

## Scrutiny Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020

### Item 8 – Call in Life Opportunity Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

#### Response from Disability Network Norfolk Group (DNNG)

#### Re Life Opportunities Services for Adults with Learning disabilities and/or autism.

Thank you for asking for our views on the above as stakeholders.

We understand that the consultation to produce “My Life, My Ambition, My Future” which has led to the Life Opportunities Plan was carried out in 2017. We hope that this is what you are referring to as you talk about the consultation exercise undertaken in 2018. We have asked the members of the Disability Network Group (DNNG), but have been unable to find a single member who can definitely recall seeing or responding to the consultation.

While we understand that people with disabilities and their carers did make responses to the consultation because it says so in the My Life, My Ambition, My Future document it appears to us that it was not sent to all those who would be affected as with the consultation for the changes to the MIG and the latest ‘An Accommodation Plan for People with Learning Disabilities’ which some of our members have asked to be sent out to all concerned but have not as yet had a reply to even though the closing date for responses for that is on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Checking on the My Life, My Ambition, My Future document, it is quite clear why we are concerned about the council’s intentions, despite Cllr. Borrett’s assurances that the Life Opportunities plan is “cost neutral”. The plan is apparently formed directly from the My Life, My Ambition, My Future document, and page 7, the first page of Context, starts with *“As in many parts of the country, budgets are not keeping pace with demand and so change is needed”*. It continues *“to make significant efficiencies across health and social care.....”*, *“There are already savings plans in place, however, assuming these are delivered, there is still a combined financial challenge for health and social care of c. £56m for 2018/19.”*

We realise this is now 2020, but the pressures are still there and even more pressing and the new plan is drawing on the same document.

The new plan has already required significant input and will need much more before it is fully trialled and in operation. It appears to be a diversion of resource that could be used directly to benefit service users. It may, if effectively applied, make some

difference to, in the best case, possibly 4% of working age adults in Norfolk (about 60 people). In our opinion the object of the plan, of working in the whole community for those able to do so, is exactly what previous policy was aimed at. We see no reason why this new plan should be any more successful and it will have been a significant expenditure of effort and resource.

We also note that on page 40 the final paragraph says "*The Council should be a role model and employ people with disabilities including a learning disability*". This was written in 2018, has the Council become a role model? Can we use that as a yardstick to weigh the likelihood of the Life Opportunities plan benefitting those 4% of working age adults with disabilities? What about the other 96%?

Some of our members asked Councillors questions in an email regarding concerns about various aspects of the document put before Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Apart from a brief reply from Cllr Borrett saying that it is 'cost neutral' and with no reference to the specific question raised they have heard nothing further despite writing again.

Judith and Nick Taylor will be attending the meeting as representatives of DDNG.

Yours sincerely,

DNNG

Dear Councillors,

## **LIFE OPPORTUNITY SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES/AND OR AUTISM – CABINET 3<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 PAGE 251-270**

The aims of the above are in general to be commended. However, many of the details cause us great concern.

The introduction refers to ‘**improvements**’, ‘**cost neutral**’ and ‘**co-production**’ with service users and providers’.

The introduction also includes recommendations including:-

(2) *“to agree to pilot the new Wellbeing and Promoting Independence Pathways before being implemented as part of the framework.”* This MUST include review the effectiveness of those pilots with service users and providers and to proceed with an agreed plan.

(3) *“To agree the launch of the Skills and Employment pathway.”* This also needs review, evaluation and agreement by a wide range of service users including those with complex learning disabilities and providers BEFORE implementation. How can Cllrs agree a pilot about which they have no idea of the outcome of?

It must be clear that the outcomes of the pilots result in implementation of systems that are agreed by NCC, service users and providers as **beneficial** – bearing in mind the stated aim of improved outcomes, opportunities, choice and control. We see nothing in the document about evaluated outcomes.

Further:

### 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.2 *“The changes proposed offer more choice, closer to where the service user lives.”* How? There is no explanation. In most instances provision in place is provided by the closest provider of service whether suitable for the service user or not. This is supposed to be reviewed annually although rarely is. These proposals make no mention of new or additional services or providers so how is there going to be more choice?

1.6 *“Fundamental change” of contract with providers.* In our opinion many providers have little or no resilience to manage change as it will require input which is not available because there is no financial freeboard.

