



Buckinghamshire County Council

Health and Adult Social Care Select
Committee

Inquiry Report

Accessibility and promotion of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

The role of the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee is to hold decision-makers to account for improving outcomes and services for Buckinghamshire. It has the power to scrutinise all issues in relation to Health and Adult Social Care.

Membership of the Select Committee

Mrs Angela Macpherson (Chairman)
Mr Roger Reed (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Brian Adams
Mr Chris Adams
Mrs Margaret Aston
Mrs Patricia Birchley
Mrs Janet Blake
Mr Noel Brown
Mr Brian Roberts
Mrs Julia Wassell
Ms Shade Adoh, Local HealthWatch
Mr Tony Green, Wycombe District Council
Mrs Sandra Jenkin, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Mr Nigel Shepherd, Chiltern District Council
Mrs Wendy Matthews, South Bucks District Council

Membership of the Accessibility and promotion of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities Review Group

Mrs Margaret Aston
Mrs Avril Davies (co-opted)
Mr Steven Lambert (co-opted)
Mrs Angela Macpherson
Mr Brian Adams

Contact:

Julia Woodman, Committee & Governance Adviser, HQ Member Services
(01296) 382062
democracy@buckscc.gov.uk

Further information on the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee can be found at:
<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=137>

Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	6
1. Inquiry context	8
2. Accessibility of Transport	14
3. Accessibility of Information on Community Services	18
4. Ensuring universal community services and facilities are in place to meet needs	22
5. Encouraging mainstream services and facilities to be more accessible	25
6. Safeguarding	27
Appendix 1 – The Inquiry Scope	28
Appendix 2 - Schedule of evidence gathering	30
Appendix 3 – Summary of User, Carer and Provider Feedback	31

Acknowledgments

The County Council has a critical role under the Care Act in ensuring the market place for Adult Social Care meets the needs of all users in Buckinghamshire who need care and support. The ambition is to continuously improve quality, choice and the cost-effectiveness of services.

We wanted to hear first-hand from service users, carers and providers to understand the current marketplace of activities and services for adults with learning disabilities.

We would therefore like to express our thanks and gratitude to those who participated in this Inquiry, in particular:

- Service users and Talkback who helped us understand a range of issues linked to accessibility of services such as choice and availability.
- Carers and Carers Bucks, who helped us to particularly understand aspects of safeguarding risk, provision of transport and the costs implications of the current marketplace.
- We would also like to thank the Learning Disability Partnership, The Learning Disability Providers forum and all the Council officers involved for supporting the Committee, providing information and support.

Executive Summary

Learning Disability and support services are high up the national agenda as a result of the Winterbourne Review in 2011 and the more recent 2014 Independent Review by Sir Stephen Bubb which has highlighted the need to accelerate the progress of reform. Locally Buckinghamshire County Council commits a significant proportion of its Adult Social Care budget to Learning Disability Services with a forecasted growth of residents with severe and complex needs.

The Inquiry group gathered evidence in different ways—speaking directly to frontline carers and service users through holding focus groups; research into best practice elsewhere; interviews with service providers, officers and through dedicated discussion sessions with the Learning Disability Partnership Forum and the Learning Disability Providers Forum.

Key findings included the importance of:

- Good public transport and travel training to enable adults with learning disabilities to have better access to a broader range of universal services independently.
- Providing information on services and activities available in a range of formats than can be easily accessed and understood by adults with learning disabilities and their carers.
- Offering a breadth of services and activities to meet a range of needs and abilities.

Adults with less complex Learning Disabilities in semi-independent living situations want to be supported to participate in universal activities, in universal and community settings. The cost of paying for support to access these activities individually is prohibitive and therefore greater availability of group activities is needed. User feedback also indicates the lack of evening activities and the success of local providers such as Gateway and Social Link highlights a real demand for this.

User, carer and provider feedback highlighted a lack of awareness of activities that are available locally. Currently there is no website or 'whats on' guide to easily assess what is available and accessible to adults with a learning disability. The adult social care brokerage service has a list of providers, but this is across the adult social care spectrum and not in the public domain. It is therefore difficult to establish how much of the issue of service provision is down to poor communication.

We found evidence that the market place of activities for adults with learning disabilities is very volatile and sustainability of provision is an issue. Opportunities for making links with other council services should be more extensively explored.

Although outside the scope of this Inquiry, a common thread from our carer and provider evidence was significant concerns regarding the provision of safeguarding support and awareness training for Users, Carers, and Care Support Staff. This could not be ignored and merited an extra chapter on safeguarding

Recommendations

Transport

1. Buckinghamshire County Council should ensure that the experience of Adults with Learning Disabilities who use the college and day opportunity centre transport service is a core part of the contract monitoring process, and is reflected within the Key Performance Indicators for the Contract.
2. Buckinghamshire County Council should coordinate learning disability awareness training for drivers within managed transport services, ensuring this training is annually refreshed and monitored.
3. Buckinghamshire County Council should promote the importance of learning disability awareness training with local bus operators as part of the Council's role in improving disabled access on buses.
4. Buckinghamshire County Council, in conjunction with Buckinghamshire district councils, should promote the 'Fair4Aall' taxi scheme so that Adults with Learning Disabilities are supported to have trust and confidence in using taxi and mini-cab services safely.
5. Buckinghamshire County Council should continue to invest in travel training – ensuring all appropriate Adults with Learning Disabilities can access this as part of the transition to independent living.

