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## **Redbridge Disability Consortium**

Consultation response:  
Draft, Health and Well Being  
Strategy, 2017-21, Redbridge

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# Introduction

Redbridge Concern for Mental Health welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Redbridge, 2017-21. We are encouraged to see the Health and Well Being Boards commitment to Mental Health. Study after study clearly demonstrates that it is not possible to improve Redbridge's general health or respond effectively to the challenge of long-term conditions without tackling mental health issues. Councils have a vital role in tackling the contributory factors to poor mental health such as poverty, isolation and stigma and in improving treatment through early intervention and peer support.

Mental ill health is widespread, increasing, very painful, disabling, and life threatening. Mental suffering is as insidious, widespread and growing as obesity only less visible. Young people are particularly vulnerable<sup>1</sup>

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Sir Michael Marmot's report on the root causes of inequality in health rightly calls for concerted action to break the link between ill health, poverty and social exclusion. Redbridge residents in order to enjoy good mental and physical health and the opportunity to lead flourishing and meaningful lives require: "decent housing, nice neighbours, good friends, not feeling isolated, enough money, places to go, being able to do things and people to turn to in times of trouble."<sup>2</sup>

In the current economic climate of significant austerity and public services cuts— we strongly believe - that fairness matters more than ever. It is incumbent on the Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to ensure that we improve the quality of life for everyone and **in particular disabled people**. The fact is that whilst at face value we have travelled far, in reality disabled people are being left behind in Redbridge, their life chances remain very poor, and public attitudes have changed very little.

Our report, Redbridge Voice<sup>3</sup> revealed the lack of equal opportunities in education and employment; barriers to access to transport, health services and housing; the persistent and widening disability pay gap; deteriorating access to justice; and welfare reforms are significantly affecting the already low living standards of disabled people.

Evidence and research clearly demonstrates that insufficient income is associated with worse outcomes across virtually all domains of health, including long-term health and life expectancy. Disabled people are, for example, twice as likely to live in poverty as everyone else; and are more likely to be working in low-paid jobs (when working at all).

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<sup>1</sup> Avner Offer, The Challenge of Affluence Self-Control and Well-Being in the United States and Britain since 1950:

<sup>2</sup> Health Education Agency

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rcmh.org.uk/documents/reports/Redbridge%20Voices\\_Final\\_april15\\_emailversion.pdf](http://www.rcmh.org.uk/documents/reports/Redbridge%20Voices_Final_april15_emailversion.pdf)

## Key Facts

- More disabled people than non-disabled are living in poverty or are materially deprived
- Across the UK, 18.4% of disabled people aged 16-64 were considered to be in food poverty compared with 7.5% of non-disabled people
- The qualification gap between disabled and non-disabled people has narrowed, but the proportion of disabled people with no qualifications was nearly three times that of non-disabled people, and the proportion of disabled people with a degree remained lower
- Less than half of disabled adults are in employment (47.6%), compared with almost 80% of non-disabled adults, and the gap between these groups has widened since 2010/11
- The disability pay gap in Britain also continues to widen, with disabled young people (aged 16-24) and disabled women having the lowest median hourly earnings of all
- Social security reforms have had a particularly disproportionate, cumulative impact on the rights to independent living and an adequate standard of living for disabled people
- Families in the UK with a disabled member are more likely to live in relative poverty than non-disabled families
- Disabled people continue to face problems in finding adequate housing, due to a shortage in accessible housing
- Accessing healthcare services is problematic for disabled people, and they're less likely to report positive experiences.

## Poverty

Evidence and research clearly demonstrates that insufficient income is associated with worse outcomes across virtually all domains of health, including long-term health and life expectancy. Disabled people are, for example, twice as likely to live in poverty as everyone else; and are more likely to be working in low-paid jobs (when working at all). Increases in financial support are crucial for many disabled people in to enable them to do day-to-day things that many of take for granted: getting out bed; cooking a meal; shopping; having a shower and getting around.

Redbridge Health and Well Being Board:

- Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to come up with initiatives to protect disabled groups from the impact of cuts
- Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to ensure adequately funded social care
- Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to commission a multi-faceted strategy to break the link between disability and poverty that links education, skills and employment.
- Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to produce Cumulative Impact Assessment (see below)

## Cumulative Impact Assessment

Redbridge Council to produce a Cumulative Impact Assessment, to analyse the impact on Redbridge residents of welfare reforms and cuts and in particular the impact on disabled people, long term sick and children. Such an analysis will help the Health and Well Being Board and partners to further develop its approach to supporting those affected by current and future welfare reforms.

Disabled people have been disproportionately hit by the government's austerity measures. The cumulative impact of the welfare benefit cuts and cuts to care and support have hit disabled people 9 times more than most other citizens<sup>4</sup>. There have been over 20 major changes to working age benefits since 2010 that the Government has implemented or plans to implement.

National research suggests that essential support has been taken away from 164,000 Disabled people through changes to Personal Independence Payments. Moreover, the cut to Employment and Support Allowance by a third for Disabled people in the Work Related Activity Group will predominantly affect people with autism, learning disabilities and mental health support needs who are not able to find paid jobs.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/type/pdfs/a-fair-society1.html>

Many households are affected by more than one change which is particularly likely to be the case for long term sick or disabled people, and people with children. Moreover, significant risks have passed to the local authority as Government has withdrawn some national benefits (including Crisis Loans, Community Care Grants and Council Tax Benefit) and required local authorities to provide a local safety net through Discretionary Housing.

## Employment

Disabled people remain **significantly less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people**. In 2012, 46.3% of working-age disabled people are in employment compared to 76.4% of working-age non-disabled people.

Moreover, the cut to Employment and Support Allowance by a third for Disabled people in the Work Related Activity Group will predominantly affect people with autism, learning disabilities and mental health support needs who are not able to find paid jobs.