1.7 We see no benefit from a name change.

### 2. PROPOSAL FOR LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

2.3 *Skills and Employment Pathway* – a VERY limited percentage of the total number of people with learning disabilities will be able to access this. Additionally, it

is of no use unless work places are available for them in something they are interested in and want to do ('choice' – introduction and 'one size doesn't fit all' 1.3 (e)). It would be extremely detrimental to raise false expectations for individuals.

2.5 *"Skills and Employment Team will create employment opportunities"* – see our comment 2.3.above. NCC themselves do not have a scheme to employ people with the sort of disabilities who need the services under discussion especially those with complex/severe LD.

2.6 *Pilots of "Wellbeing and Promoting Independence Pathways"* There must be a robust framework for NCC, providers and service users to review, monitor and evaluate pilots and any implementation must only be with agreement of all. If providers and service users prefer the status quo, and if as accepted, the changes are cost neutral, this should be perfectly acceptable.

2.7 Will NCC use providers who do not wish to be part of the scheme? If not, is this coercion?

2.8 As 2.6

2.10.2 It is not now 2018. MIG changes, cuts to respite, transport and day services mean that disabled people are now less able to meet the challenges of greater independence and work. They are less resilient.

4.1 The pathways are suggested to allow people who use services to benefit from more personalised care and support" This is vague and needs to be quantified before it is agreed to proceed.

4.1.1 Social care staff should monitor outcomes, not rely on providers assessments. There is a conflict of interest here.

4.1.2 *Changes will be "implemented after a pilot period"* – surely this is prejudging the outcome of the pilots? They should be monitored, reviewed and evaluated before implementation.

4.1.3 *Change implemented will be "planned with the person and agreed and set out in their providers support plan."* Is this a guarantee to only make changes if they bring about improvements for individuals? (Introduction). Carers should have an input into this also particularly if they have Power of Attorney or are appointees or if the disabled person is under 18.

4,2,1 *"Align costs and spend annually"* Will service quality be reduced if costs and spend don't align? The stated aim in the introduction is improvement.

4.2.2 See our comment 1.6

4.2.3 See our comment 1.6

4.2.6 “*Provider unsuccessful in their application.*” – Proper respect must be paid to the needs of affected individuals. Change of provider and availability of suitable alternatives will almost inevitably mean that if a provider is ‘unsuccessful’ disabled people will suffer. How will applications be judged and who will do so? We regard this with great concern.

4.3.2 *Quality* – who will assess quality and on what parameters? Any price capping can only reduce choice. It is essential that attempts to control cost do not encourage worse provision – (improvement – introduction).

4.3.3 Any price cap WILL inevitably damage individuals if it is set below the level of current provision in place. However, if introduced, any cap would need regular review for its effects on outcomes and indexing.

5.3. “*There are many examples.....skills and employment pilot.*” How many examples? How sustainable are those expectations if greater numbers are involved? Are there any predictions? What is the best case in the UK as a benchmark? Please refer to our comments on 2.3

We feel that a much greater degree of monitoring and agreement from service users, carers and providers is essential for these proposals to have any chance of improving the lives of people with learning disabilities otherwise we can see that financial pressures from across council spending will inevitably mean that the lives of those with learning disabilities will not be improved, but will actually be disrupted and worsened.

With reference to the document Life Opportunities. Transformation Project. Equality Assessment – Findings and Recommendations - page 4, (page 262 Cabinet agenda) 2<sup>nd</sup> para: A “Radical review of day care services” which would contribute to the **savings** programme ref ASC013 ..... It also talks about ‘the variance in savings’ delivery.....’ – how does this sit with being ‘cost neutral’?

We would also like to comment about ‘locality hubs for those with complex needs’ in the same paragraph. Having visited the current hub provision they struck us as being inflexible, dull and unsuitable to properly fulfil the potential of many people with learning disabilities – they seemed 20 years out of date. Other provision we have experienced firsthand, in our opinion, far outclasses it. To rely solely on hubs for people with hugely ranging degrees of LD would be a massive step backwards and contravene the aim of ‘improvement’ and ‘choice’.

We therefore cannot see how Cabinet can possibly recommend agreement of this document without the questions and concerns we have raised being dealt with first.