Accessibility of Information on Community Services

6. Buckinghamshire County Council should ensure its web pages are accessible for all users, with Adults with Learning Disabilities seen as a priority group.
7. Buckinghamshire County Council undertakes a digital service standards assessment of www.careadvicebuckinghamshire.org and the County Council web site in order to identify immediate, short and medium term priorities for ensuring it meets the needs of all users
8. Buckinghamshire County Council to evaluate and consider investing in a dedicated Buckinghamshire venue guide for users with disabilities, working collaboratively with District Councils
9. Buckinghamshire County Council should explore how information on community activities could be presented in a more dynamic format for example via a community portal
10. Buckinghamshire County Council should develop an implementation plan that includes staff training and guidance to ensure effective compliance with the Accessible Information Standard (for Health and Social Care Services)

Ensuring Universal Community Services and facilities are in place to meet needs

- 11. Buckinghamshire County Council should review current community provision (not solely Council services) for adults with learning disabilities identifying needs, gaps in services and actions for how these will be met in the future.**

Encouraging mainstream services to be more accessible

- 12. Buckinghamshire County Council should make its regular activities and services more accessible to adults with a learning disability e.g. its library services developing services that people with a learning disability could access**

Safeguarding

- 13. Buckinghamshire Council to work with Local Safeguarding Boards to ensure safeguarding training and support by providers to service users with learning disabilities is provided with a particular focus on the following: avoiding exploitation, money management, relationship management and use of social media**

1. We agreed in early 2015 to have an Inquiry into Adult Learning Disabilities Services. The key drivers for having this Inquiry were linked to the national commitment to transform care and support for people with learning disabilities post Winterbourne Review. A review of Buckinghamshire evidence did not highlight significant issues to warrant a Select Committee inquiry in relation to preventing admission and the discharge process, due to a low and stable number of inpatients. In addition, a significant programme of work is in place to deliver the requirements of the Transforming Care Agenda. The Select Committee felt it was important to focus on issues linked to social inclusion and accessibility of services for adults with learning disability as this was highlighted in consultation evidence from CHASC as an issue.
2. We decided to use consultation evidence from users and carers to determine the focus recognising this covered a broad range of services. We identified service users' and their carers' experiences of accessing services and amenities through existing feedback and engagement groups. From this we then agreed on our focus (The full scope is attached at Appendix 1.)
3. The Committee appointed us (as an Inquiry Group).. The Inquiry Group comprised: Mrs Margaret Aston (Chairman), Mr Brian Adams, Mrs Angela Macpherson, Mr Steven Lambert and Mrs Avril Davies. Julia Woodman, Committee and Governance Adviser from the Council's Member Services team provided the officer support for the Inquiry.
4. The Inquiry Group gathered evidence through the following stages:
 - A 'scene setting' meeting with the Lead Commissioner for Learning Disabilities and Talkback in October 2015: This focused on current performance and consultation findings.
 - A meeting with the Service Manager of Learning Disabilities, Transitions and Continuing Health Care in November 2015 to consider, the care management process, care and support planning. The Review group considered the type of activity and choice available to users.
 - A meeting in December 2015 to consider best practice modes both nationally and locally.
 - A User focus group in January 2016 facilitated by Talkback which looked at:
 - Barriers to accessing services,
 - How people find out what is going on in the community
 - What was working well and what could be improved
 - A Carer focus group facilitated by Carers Bucks was held in February 2016, which focused on:
 - How carers access information about services (how many use the computer and use the internet),
 - Awareness of the Care Advice Buckinghamshire web site,
 - To gain a view on the accessibility of facilities and activities in the local community.
 - Attending the Buckinghamshire Learning Disability Providers Forum in February 2016 to consider areas that are working well, gaps in services and barriers faced by users, carers and care support staff.
 - A series of one to one interviews the service providers conducted by the Committee and Governance Advisor and the Chair of the Review.

The National Context

Social inclusion and opportunities

5. Highlighted below are some of the key facts about adults with learning disabilities which impact on their life opportunities:
 - Education and training - just 1 in 3 people with a learning disability take part in some form of education or training.¹
 - Independence – people with learning disabilities do not get the same chances as other people to gain independence, learn key skills and make choices about their own lives.²
 - Carers support - 7 out of 10 families caring for someone with profound and multiple learning disabilities have reached or come close to 'breaking point' because of a lack of short break service³
 - In addition, people with learning disabilities, especially those with less severe disabilities who do not use learning disability services, are more likely to be exposed to common "social determinants" of health such as poverty, poor housing conditions, unemployment and social disconnectedness.⁴

The Local Context

6. At the last census (2011) Buckinghamshire had a population of 505,280 of which an estimated 5890 (18-65) and 1370 (over 65yrs) were adults with a learning disability⁵. 1600 adults are known to the council and of these approximately 1000 are currently in receipt of services.
7. In line with the general population figures for Buckinghamshire, of the people with learning disabilities:
 - 37% live in Aylesbury Vale
 - 33% live in Wycombe
 - 17% in Chiltern
 - 13% in South Bucks
8. The adult learning disability social care service for Buckinghamshire is made up of two area based care management teams, responsible for the assessment of needs of individuals and their carers. They work with people from the age of 18 and may work with people into their 80's. They provide assessments, support plans, review plans and packages of support to ensure they meet the person's eligible care and support needs.
9. Currently there are a number of teams in Children Social Care (CSC). Some young people with a learning disability will be known to the Children with Disabilities team (CWD) and the Health Complex Care team and most young people with a learning disability will be known to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) team. A proportion of those known to these children's teams will transition to Adult Social Care (ASC) at the age of 18, (although if they stay in education they can be supported by the SEN team up to the age of 25 years); this usually numbers about 50-60 additional young people each year.

¹ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/what-we-campaign-about/employment-and-training>

² <https://www.mencap.org.uk/about-learning-disability/about-learning-disability/facts-about-learning-disability>