Fair Society, Health Lives, The Marmot review clearly states: "Being in good employment is protective of health. Conversely, unemployment contributes to poor health. Getting people into work is therefore of critical importance for reducing health inequalities. However, jobs need to be sustainable and offer a minimum level of quality, to include not only a decent living wage, but also opportunities for in-work development, the flexibility to enable people to balance work and family life, and protection from adverse working conditions that can damage health.

- Redbridge Health and Well Being Board to commission a Disability and Health Employment Strategy for Disabled Adults It should be a multi-faceted strategy to break the link between disability and poverty that links education, skills and employment.
- Redbridge Council and the NHS are two of the largest employers in the borough and must therefore lead by example by setting meaningful and stretching targets to recruit more disabled people

## Housing

Although the gap in non-decent accommodation has closed over recent years, 1 in 3 households with a disabled person still live in non-decent accommodation. Moreover, 1 in 5 disabled people requiring adaptations to their home believe that their accommodation is not suitable

Furthermore, over half of disabled people have difficulties accessing rooms within their own home so there is a huge unmet need for accessible housing. It is vitally important that accessible housing is seen as a part of mainstream build, rather than a niche need for a small section of the population.

It is important that Redbridge Health and Well Being Board ensures relevant partners and housebuilders and developers commit to National Standards that

- Provide equivalent or enhanced access standards compared with existing standards
- Provide the minimum required standard, while allowing for local schemes containing higher access standards to meet local need.
- Are enforceable

## Transport

Barriers to disabled people's participation in physical activity, leisure and sport provision depends largely on a transport system that is reliable, accessible and supportive. Poor access to transport, leisure and other services can affect the community and social life of disabled people, creating a barrier to independence and their enjoyment of day-to-day activities which in turn impacts adversely on physical health and well-being will contribute to health inequalities.

## Social Care and Support packages

In many areas the funding for support packages is being cut in real terms, so disabled people are either having to fill the funding gap to maintain the same level of care, at the same time as the costs of care are rising, or face a cut in support.

Redbridge Health and Well Being Board will need to come up with initiatives to ensure that high quality support and resources are made available to disabled people to do day-to-day things such as getting out of bed, cook a meal, shopping, caring for families, having a shower and getting around. It is also of fundamental importance to continue to develop and promote services that meet people's needs and enhance their dignity and promote independent living and encourage flourishing lives.

## Digitilisation - Access to Information

As more and more forms, benefits, information and advice go on line and public services become 'digital by default'. Redbridge like the rest of the UK is facing the growing problem of disabled groups becoming more and more excluded. The fact is those who need access to services most, 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Redbridge Voices, The views of Deaf, vision impaired, hard of hearing and disabled people (2015), [http://www.rcmh.org.uk/documents/reports/Redbridge%20Voices\\_Final\\_april15\\_emailversion.pdf](http://www.rcmh.org.uk/documents/reports/Redbridge%20Voices_Final_april15_emailversion.pdf)

“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?”

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Thus, Redbridge Health and Well Being Board will need to champion and encourage interventions and initiatives designed to tackle digital exclusion in increasingly hard to reach groups through multiple strategies, taking into account skills, awareness, experience and motivational issues that stop people from becoming digitally engaged citizens.

## **Meaningful Participation - Nothing About us Without Us**

Participation by disabled people in development and decision making is vital – from seeking feedback through to full decision making and leadership by disabled people. To achieve fully inclusive outcomes i.e. disabled people taking part in society requires fully inclusive processes. In other words, disabled people participating at all stages in planning and decision-making. These approaches can also help Redbridge public sector bodies meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This means that any decision by a public body which will or may result in a reduction in services to one or more disabled person must involve the person or people in this decision and pay proper regard to their views.

## **Championing Independent Living**

Redbridge Health and Well Being Board, to Champion Independent Living. It is important to keep disabled people in their own homes when this is the most appropriate place for them to live. If it isn't possible for the disabled person to live at home (or they don't want to do so) then it requires high quality residential provision to be made which is suitable to the disabled person's needs and respects their wishes, feelings and preferences. Redbridge must ensure and secure a sufficient supply of in-home, residential, and other community support services for disabled people, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community.

## **Accessible Communication**

Significant improvements to accessible communication services, specially BSL interpreting provision are of fundamental importance such as public

sector staff undertaking deaf awareness training. Redbridge Council is the first council in the Country to be given the 'Louder than Words' Charter Mark for the whole of its services. This nationally recognised charter mark is for best practice for offering excellent levels of service and accessibility for staff and customers who are Deaf, or hard of hearing

Redbridge Health and Well Being board to champion and encourage local partners (NHS, and Local business) to adopt 'Louder than Words' Charter Mark.

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## About Us

### **Redbridge Disability Consortium**

[www.redbridgedisabilityconsortium.org](http://www.redbridgedisabilityconsortium.org)

Our work is driven by the goal of a society in which disabled people are treated with dignity, fairness, respect and understanding. We are passionate about developing high quality, accessible services for disabled groups, working in partnership to influence policy and outcomes affecting disabled groups; and challenging the stigma and discrimination that disabled people encounter in their day-to-day lives

### **Redbridge Concern for Mental Health**

[www.rcmh.org.uk](http://www.rcmh.org.uk)

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.

### **Redbridge Forum**

[www.redbridgeforum.co.uk](http://www.redbridgeforum.co.uk)

Our aim is to help improve the quality of life for people with a learning disability and their carers, including those on the autistic spectrum. A lot of our work at present is based around children's services and we run 4 projects Fun 4 All, Bright Ideas, TrueColours and Childrens Advocacy. We also support people with a learning disability to speak up for themselves and we also engage with local carers to find out what they think about services in Redbridge