We would also like to add the following points:

1. If people with learning disabilities (LD) manage to gain employment will they be paid at least the minimum wage?

2. If the person with LD is in supported living and manages to gain employment will he/she still have a care package for that?
3. If the person with LD is unable to use public transport will NCC pay for a taxi to get them to and from work or will the person be expected to pay for this themselves? If the latter, they probably won't earn enough each week to cover the expense.
4. Will companies who employ the person with LD be expected to support the person FOC or will NCC pay for any support required?
5. How many people with LD are NCC predicting will get into work over the next 2 years?
6. You talk about choice. How many new 'hubs' will be opened to facilitate the pathways scheme and will there be closure of existing day service centres? If so, how is this choice?
7. How many companies/businesses has NCC approached so far to get this scheme off the ground?
8. How many people with LD are employed now that the pilot is completed?
9. How many people do NCC employ with complex/severe LD (excluding affiliated companies eg Norse) and what opportunities of work is NCC intending for people with complex /severe LD as a result of this scheme?

Yours sincerely,

Judith & Nick Taylor

## **Response from Family Voice**

### **Re Life Opportunities Services for Adults with Learning disabilities and/or autism.**

Thank you for inviting Family Voice Norfolk to comment on the consultation process around the above report. We would like to make the following points:

1. Family Voice Norfolk (FVN) is a collective of parent carers from over 900 families across Norfolk and represents almost 1,200 children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). FVN has been the strategic voice of parent carers working in partnership with Norfolk County Council (NCC) and the five clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) since 2006. FVN aims to influence the planning, design and commissioning of local services for children and young people with SEND from the ages of 0 to 25 years. It is funded through a direct Department for Education grant, by NCC and by the five CCGs.

This strategy significantly affects our membership.

2. We were not involved in a consultation in 2018. We responded to an online survey in July 2017 about Learning Disability Strategy. This was a brief survey, mainly asking for views on previous developments. We believe that our membership should have had the opportunity to give us their views in the 2018 consultation to form a considered response from Family Voice Norfolk.

3. 'Consultation', however, is not the way of working that Norfolk County Council itself says it prefers. At <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/about-the-local-offer/pledge-for-coproduction> NCC states:

The SEND Code of Practice makes it clear that the local authority, education settings, social care and clinical commissioning groups must engage with and listen to children and young people and their parents and carers. This is so that when planning, designing and organising services, their experiences, views and expectations are fully taken into account.

We believe that co-production is the best, fairest and most effective way to achieve this. Children, young people and families must be placed at the centre of shaping the way services are planned and delivered in Norfolk.

As the parent carer forum for Norfolk, we have signed NCC's 'pledge for co-production' and believe that working with professional partners to shape services from the beginning is the best way to ensure that the council's resources are used in the most effective way to help families with children and young adults with SEND.

*The Life Opportunities Services for adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism* report presented to Cabinet on 3 February 2020 states:

This proposal has come about as a direct result of the strategy for learning disabilities; “My Life, My Ambition, My Future 2018-22”, which was produced with people with learning disabilities and their families. It says:

***“People with a learning disability have the ambition, choice and opportunity to be equal members of the Norfolk Community”***

We are therefore working together with people who use services to shape a future that improves the outcomes, opportunities, choice and control of people with a learning disability and/or autism, whilst delivering quality and efficient local services.

Family Voice Norfolk has not been involved in this ‘working together’.

We believe that the views and experiences of families and of young people with learning disabilities in their first seven years of adult life are key to the confidence with which they can move forward throughout their lives.

4. We appreciate being alerted to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee but feel we should comment that the steering group and membership of Family Voice Norfolk are all parents of children and young people with SEND. Receiving notice of this meeting late on a Friday afternoon with the time to respond consisting of two days of a weekend and two days of half term, when parent carers have children at home or may even be away, is neither ideal nor in the spirit of co-production.

5. We are very happy to be involved in work on Life Opportunity Services for Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism. Young people with learning disabilities, who have already been affected by the Minimum Income Guarantee cuts, are at particular disadvantage in being able to juggle priorities in their lives without support. They do not necessarily fall neatly into the pathways that services proscribe and the ways in which their disability affects their lives is often a very complex matter. Family Voice Norfolk is well aware of the impact that fitting into external systems has on the young people themselves and on their families. We believe that it is critically important that stakeholders like ourselves are involved in all aspects of planning for these services and that our lived experience must be reflected in systems put in place.

6. We would like to send a representative to the Committee on 20th February.

Yours Sincerely

Family Voice Norfolk.