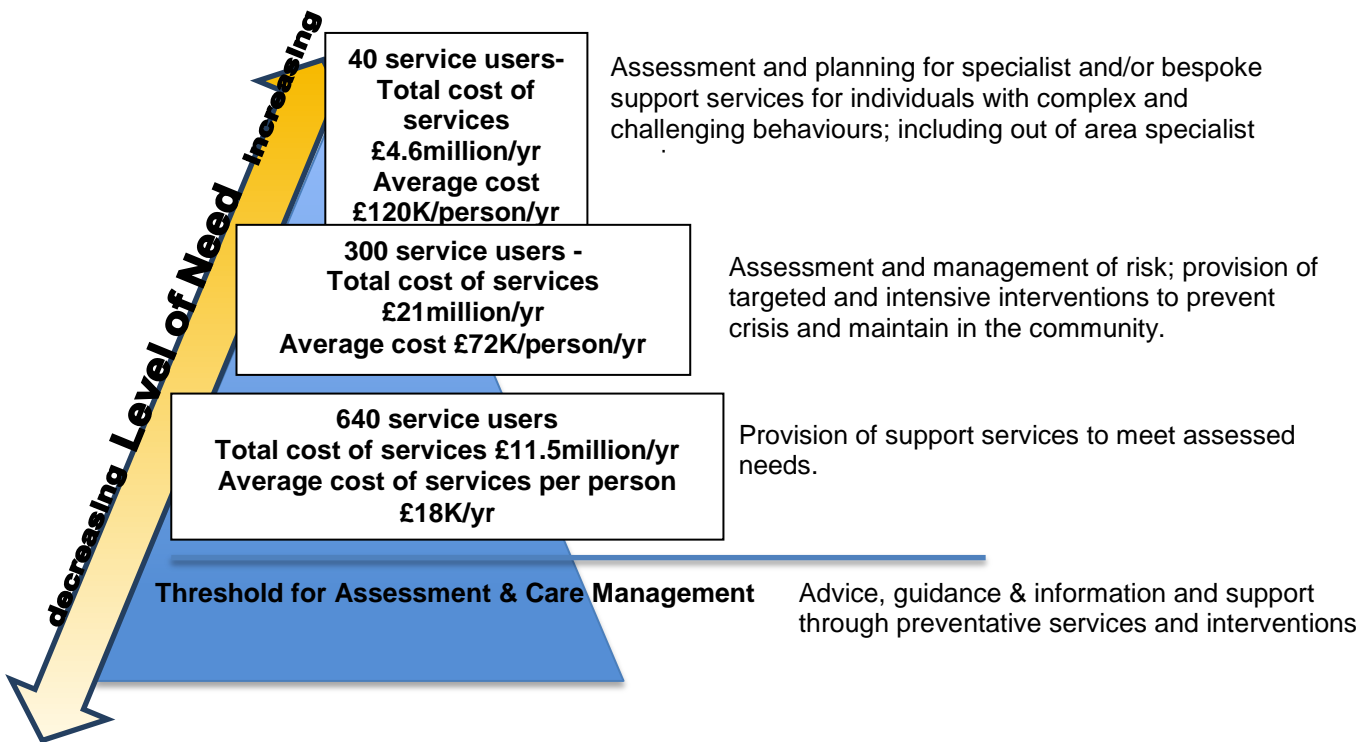
³ https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2008-04/campaigns_breaking_point_0408.pdf

⁴ https://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/uploads/doc/vid_7479_IHaL2010-3HealthInequality2010.pdf

⁵ Population statistics for Buckinghamshire – ONS 2011 (BCC, 2013)

10. The Learning Disability Social Care service (LDSC) for Buckinghamshire is made up of two area based care management teams, responsible for the assessment of needs of individuals and their carers. In addition a small team is responsible for the assessment and support planning for those transitioning into adulthood.
11. Currently the number of adults aged 18yrs+ with learning disabilities, assessed as eligible and in receipt of services from the local authority in Buckinghamshire is around 1000. This number has remained relatively consistent over the last 5 years.
12. Individuals are in receipt of a range of care/support packages including supported accommodation, day services, supported employment, and domiciliary care.

Costs for services for people with learning disabilities increase in relation to assessed needs, and for some, the packages of care may be high due to very complex support needs. The diagram below gives an approximation of numbers of adults with a learning disability and costs in relation to assessed needs.



13. Where there are health needs, these will be met through health funding streams. For a small number of individuals who may have behaviours that challenge, support will be intensive and specialist at times and may require either short periods of time in specialist hospital settings or long term placements with specialist providers, either in county or out of area. Currently this funding is in excess of £8million per year (including Continuing Health Care).
14. Specialist learning disability health services in Buckinghamshire are currently provided by Southern Health Foundation Trust. This service is commissioned and funded by the Chiltern Clinical Commissioning Group; the total budget for this service is £3.4 million and provides specialist community assessments and interventions as well as inpatient beds at an assessment and treatment unit in Wycombe.

Future demand

15. Estimated projections regarding the population of adults with learning disabilities in Buckinghamshire have been sourced through Planning4Care.⁶ The overall number of people with learning disabilities aged 18-64yrs is projected to decrease, whilst the number of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities is projected to increase (table 1).

	2011	2021	2031	% Change 2011-2031	
				Buckinghamshire	England
PMLD ⁷	150	169	199	30%	44%
SLD ⁸	1130	1101	1077	4.5%	7%
MLD ⁹	4610	4498	4356	5%	5.5%
Total	5890	5768	5631	4%	6.5%

Table 1: Estimated projections for number of adults with learning disabilities (by severity) aged 18-64yrs, in Buckinghamshire. Source Planning4Care 2010

16. The population of older people (65yrs+) with learning disabilities in Buckinghamshire, is projected to increase over the next 20years (table 2).

	2011	2021	2031	%change 2011-2031	
				Buckinghamshire	England
PMLD	20	30	40	100%	102%
SLD	160	190	240	50%	50%
MLD	1190	1500	1840	55%	49 %
Total	1370	1720	2120	55%	50 %

Table2: Estimated projections for number of adults with learning disabilities (by severity) aged 65yrs and over, in Buckinghamshire. Source Planning4Care 2010

17. Both older people with learning disabilities and those with profound and multiple difficulties will require complex long term case management support.

Current performance

18. The Annual Joint Health and Social Care Self-Assessment Framework enable authorities to assess and compare services for users with learning disabilities against the following themes:

Staying Healthy – making sure people with learning disabilities can access health services, including GPs, chemist, dentists and at the hospital.

Keeping Safe – being safe at home, whilst in hospital or out and about in the community.

Living Well - making sure people with learning disabilities get the same life chances as other people, are part of what happens in their area, and can access universal services.

