Administration) proposed the following motion in May of this year

“To note that any client unhappy with the service delivered could seek a direct payment and ... to ensure all service users were aware of this option and the services available to assist them in exercising this choice. “

176 people took them up on this but now without council approval council officials have made up a new policy and denied over half the people any choice about being able to keep their current providers. An email sent out on the 16th of October said.

“We had hoped to be able to approve DP applications in advance of the start of the new contracts. However, it has not been possible to commit the resources to manage this. We are now at the stage of having to make sure that resources are committed to the transition of services [to new providers] as a result of the tender... As a result we will not be able to process any further applications for Direct Payment during the transition.”

However information received by

LDAS indicates that this is not the whole truth. The two departments involved in the process have been in heated debate over this for the last 5 weeks. One of them wanted to confess the truth, the other to claim they were short of resources.

And what is this truth that is being hidden away. In an internal council memo written on the 6th of August it was stated:

“If we receive and approve any additional [learning disability] DPs then we would only be able to award 1 package [instead of 5].”

“If any more DPs are approved in the Physical Disabilities category then we will be unable to award the package and will achieve no savings.”

An email from a senior official in the planning process followed up noting that changing the Direct Payments policy “departed from the statements already made to the public and endorsed by politicians. The manner of communication of any change was crucial.” In other words council officials were going to

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Bad News to Come!

It looks like Scotland's local authorities are going to be facing a major challenge in financing their budgets.

People with learning disabilities are the most vulnerable in society but spending is still a small part of local budgets. **Spending on services for people with learning disabilities is only 3.4% of local authority budgets and just 17% of all social work spending.**

Here are just some of the councils who have announced cuts -

Aberdeen plans a 5% cut with 600 job cuts to save £16.9 million in 2010/11.

East Lothian council are cutting £6 million in each of the next three years.

East Renfrewshire is expecting to cut spending by 15% by 2013.

Edinburgh City is cutting on services by up to 8 percent.

Glasgow City is looking for 10 percent cuts—up to 2,000 jobs

North Lanarkshire plans to save £75 million over four years.

South Lanarkshire Council plan to cut £6m with 150 jobs cut.

We need to make sure vital services and support are not lost over the next few years.

CHANGING PLACES TOILETS AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

On September 8th PAMIS and LDAS delivered their Changing Places petition with over 3000 signatures to the Scottish Parliament.

Linda Burke spoke to the petition telling the committee that these facilities made a real difference to her daughter's life and that while some progress had been made



there was still a long way to go.

There was a very supportive atmosphere and a feeling that delivering Changing Places toilets would be a good thing for Scotland. The debate was helped greatly by Jackie Baillie who suggested including a point in the next round of the Single Outcome Agreements to measure progress in the provision of Changing Places toilets.

- local authorities would keep control of the process but introduces external encouragement and inspection.
- allows a proportionate response from councils. For example, there should be

more provision by Glasgow than East Renfrewshire

The committee agreed that more needed to be done and wrote to

- Scottish Government
- A number of sample local authorities
- Scottish Retail Consortium
- Historic Scotland
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland

Nigel Don MSP made perhaps the central point of the day – the additional cost of a Changing Places toilet is actually quite small if the planning is included at the early stage of refurbishment or design of new toilets.

Edinburgh Breaks Promise cont.

undermine what politicians had promised.

In August the first indications were made that Direct Payments were to be frozen. People told their process was being put on hold, incomplete letters sent out, contracts missing from mailings. Sarah Boyack MSP challenged this through the Scottish Parliament but Edinburgh told Scottish Government officials there was no freeze, it was simply too hard for them to process so many applications. However the government still rapped the council over the knuckles. Things improved for a couple of weeks until last week when the Big Freeze came down.

National Implications

The Scottish Government is about to release a new policy on Self Direct Support which is due to announce a presumption that people should have a Direct Payment and have to opt out

rather than opt in as presently.

How can anyone have any faith in Direct Payments as a system when local authorities can "control" the resources so that some people get them and others don't and that the rates that people receive can go down at the whim of a local authority.

The council has all the rights about how and what people get and none of the responsibility to ensure that it is fair.

Only a tiny handful of council officials are behind this policy, most, if not all councillors have not been informed in advance of this. Is this what local democracy has come to - hijacked by a group of desperate anonymous officials who are worried that their reputations may be damaged?

A Payment Delayed is Worth Less

Edinburgh says that Direct Payments may be made available again after the transition to new services in March 2010. However:

1. people will only get a new rate (about 25% lower than they are currently entitled to) and be in poor position to negotiate with their existing provider if they wish to return.
2. By this point their service will have been transferred to a new provider which they will have to leave and transfer back.
3. Staff may already have transferred over and so individuals will have to choose between provider or staff.
4. Even if service users transfer back to their favoured provider, remaining staff may have been made redundant, left or transferred elsewhere.

Only getting their Direct Payment now can give individuals the choice that they are looking for.

ITS NOT TOO LATE FOR
EDINBURGH TO DELIVER ON ITS
PROMISE.