


One Place East
Where disability matters

www.oneplaceeast.org
jon.abrams@oneplaceeast.org

Response to Redbridge Council's Budget Consultation 2018/19



Introduction

Life in Redbridge is unfair

One Place East welcomes the opportunity to comment on Redbridge Council's Budget Consultation. We recognise the budget constraints on the local authority and the fact that national not local government has control over the level of many funding streams and the welfare system. We also appreciate that Redbridge Council will have to make tough decisions in light of continued austerity and Government cuts.

Nonetheless, it is disappointing especially in light of Redbridge's Fairness Commission that Redbridge Council is still hitting Deaf, Disabled people, and carers with cuts and charges. Study after study, demonstrates how Disabled people are bearing the brunt of a series of decisions on public spending and are consequently losing support to enable them to take part

in community life, go out to work and see friends and family.

34%

of people with a disabled adult in the family are in poverty in London, compared with 25% of people without a disabled adult in the family.

Our research [Redbridge Voices](#), demonstrated that many Disabled people believed that equality and fairness were going backwards in Redbridge.

The report, [Being disabled in Britain: A journey less equal \(April 2017\)](#) found

evidence of a lack of opportunities in areas including education and employment, deteriorating access to justice, and a widening pay gap. Moreover, more Disabled people than non-disabled are living in poverty and the evidence suggests that welfare reforms and social services cuts have had a particularly disproportionate, cumulative impact on the standard of living of Disabled people.

Disabled people pay on average
£550 per month
on extra costs related to their disability

Scope, 2014, Priced Out: ending the financial penalty of disability by 2020



Disabled people are more likely to have unsecured debt. A [Scope survey, Priced Out, ending the financial penalty of disability by 2020](#)

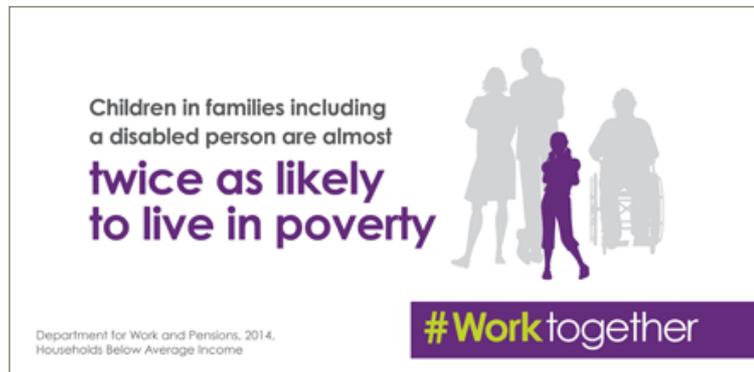
found that a large proportion of disabled people are relying upon credit to meet their basic needs – half (49 per cent) of Disabled people have used a credit card or loan to pay for everyday items in the previous 12 months, most commonly to pay for clothing and food.

As we pointed out in our response to [Redbridge Council's Charging Policy](#) consultation, charging risks discouraging Disabled people and carers from accessing the support they need. In turn, this is likely to have an increased cost on the public purse in the long term as Disabled people, older people and carers who have been discouraged from accessing services only come to the attention of Redbridge Council and NHS services at crisis point.

Charging will also adversely impact on more and more Disabled people who are likely to face a combination of going without the care support they need, cutting back on expenditure on food, heating, clothing, and increasing levels of debt.

We believe that Redbridge Council still has flexibility in the choices it makes when targeting cuts. For example, according to [Redbridge Council's Unaudited Draft Statement of Accounts 2016/17](#) there is £166m of Usable Reserves. We are recommending that 5% is released to ameliorate cuts in core services impacting on Disabled, frail, older people and carers.

Furthermore, our analysis of [recent Council spend](#) suggests that there are a range of other cuts and savings that can be made before targeting Disabled people, carers and the long-term sick. For instance, according to the [November 2017 data set](#) Redbridge Council spent £60,000 on Business, Marketing and Management Consultants. Extrapolated over a year this equates to £720,000



Summary of Recommendations

Release 5% of Usable Reserves

According to [Redbridge Council's Unaudited Draft Statement of Accounts 2016/17](#) there is £166m of Usable Reserves. We recommend that 5% are released to ameliorate cuts in core services and to scrap charges impacting on Disabled, frail, older people and carers. [Hammersmith and Fulham Council, for example](#), have abolished all charges for home care services for older and Disabled people.

Carry out a forensic analysis of council spend and publish the results

We accept tough decisions need to be made. However, from our analysis of [recent Council spend](#) there appears to be significant amounts of tax payers money being spent on a number of areas that need to be forensically scrutinised and reviewed before cuts are made impacting on Disabled, older people and carers. For instance, according to the November 2017 data Redbridge Council spent £60,000 on Business, Marketing and Management Consultants. Extrapolated over a year this equates to £720,000.