⁶ Source Planning4Care estimates 2010

⁷ Profound and multiple learning difficulties

⁸ Severe learning difficulties

⁹ Moderate learning difficulties

19. The table below highlights the areas where Buckinghamshire is doing well and areas for improvement. ¹⁰ (table 3)

	Areas of good performance	Areas for improvement
Staying Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a Staying Healthy working group, representing healthcare providers, including GPs and hospitals • GP registers include all those with learning disabilities known to social care • Annual Health Checks have increased • There are two new Learning Disability Liaison nurses in Buckinghamshire hospitals • There is a new flagging system at the hospital so people know if an individual has a learning disability and may need additional support • We have developed a Health Passport for people to keep all their health information in one place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information recording and sharing amongst health care professionals • Make sure people with learning disabilities and their families know about the support available • Improve health awareness of people with learning disabilities and those that support them • Improve the skills of mainstream healthcare to better support people with learning disabilities
Keeping Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract managers meet regularly with our big service providers and have close links with Care Quality Commission (CQC) • Commissioners liaise with NHS England and Monitor • There is a well-established safeguarding board in Buckinghamshire • People with learning disabilities are included in the safeguarding forum • There are positive initiatives for keeping people safe e.g. Safe Place Scheme • Commissioners closely monitor all those in specialist hospitals • People are regularly asked their views on services and involved in developing and tendering new services • Talkback make sure the voices of people with learning disabilities are heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure the views of the Learning Disability Partnership Board are heard by those making decisions • Involving people with learning disabilities in checking the quality of services
Living Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have some joint funded and services • Front line staff work well together to deliver the right support to people • We have a well-established supported employment service and many work related opportunities for people with learning disabilities • There are examples of how people with learning disabilities can access some ordinary places and services • Accessibility has improved in most places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring people can access universal services and don't have to rely on special services all the time if they don't want to • Not all our information about services is accessible • People still cannot access ordinary sports and leisure services when they want to • People with learning disabilities still experience discrimination in their own communities

¹⁰ Current performance as at 30th Oct 2015¹¹ <https://www.amey.co.uk/amey-in-your-area/london-south-east/buckinghamshire-transport-services/>

Barriers to social inclusion

20. National evidence and local evidence gained by Talkback (a user led engagement and self-advocacy charity) from users has highlighted the following barriers:

- Prejudice and stereotypes
- Inflexible organisational practices
- Inaccessible information and a lack of some information
- Inaccessible buildings
- Unsuitable transport
- Exclusion from decision making

“More needs to be done to strengthen the support framework that enables people with learning disabilities to achieve social inclusion.... we need to think about how well people are supported to access the life they want, whether or not public services are really accessible for all’ Talkback.

21. From the perspective of users, carers and providers, the key issues we heard were around transport, finding out about services, how accessible they are and provision of support and training to access services. In addition we have also looked at the safeguarding implications of current provision. The following chapters set out the details of our findings and recommendations in relation to these issues.

Chapter 2: Accessibility of Transport

Key findings

- Transport is a vital part of accessing services and living an independent life for adults with learning disabilities.
- Bus timetables are not accessible to adults with learning disabilities in Buckinghamshire, and real time display boards are vital to enable access to the right bus service.
- Significant issues around transport were highlighted in numerous historic consultation exercises with adults with learning disabilities and yet currently the perceptions of poor accessibility remain
- An inconsistency in the level of disability awareness of drivers employed by Buckinghamshire County Council supported transport services is leading to a lack of confidence in the service by users and carers.

Ensuring User and Carers experiences effectively inform service improvements

22. Our key findings on the experiences of users and carers were as follows:

- The taxi and transport service provided by Amey¹¹ was used by significant numbers of the focus group to transport them from home to college. User experiences of this service were mixed. The majority of 10 users in our focus group felt that multi-user taxis were daunting. In addition, journeys were made more stressful if drivers tried to engage in inappropriate conversations. Two incidents of users being dropped-off in the wrong location were reported.
- The majority of users in the focus group reported experiencing long journey times due the volume of people each taxi took home. Examples were given of a normal 20 minute journey taking around 1.5 hours. The Carers focus group said that they would like a direct line to call in the event of a serious delay, to find out what, if any issues there are. Presently a Carer has to call a Social worker, who calls Amey, who then calls the taxi company, making communications difficult

23. The evidence we received from the Head of Client and Public Transport highlighted that there had been significant change during 2015, as a significant amount of transport provision was transferred from the Communities, Health and Adult Social Care Services Business Unit to the Amey Client Transport Team. Difficulties were experienced during the handover, leading to the service reporting a high volume of complaints. Whilst the services were now working better, we were told that improved procedures are being put in place to support better engagement with colleges and services to prevent the issues arising again.

24. We note that services managed by the Amey Client Transport team will from 1 April 2016 come back in-house, forming part of the Client and Public Transport team forming up under the Transport, Economy and Environment (TEE) Business Unit. The integrated in-house team

¹¹ <https://www.amey.co.uk/amey-in-your-area/london-south-east/buckinghamshire-transport-services/>

will continue to work with Talkback and the Learning Disability Partnership in understanding user issues with public transport, subsidised public bus and client transport services.

25. As part of this Inquiry we have not looked in-depth at the contract management arrangements in transportation as this was outside of the scope of our work. We can report that the User and Carer evidence of the home to college transport gained by the Inquiry group is post the 2015 changes and indicates that more effective mechanisms need to be in place to ensure user issues lead to review and change.
26. We are therefore seeking assurances going forward that the KPIs include indicators of complaints and customer feedback so that we have confidence that the contract management process will identify and enable systematic capturing of the experiences of adults with learning disabilities as part of this process.

Recommendation

- 1. Buckinghamshire County Council should ensure that the experience of Adults with Learning Disabilities who use the college and day opportunity centre transport service is a core part of the contract monitoring process, and is reflected within the Key Performance Indicators for the Contract.**

Disability Awareness Training for Drivers

27. Our key findings on the experiences of users and carers were as follows:
- Bus and taxi drivers' lack of learning disability awareness – users gave examples of brusque and unhelpful staff which acted as a disincentive to access transport independently.
 - A perceived lack training of drivers and escorts reported by Carers due to the way their son / daughter is spoken to and physically lifted / manoeuvred.
28. We were provided with assurances from the Head of Client and Public Transport is that providers under contract to the Council to deliver transport services undergo stringent checks that go beyond formal DBS checks and are required to undertake training and pass assessments covering communication and technical skills, including physical handling and use of wheelchair accessible transport. The public transport team (currently under TfB but from 1st April part of the TEE Client and Public Transport team) also works with bus operators to improve disabled access on buses, at bus stations, bus stops and for public transport information training and assessment processes.
29. Despite the current steps in place by the Council to support bus providers and taxi companies to ensure their staff are aware and considerate of the needs of adults with disabilities, we concluded that more work was needed as the experiences of users & carers we spoke to (as well as supporting evidence from the TalkBack Survey) showed that lack of awareness by drivers was still a barrier. We therefore ask for more targeted training in learning Disability

Awareness to drivers, to improve communication and that should be reinforced via annual training and assessment.

