
Redbridge Concern for Mental Health and RUN-UP consultation response

Redbridge Conversation
London Borough of Redbridge
Budget Consultation, 2012

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Introduction

Redbridge Concern for Mental Health and RUN-UP welcome the opportunity to comment on the Adult Social Services Budget Consultation. We recognise the budget constraints on the local authority in light of the financial crisis and the pressures on budgets. We also appreciate that the local authority will have to make difficult judgements over the coming years in light of the savings the council will have to make.

Redbridge Concern and Run Up are committed to working in partnership with Redbridge Council to ensure that we minimise the pain that will inevitably be caused and to ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our community are not unfairly impacted by any reductions and cuts in services.

In the current economic climate as public services are cut – we strongly believe - that fairness matters more than ever. It is incumbent on Redbridge, Council to ensure that we improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Redbridge, making it a fairer place.

We trust that Redbridge Council will remain committed to ensuring that services and support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community are maintained, developed and improved to ensure that they have the same opportunities and choices as other citizens.

We strongly recommend, therefore, that **Children’s Social Care and Adult Provision both of which are areas of spend with great impact on fairness and health and wellbeing are safeguarded.**

“Flourishing communities are those where everyone has someone to talk to, neighbours look out for each other, people have pride and satisfaction with where they live and feel able to influence decisions about their area. Residents are able to access green and open space, feel safe going out and there are places and opportunities that bring people together.”

Dr Hussey, Regional Director of Public Health NHS North West

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Establish a Redbridge Fairness Commission

To set up a Fairness Commission - an independent, non-political body to advise Redbridge Council on ways it can increase fairness and reduce inequality in Redbridge.

A number of local authorities, have adopted such an approach including Islington,¹ and York² which is sponsored by the Archbishop of York. The focus of a Commission is to advise a Council on the difficult budget decisions it faces

Redbridge Conversation likely to exclude those who need access to services most

Whilst the Redbridge Conversation has its merits a number of studies are making it increasingly clear *‘that a digital underclass is emerging in Britain, a group of people who are increasingly more disadvantaged in their ability to use the internet and other Information and Communication Technologies.’*³

We would require further information on how the Redbridge Conversation has talked to and engaged with these particular disadvantaged and hard to reach groups who are most in need of child and adult social care provisions.

Recommendation 2 - Commitment to reducing inequalities

Make reducing inequalities a prime focus in policy and decision-making.

Recommendation 3 - Support and empower the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups

There are certain groups in Redbridge that are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged including those who are very young, very old or disabled or have complex mental health conditions **and their interests need to be protected in a time of smaller budgets.**

The link between disability, poor mental health and poverty is well established. High levels of unemployment among the disabled population means disabled people have lower incomes than average and are

¹ <http://www.islington.gov.uk/council/councilfairness/>

² <http://www.yorkfairnesscommission.org.uk/whatisthefairnesscommission.html>

³The Emergence of a Digital Underclass: Digital Policies in the UK and Evidence for Inclusion, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/60556197/Policy-Brief-Emergence-of-a-Digital-Underclass>

disproportionately likely to live below the poverty threshold and be dependent on benefits for a large proportion of their income.⁴

It is crucial, therefore, that the London Borough of Redbridge enables Social Services to “support people to maintain their independence, enable them to play a fuller part in society, protect them in vulnerable situations and manage complex relationships.”⁵ To continue to support people to do day-to-day things including: getting out of bed; cooking a meal; shopping; caring for families, having a shower and getting around.

Children’s Social Care and Adult Provision are areas of spend with great impact on fairness and they need to be safeguarded.

Recommendation 4 - Adopt a long term view

Redbridge Council considers carefully, weighs up the costs and benefits of the long-term impact of choices as well as short-term savings, and recognises that prevention is better than cure.

Recommendation 5 - Equality Impact Assessment

Individual Equality Impact Assessments are helpful.

However, we strongly recommend that should be an overall EIA with an emphasis on disability exploring how the savings, cuts and increases in charges affect disadvantaged groups.

“We are also very concerned about the cumulative effect of local and national changes – we have local cuts and national cuts proposed (e.g. DLA, child benefit, and health services).

Put together all these cuts could chip away at all the support mechanisms and services our families relies on and causes even costlier family breakdown and deeper inequalities.”

Claire Downey, Interface - a Redbridge based group for parents of disabled children

Recommendation 6 – Income Generation via Voluntary Contributions

Redbridge council to explore the costs/benefits and practicalities of ⁶

- asking people if they would wish to make a donation on top of the advertised price of a service (e.g. leisure bookings) to support Council

⁴ Demos, The most effective way to tackle disability poverty is by reducing costs..., <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/countingthecost>

⁵ Department of Health, 2006

⁶ Refer to York Fairness Commission, Interim Report: <http://www.yorkfairnesscommission.org.uk/whatisthefairnesscommission.html>

activity to support those in greatest need - either generally or a named service or good cause campaign.

- setting a higher advertised price for services that automatically includes a donation to a good cause (as above), but with the option for people to say they would prefer not to pay the additional contribution.
- asking people if they would make an extra voluntary contribution on top of their Council Tax bills to support services/good causes, especially if Council Tax is frozen

Some or all of these options may work best if an independent 'York Welfare Fund' or similar is established that would raise money for named good causes including activities the Council would like to support but cannot afford to run (e.g. a Sure Start centre or additional 'enrichment' activities for children from low income backgrounds).

About Redbridge Concern for Mental Health

Redbridge Concern for Mental Health - established over 15 years ago – is a service user led organisation based in the London Borough of Redbridge dedicated to promoting, improving and protecting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the wider community.

We offer high quality services to local residents seeking mental health support. We also provide information and signposting as well as challenging the stigma and discrimination that people experience in their everyday lives.

Our Aims

- To develop high quality, culturally appropriate, accessible services for people recovering from and experiencing mental health problems.
- Work in partnership to influence mental health policy and to promote best practice in all aspects of service planning and delivery.
- Develop new ways of promoting service user involvement and helping service users to improve their lives.
- To improve people's health, care and well-being by promoting positive mental health.
- To challenge the stigma and discrimination that people experiencing and recovering from mental health problems encounter in their everyday life.

What does Run-Up Do?

Nothing about us without us - A key role of RUN-UP is to influence the design, delivery and management of local mental health services. In particular: to contribute experience and expertise to policy development as a 'critical friend' as well as to promote and monitor the effectiveness of user involvement in the planning, commissioning, managing and monitoring of services to ensure service users have a full say in policies and practices which affect their lives. Articulating views and experiences of our members by attending meetings, seminars, workshops and debating issues

Campaigning for full inclusion in society - we all want to live in communities where we can participate fully and equally. Many indicators show us that for people with mental health conditions this hasn't yet happened and there remains considerable work to be done to get to this point. People with mental illness commonly describe the stigma and discrimination they face as being worse than their main condition. Discrimination, stigma and prejudice can pervade every part of their daily life - their personal life, working life, sense of citizenship, their ability to maintain even a basic standard of living