
**Redbridge Concern for Mental Health
consultation response**

Redbridge Conversation
London Borough of Redbridge
Budget Consultation, 2013

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Introduction

Redbridge Concern for Mental Health welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Redbridge 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 difficult judgements over the coming years in light of the further savings of up to £33 million that will have to be made over the next three years.

Redbridge Concern for Mental Health is 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. 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 disproportionately likely to live below the poverty threshold and be dependent on benefits for a large proportion of their income.

- According to the DWP in 2008, over half of disabled people incurred extra expenses as a result of their impairment (DWP July 2008, 145)
- According to a Demos 2010 report, the proportion of households with a disabled person who are below the poverty line is more than doubled to 47% when the extra costs of living with a disability are included (Demos, October 2010, 20). Apprentice

In light of rising demand and reduced money we are concerned about Redbridge's ability to fund social care in a way that results in high quality services, in places that people need them, at the heart of the community enabling people to live with dignity and pursue independent and flourishing lives.

Redbridge Council must remain committed to supporting and empowering the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Redbridge.

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It is imperative that Redbridge Council continues to support people to do day-to-day things such as getting out of bed, cooking 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.

Voluntary Sector Funding

We support the Council's proposal to fund a Volunteer Centre in Redbridge and the additional funding via the Redbridge Community Fund and the Olympic Legacy Fund.

We are concerned that in real terms there appear to be cuts to funding of local voluntary and community organisations in Redbridge. However, we are unable to comment fully on Voluntary Sector Funding in Redbridge as the details of The Award of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2013 are not yet available.

Public sector changes to services, as well as national and local changes to the benefit system are being introduced at a time when funding cuts have reduced the number of charitable advice centres that help claimants apply for benefits and negotiate the increasingly complex system. We believe that insufficient thought has been given to how to support people who are not online and to provide accessible alternatives.

¹ Demos, The most effective way to tackle disability poverty is by reducing costs..., <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/countingthecost>

Cumulative Impact Assessment

“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

We have over the last few years made a number of requests for a ‘Cumulative Impact Assessment’ of the cuts on the disabled community. It is becoming increasingly difficult to assess and judge the impact of all the different changes to benefits, charges, service restructuring on the disabled community.

Many disabled people now face the combined impact of social care cuts, benefit cuts, changes to in and out-of-work benefits; housing cuts, and shortly revisions to council tax benefits as well as the transferral of the Independent Living Fund to local authorities

Redbridge Conversation likely to exclude those who need access to services most and will be most affected by the cuts in public services

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.’*²

"These individuals are those that rely most on the government services that are now becoming ‘digital by default’ and will continue to do so. Those who need access to services most, from where the biggest cost savings through the digitisation of services are supposed to come, are the least likely to take these up even when access is available

- ✓ By 2011 Q4, there were 3.98 million disabled adults who had never used the Internet. This represents 34.5 per cent of those who were disabled and just under half of the 8.20 million who had never used it.

²The 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>

- ✓ By 2011 Q4, there was a decrease of 276,000 disabled Internet non-users, compared with Q3.³
- ✓ . Disabled people are significantly less likely to live in households with access to the internet than non-disabled people. In 2010 58 per cent of disabled people lived in households with internet access, compared to 84 per cent of non-disabled people⁴

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³ Office for National Statistics: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_256200.pdf

⁴ British Social Attitudes Survey 2010

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.