Recommendations

- 2. Buckinghamshire County Council should coordinate learning disability awareness training for drivers within managed transport services, ensuring this training is annually refreshed and monitored.**
- 3. Buckinghamshire County Council should promote the importance of learning disability awareness training with local bus operators as part of the Council's role in improving disabled access on buses.**

Fair4All

30. We found that users and carers reported a perceived high cost of taxis to enable participation in any evening activities. Users also reported paying high charges for journeys and a feeling that they were being exploited.
31. We are aware of the Fair4All taxi licencing project in Buckinghamshire and part of the code of practice includes to 'agree a fair price for the journey before it starts. A fair price means the normal price for the taxi will be charged and there will not be an extra charge just because the customer is disabled.' Evidence gained from the Learning Disability Partnership indicates that although the scheme was launched in 2014 adults with learning disabilities or carers had limited awareness of the scheme. The scheme should be more widely promoted, using Easy Read formats and this would help to allay fears and anxieties users have about exploitation and poor disability awareness amongst taxi and mini cab operators.

Recommendations

- 4. Buckinghamshire County Council, in conjunction with Buckinghamshire district councils, should promote the 'Fair4Aall' taxi scheme so that Adults with Learning Disabilities are supported to have trust and confidence in using taxi and mini-cab services safely.**

Travel Training

32. Travel training is designed to help people with learning disabilities become confident to travel independently. Travel training can help overcome barriers to:
 - Employment
 - Social inclusion
 - Independent journeys to school/ college
33. Trainers will accompany trainees on their journeys, providing encouragement and guidance until trainers feel confident that trainees have developed the appropriate skills to travel independently. Trainers are there to develop skills such as:
 - Coping with traffic on major roads, with and without pedestrian crossings
 - Learning the highway code
 - Confidence in using buses and trains

- How to plan a journey
- Familiarisation of travel routes and timetables
- Identification of landmarks
- Where to get help
- Personal safety

34. The user focus group highlighted that a number of users were waiting for travel training which they had not yet received. The training is delivered by Talkback but the company is reliant on resources for this. The evidence gained from the Talkback facilitator at the User Focus Group is that current provision is piecemeal and reliant on supported funding from charities such as local Mencap.
35. There is no statutory responsibility to provide travel training and responsibilities for travel support do not sit clearly within one service area within the Council and currently it sits across, as the CHASC BU, Children's Social Care and Learning (CSL) or TEE BUs.
36. We believe that it is in the Council's financial best interests to provide sufficient travel training to meet demand; as this will reduce the high cost of paying for taxis. Our evidence indicated that there was a need for more investment to be made in travel training, in particular for young adults with learning disabilities who are accessing the home to college taxi and bus services.

Recommendations

- 5. Buckinghamshire County Council should continue to invest in travel training – ensuring all appropriate Adults with Learning Disabilities can access this as part of the transition to independent living.**

Chapter 3: Accessibility of Information on Community Services

Key findings

- Currently there is no easily accessible information available for adults with learning disabilities, carers or providers on 'what's on' in Buckinghamshire.
- Our consultees strongly supported the need for 'what's on' in the community information housed in one place.
- There is a need and demand for an online solution to help provide better information on 'what's on'.
- Information should be made available to those who are not IT literate.

Access to Community Information

37. The way in which adults with learning disabilities access communications may be different to non-disabled people; and people with different impairments have different needs or experience different 'barriers' to accessing information. There is no one-size fits all approach. Accessibility is about ensuring that adults with learning disabilities can access communications through media such as a website, leaflets, email or, telephone and that there are no barriers that prevent this. A barrier to access might be only providing materials in hardcopy, font size 10, or only offering one type of communication route e.g. telephone contact details but no email or postal address. Making *something* accessible means providing alternative means (formats or options) to access what's on offer if the 'standard' offer is not accessible. An inclusive communication is designed to reach as broad and diverse an audience as possible with accessibility for different groups built in and part of the core communication.
38. We held a dedicated user focus group from which a key feedback was that users are finding out about services through the BCC Contact centre and leaflets but are not accessing information online via the Council's website.
39. A providers' forum for adults with learning disabilities and the Carers focus group also stated there were difficulties in finding out about activities and clubs as they are not well advertised.
40. The Carers focus group expressed difficulty in finding out about services and finding the appropriate level of support and help. Not all carers accessed the web and therefore were not aware of the Carers Advice Bucks web pages. Older carers used the telephone, word of mouth and Carers Bucks to find out what services are available.
41. We investigated what was available for users and carers and found that the main source of information is currently through a new web site Carers Advice Bucks, an organisation commissioned by CHASC BU. The Carers Advice Bucks website provides important advice and support features and ensures that the Council is compliant with the Care Act 2014. Its challenge is providing a breadth of accessible information in a dynamic format and its .org web address means it does not feature in standard searches for support or advice. The User IT focus group also found the web site difficult to navigate.

42. In response to the user evidence, the Head of Digital HQ thought that a more dynamic ‘what’s on’ activity guide should be explored on a community-wide basis. We conclude from our evidence that work is needed to improve the accessibility of the Council and community information available to adults with learning disabilities, as well as ensuring that online information is promoted to this audience.