Produce a Cumulative Impact Assessment

Redbridge Council is unaware of the extent to which Disabled people have been affected by previous and current national and local welfare reforms and social care cuts. A recent study conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission has pointed out that "welfare reforms have

significantly affected the already low living standards of disabled people.”
Redbridge cuts and charges will make the situation worse

“We are also very concerned about the cumulative effect of local and national changes . We have local cuts and more national cuts proposed. Put together all these chip away at all the support mechanisms and services our families rely on and causes even costlier family breakdown and deeper inequalities.”

Co-production Nothing about us without us

Financial decisions resulting in cuts to services and higher charges impacting on Disabled People and carers are often being made by people who have little or no contact with the people actually using the service or affected by the cuts. This is why **Disabled people have argued for many years that policy and services should be co-produced with the people whose lives it affects.**

Hold a referendum

The cuts this year are so serious, why doesn't the council show the courage of its convictions and hold a referendum that would allow it to set higher council tax? Why not let Redbridge citizens decide if it wants to pay higher council tax to support disabled, older and frail people and carers who use social services?

Budget Saving proposals and the Care Act, 2014

Direct Payments

We are concerned about the review of direct payments outlined in the Budget Consultation savings proposals. How will Redbridge Council ensure that they are complying with their duties under the Care Act 2014 making sure that the amount that people get is *sufficient to meet the person's care and support needs*?

We are also worried that direct payments efficiency savings will mean that service users could be pushed into taking a direct payment even if they do not want to , which is unlawful.

Moreover, if as a result of the review, personal assistant wages are lowered, how will Redbridge Council make sure that it is complying with their duties under the Care Act, 2014? And how will the Council ensure Disabled people and carers who employ Personal Assistants have enough to meet their statutory obligations as employers?

The Direct Payments Gap

“What is the council going to do about the biggest charge of all for many service users : the direct payments gap - the difference between what an hour of care actually costs and what the council pretends it costs. BBC data shows that the real hourly rate locally was £21.90 an hour in 2016, while the direct payments rate is barely half that. ”

The cost is paid by:

(a) service users who receive lower quality care, less well trained and motivated staff, with higher staff turnover and absenteeism rates.

(b) Council taxpayers who have to fund more expensive residential and nursing care packages due to the unsatisfactory quality of home care

Demand Management - Care Act, 2014

Redbridge Council is planning to make savings through '*demand management*' mechanisms to enable people to '*deal with their problems and reduce their dependency on services.*' We are concerned that this will lead to Disabled people, older people and carers being talked out of doing assessments.

It is important to point out that Redbridge Council still has duties under the Care Act:

Section 9(1) provides: "Where it appears to a local authority that an adult may have needs for care and support, the authority must assess:

(a) whether the adult does have needs for care and support, and,

(b) if the adult does, what those needs are.

The Care Act is highly prescriptive as to the contents of assessments. So, it cannot only be about what a person can do for themselves. A needs assessment must include an assessment of

"(a) the impact of the adults' needs for care and support on the matters specified in section 1(2);

(b) the outcomes that the adult wishes to achieve in day to day life, and

(c) whether, and if so to what extent, the provision of care and support could contribute to the achievement of those outcomes”.

Local Authority Duty - Section 5, Care Act

[Section 5 of the Care Act, 2014](#) places Redbridge Council under a ‘*market shaping*’ duty to promote diversity and quality in provision of services. A local authority must promote the efficient and effective operation of a market in services for meeting care and support needs with a view to ensuring that any person in its area wishing to access services in the market:

(a) has a variety of providers to choose from who (taken together) provide a variety of services;

(b) has a variety of high quality services to choose from;

(c) has sufficient information to make an informed decision about how to meet the needs in question

“An agency cannot provide the right quality of care. They cannot, whatever they tell you, cannot provide the right quality of care for the amount they are paid by Redbridge. That is why organisations don't any longer have contracts with Redbridge. It is not possible. That is why a lot of people have lost their carers”

Digitalisation - accessible and fair access to information

As more and more forms, benefits, information and advice go on line and public services become 'digital by default' it is becoming harder and harder for many Disabled people to access information and expert advice and support. The fact is those who need access to services most, and support for filling in welfare benefit forms and so on are the least likely to take up these on-line services even when access is available. This is compounded by the fact that there has been a reduction in expert advice across Redbridge for disabled people and resources have not kept pace with increasing demand.

"How else would you find out if you want to find out a about benefits what is available? What you are getting? Are you making sure your state pension is right? All these new rules....Those internet aware people have an advantage because the Government thinks everyone is on the internet but what about if you are not on the internet?"