Recommendations

- 6. Buckinghamshire County Council should ensure its web pages are accessible for all users, with Adults with Learning Disabilities seen as a priority group.**
- 7. Buckinghamshire County Council undertakes a digital service standards assessment of www.careadvicebuckinghamshire.org and the County Council web site in order to identify immediate, short and medium term priorities for ensuring it meets the needs of all users**

The Accessible Information Standard

43. We also received evidence from the Customer and Communication Team, HQ, regarding a new Accessible Information Standard for Health and Social Care Services. The Council will need to be compliant with the ‘Accessible Information Standard for Health and Social Care Services’, by 31st July 2016. Work is underway and it is understood that a more realistic timeframe for the Council to achieve this will be the end of 2016. The Council will need to need to establish a clear, local policy and processes for following the Accessible Information Standard.
44. The Head of Digital HQ stated that the Council will also need to develop guidance to ensure that BCC’s customer-facing digital tools comply with the Accessible Information Standard.
45. We see the Accessible Information Standard, coupled with user and provider evidence as providing a strong business case for more dynamic ‘what’s on’ digital information and providing users with an easy mechanism to find out about the accessibility of local services. In order to ensure the new accessibility information standard is followed, there will need to be staff training across the Council.
46. In regards to the Carers Bucks website, we were concerned about the lack of any awareness that the users and carers focus groups had of this as an information source, specifically in relation to Adults with Learning Disabilities. We recognise the importance of this website for general information and advice for carers overall, but question whether the website is working effectively as an information portal specifically for Adults with Learning Disabilities.
47. An evaluation should be made as to whether this information source is effective in meeting the needs of Adults with Learning Disabilities, and to fully consider other options. For example, to develop accessible information for Adults with Learning Disabilities either ‘in-house’ on the BCC website or via other third party solutions. A clearer link needs to be made through the Council’s .gov.uk address as users and carers consulted were unaware of the resource.

Recommendations

- 8. Buckinghamshire County Council to evaluate and consider investing in a dedicated Buckinghamshire venue guide for users, working collaboratively with District Councils**

9. Buckinghamshire County Council should explore how information on community activities could be presented in a more dynamic format for example via a community portal

DisabledGo – A web-based information guide on accessible local and national services

We researched how other local authorities were promoting the accessibility of a range of universal services in their areas.

48. One national service that stood out and is used by over 250 public and private organisations is DisabledGo. www.disabledgo.com/. DisabledGo works with local authorities to integrate their accessibility information into area specific websites, directories and access guides that covers shops, leisure, and culture and community services. The information collected by DisabledGo surveyors is developed in consultation with disability organisations to ensure that it meets the needs of people with a wide variety of impairments.

49. We see the advantages of DisabledGo as follows:

- It allows an up to date guide of services that could be used by carers and community organisations.
- It would help to further promote disability awareness and encourage businesses to become more accessible.
- It is developing all the time and will include an autism friendly assessment (this is currently being piloted).
- It would be complementary to the development of community 'what's on' digital guide.

50. Central Bedfordshire Council has used DisabledGo since 2011 and stated that:

'Whilst we knew that the information would be helpful for people with physical disabilities, we have also found that it's really helpful for people with mental health and learning disabilities who may be anxious about accessing a new venue and who have been able to use the website to prepare themselves before a visit... Many council venues are featured on DisabledGo and we have added numerous link pages on our own Council website to help people access information and also to promote the issue of disability access..... We have seen over the years that as access information is updated, that some venues have carried out improvements. We also have venues who approach us and ask to be featured, so I think that some organisations are starting to see the value of providing disabled people with this type of information.'

51. For Suffolk County Council, the annual access survey demonstrates improvements services have had to make to ensure a DisabledGo entry. Access improvements have included:

- The installation of a hearing assistance system
- Information being available in different formats – large print or Braille
- Staff at a venue receiving formal disability equality or awareness training
- Being able to contact the venue by fax or email
- The installation or refurbishment of an accessible toilet
- The addition of accessible parking bays
- A lowered section fitted to a reception desk
- Hoists being fitted in changing rooms or in leisure facilities

- Installation of automatic doors

52. We view the DisabledGo webpages as a powerful mechanism for promoting good accessibility practice amongst local businesses in addition to providing users and carers with a clear guide before they visit any site or service. We also think it would be impossible for the Council to provide such information in-house as all venues would have to be inspected on an annual basis. We see having an accessibility guide to local shops and businesses as complementary to a more bespoke community activity portal. We also think investment could be considered as a joint project with district councils as it has the potential to increase tourism in Buckinghamshire.

Recommendations

10. Buckinghamshire County Council to evaluate and consider investing in a dedicated Buckinghamshire venue guide for users with disabilities, working collaboratively with District Councils

Chapter 4: Ensuring universal community services and facilities are in place to meet needs

53. Promoting a diverse and sustainable market arises from Section 5 of the Care Act 2014. This sets out new duties for Councils' with regard to shaping and managing their local care markets. There are duties placed on local authorities to facilitate and shape their market for adult care and support as a whole, so that it meets the needs of all people in their area who need care and support, whether arranged or funded by the state, by the individual themselves, or in other ways. The ambition as set out in the Care Act is for local authorities to influence and drive the pace of change for their whole market, leading to a sustainable and diverse range of care and support providers, continuously improving quality and choice, and delivering better, innovative and cost-effective outcomes that promote the wellbeing of people who need care and support.

Key Findings

- Post 16 provision and apprenticeships is highlighted as an example of good practice, recognised recently in the national press.
- The ambition for many users is to live independently and to have phased support to enable this.
- Adults with learning disabilities, particularly those who are semi-independent, do not want to use Day Opportunity Centres (DOC's) and are looking for support to access mainstream services, in mainstream settings,. Affordability is a key factor. Carers of adults with complex needs who are using DOCs stated they have curtailed usage due to high costs and this has respite implications.
- A lack of breadth of group activities across Buckinghamshire has implications for the high costs of social activities for users. It means that users who want to go to activities such as the cinema and need support will have to pay for themselves and an escort. It means a cinema trip with a £15per hour escort could cost over £50.
- Smaller providers find it difficult to sustain provision and cannot weather dips in use or the time it takes for usage to grow.
- 'Taster' sessions were highlighted as a mechanism to find out about what they liked to do and to stimulate interests and hobbies.
- Carers underlined the importance of bespoke activities to fit a wide range of needs.
- Ngage (run by Talkback,) The Gateway Clubs (facilitated by local Mencap), Get Active and Social Links (a Social Enterprise) were given as examples of success stories.

54. We interviewed the manager from Social Link as this organisation featured prominently in the focus group and consultation evidence as a success story in terms of providing more choice based services and a sustainable business model. Social Link evolved from a youth club in Gerrards Cross for people with a learning disability. The charity has been running for five years and at the time there were limited services for users aged 25 years and over with less complex needs. It is a charity that is self-funded via clients' Direct Payments and benefits. The service has established a base of volunteers, some of who are former users of services and have gone on to take paid positions in the charity.

55. The Charity has a focus on developing and maintaining independence and social skills. The emphasis is on a less structured approach to create a more 'real world' feel. Activities provided will be based on the needs and wishes of the individuals attending the service. Social Links

offer courses in areas where there is a need: relationship training, drug and alcohol awareness, first aid, safeguarding: using a mobile phone and surfing the internet safely, 'stranger danger'. It encourages healthy lifestyles approaches through promoting variety of physical activities for all abilities, cooking classes and healthy eating making users aware of the sugar content of foods and drinks.

56. The service cannot meet all the demand and success is down to regular consultation and shaping of services and activities around user choice. The manager commented that user's expectations can be low when they arrive at Social Link, but horizons are expanded through offering broad choice which puts users at the heart of the development of activities.
57. In addition the service offers a weekly session in Wycombe as a mechanism for users to discuss a range of issues, which is arranged in the afternoon to enable those who work to attend. The manager commented that there was a demand for users in independent and semi-independent living situations to discuss a range of issues such as money management. A number of users were getting into debt with mobile phones and taxi services with no-one to discuss the issues with.
58. We understand that Prevention Matters works with clients such as those seen by Social Link. Prevention Matters also employ Community Link workers to identify gaps and help to support organisations. However funding is limited and is for the whole of adult social care services. Funding is currently in place until August 2016.
59. We interviewed the Senior Joint Commissioner for Adults with Learning Disabilities who stated these types of services meet the needs of those users with Direct Payments or those accessing prevention services as they sit just under the eligibility criteria for a set package of council funded support. The Commissioner added that this type of evidence informs the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) updated by the Public Health Service.
60. We interviewed the Brokerage manager within CHASC BU. The manager stated that an extensive list of providers was put together across the Direct Payments market place and she did not feel the issue was lack of breadth of activities but more a reluctance in some users to try new activities. The manager added that the Brokers role is also to provide market gap intelligence to the Commissioning Team, where more strategic market place issues could be identified.
61. We tried to establish through our Inquiry if there was a need for more provision community activities for adults with learning disabilities (feedback from the users & carers) or whether it was more the case that users did not wish to try new activities. We did not have any specific evidence of 'new' activities where that had been a low take up. We requested a list of providers specifically for adults with learning disabilities to consider the types of provision offered. However, there is no segmented list specifically showing provision for adults with learning disabilities as there is only one list of providers for Adult Social Care overall.
62. We think the consultation evidence from the focus groups is clear that users, particularly those who are semi-independent, do not want to use Day Opportunity Centres (DOC's) but want support to access mainstream services, in mainstream settings.

63. We note that a key part of the sustainability of services like Social Link is to proactively stimulate choice, regularly consult and encourage the shaping of services by users. The users accessing these services are using their Direct Payments to pay for activities. Social Link has created a success story from a new choice based market place
64. We concluded that our evidence is that users and carers perceive that there is a gap in provision, particularly in regard to community services for those with less complex needs and we were not provided with any specific evidence by the commissioning team to demonstrate that this is incorrect. We therefore can only conclude that either that there is a real gap in provision for activities for adults with learning disabilities or that there is a gap in communications. Either way, there is an issue to addressed. We do not think that the information contained within a JSNA chapter is sufficiently detailed to provide information on the current provider market and user needs for adults with learning disabilities. We therefore are asking for the commission team to undertake work to map current provision and either demonstrate that there is sufficient activities in the marketplace and communicate this provision to potential users; or to identify and fill gaps in service provision.

Recommendation

- 11. Buckinghamshire County Council should review current community provision (not solely Council services) for adults with learning disabilities identifying needs, gaps in services and actions for how these will be met in the future.**

Chapter 5: Encouraging mainstream services to be more accessible

Key findings

- The Safe Places Scheme is seen by adults with learning disabilities as a good idea and provides reassurance in accessing mainstream services independently
- Kent's 'charter' of accomplishments is linked to helping people to navigate and connect to community resources. Kent Libraries aimed to welcome adults with learning disabilities into libraries as part of this initiative. Work undertaken won the 2011 Libraries Change Lives Award from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information.

65. We considered a range of evidence looking at making mainstream services more accessible to users with a range of disabilities. We have highlighted one local scheme Safe Place, which is a good example of a low cost solution that has high user awareness and buy-in. We also reviewed schemes from other local authorities and considered Kent's Accomplished Community worth highlighting due to its award winning work with adults with learning disabilities. In looking at the Kent initiative, we considered what elements could be replicated within a local setting.

The Safe Places Scheme

66. The Scheme provides reassurance to vulnerable people, and to their families and carers, so that they have a means to alert someone of any potential risk or emergency if they are out alone. The programme is co-ordinated by district councils in Buckinghamshire with support from Thames Valley Police and local voluntary organisations. Over 80 shops and services across Buckinghamshire have signed up so far.

Martha Edwards, Community Safety Coordinator, County Council, is currently working with the Council's Communications Team to more broadly advertise the Scheme to increase business sign-up. The service is currently developing an online training package for businesses and a short leaflet on disability awareness which will be handed out as businesses sign up to the scheme. A publicity campaign will be launched for the summer. The team have already produced the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAXK2ntkIV4>

67. All members of the User focus group were aware of the Safe Place Scheme and how they could use it. Although none of the users had yet needed to use it, there was a majority view that the Scheme provides reassurance and is a good idea.

Kent County Council – The Accomplished Community

68. Kent's 'charter' of accomplishments is linked to helping people to navigate and connect to community resources
- Local people have access to independent facilitation, in-depth knowledge of local community resources and the offer of support to make new connections if needed.
 - Self-funders receive good advice and support to maximise the use of their income and get the most for the funds they have available.
 - Local people have good access to, or can purchase, high quality information, advice and guidance.
69. Kent Libraries aimed to welcome adults with learning disabilities into libraries. The work undertaken won 2011 Libraries Change Lives Award from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information

The work has included:

- Increased provision of easy read books, promotion of Assistive Technology, delivery of inclusive events (including arts exhibitions and events), and use of new volunteers.
- Development of mystery shopping to check access and report on findings as one important way of gaining customer feedback.
- Visual choice cards and menus. These have been developed by libraries to assist librarians in serving customers who may not use spoken language, and who may need visual images to help them make choices.

Kent's 'charter' of accomplishments linked to information and communication

- Provide information in different formats like easy read, including person-to-person contact
- Community groups, associations and public services are skilled in the production of easy information, have clear standards for how public information is produced and get feedback on how well they are doing.
- Those producing written information for the public have clear easy-access standards to guide their work.
- Those responsible for producing information for the public are skilled in producing material for different audiences and know what the issues are for different sections of the community.
- Information is available in a variety of formats,
- Visual images are selected to represent people from the whole community and challenge negative stereotypes.

70. We interviewed Fay Ewing, Adult Reading Development Coordinator to look at how the Kent model could be used in libraries in Bucks. We understand that BCC Library Service has met with Kent Library Service and local providers. The results of this work will now inform a business case for activities for adults with learning disabilities that could be provided in libraries in Aylesbury and High Wycombe.

Recommendation

12. Buckinghamshire County Council should make its regular activities and services more accessible to adults with a learning disability e.g. its library services developing services that people with a learning disability could access

Safeguarding

Key findings

- Providers stated that safeguarding for adults with learning disabilities needs to include minimising the risk of exploitation.
- Providers are reporting significant safeguarding and awareness training gaps for both professionals and adults with learning disabilities and provision that is in place is not coordinated.
- Providers thought that Adults with learning disabilities need to have support and awareness sessions reinforced throughout their adult life around key risk areas such as relationships and managing money. Dedicated awareness raising sessions could be reinforced through drop-in sessions.
- Users stated that Facebook and Facetime was an important part of keeping in contact with families and some users were aware of potential dangers with unwanted contact. Users did highlight a need to be able to use social media safely and to have a person they could talk to if they did encounter any difficulties. Outside of the college environment, users stated minimal awareness training or support is available for using the internet and social media safely.

71. In terms of communication and information the following was highlighted at the Learning Disability Providers Forum:

- Training and awareness information needed to be available for carers and staff to provide appropriate advice and information to those in their care around relationship management, sexual health. Examples were given where this advice falls to care assistants with no support materials or training.
- Money management and prevention of exploitation were identified as real risks. A carer provided the review group with an example of her son in semi-independent living who had given sums of money to an individual whilst she was away on holiday.

72. Providers felt there needed to be leadership and advice from the CHASC Business Unit and the Adult Safeguarding Board to run training sessions and produce easy read literature (or links to freely available resources) that care staff can use with their clients.

Recommendations

13. Buckinghamshire Council to work with Local Safeguarding Boards to ensure safeguarding training and support by providers to service users with learning disabilities is provided with a particular focus on the following: avoiding exploitation, money management, relationship management and use of social media

HASC Inquiry into Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities Scope

Title	Accessibility and promotion of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Signed-off by	
Author	Julia Woodman, HASC Committee Advisor
Date	
Inquiry Group Membership	Mrs Margaret Aston (Chair) Mr Brian Adams, Mrs Avril Davies, Mr Steve Lambert, Mrs Angela Macpherson
Member Services Resource	Sara Turnbull, Head of Member Services, Policy Advice and Report Quality Assurance Julia Woodman, Committee Adviser, Policy Lead & Project Management
Lead Cabinet Member	Mike Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Lead HQ/BU Officers	Rachel Rothero, Service Director Commissioning & Service Improvement, BCC Adults & Family Wellbeing Zita Calkin – Lead Commissioner for Learning Disability & Autism
What is the problem that is trying to be solved?	<p>People with learning disabilities do not have equity of access and provision to a range of universal services,</p> <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of reasonable adjustments made in universal services and amenities in the community • Access to ordinary activities increase social exclusion including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work; support to enter and maintain employment - Leisure activities; cinema, theatre, music venues etc. - Sports facilities - Being involved in local decision making - Changing facilities in toilets - Public transport i.e. bus pass timings; improved links <p>Poorer health outcomes ‘People with learning disabilities have poorer health than the general population, much of which is avoidable. These health inequalities often start early in life and result, to an extent, from barriers they face in accessing timely, appropriate and effective health care. The impact of these health inequalities is serious. As well as having a poorer quality of life, people with learning disabilities die at a younger age than their non-disabled peers’ - Public Health England The Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with learning disabilities (CIPOLD) found that men with learning disabilities died on average 13 years younger than men in the general population and women 20 years younger.</p>

Is the issue of significance to Buckinghamshire as a whole?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area was identified as a top priority from extensive learning disability engagement reports in May 2015; the Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) focus groups feedback, engagement and action plans.
Is the topic of relevance to the work of BCC?	Yes - The service has identified users experiencing a number of transport issues and a lack of challenge to wider universal services and issues that fall outside services control and influence
Is this topic within the remit of the Select Committee?	Yes - Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities cuts across both Health and Adult Social Care.
What work is underway already on this issue?	The Learning Disability Partnership Board is a forum for hearing the views of people with learning disabilities; some mapping and assessment of universal services has been carried out by the community links workers and other voluntary sector organisations.
Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue?	
What are the key timing considerations	
Who are the key stakeholders & decision-makers?	<p>Other stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult and Family Wellbeing Service commissioners Service users and their families/carers Service providers Buckinghamshire Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Healthwatch Bucks Carers Bucks Talkback
What might the Inquiry Achieve?	<p>A key outcome would be to identify service users' and their carers 'experiences of the accessing ordinary and universal services and amenities through existing feedback and engagement groups. From this the review group could highlight areas that they would like to focus on This could also achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to advocacy mechanisms for resolving issues around community inclusion particularly those which sit outside Health and Social Care remit i.e. transport, local leisure amenities Championing the rights of people with learning disabilities Championing good practice in universal/community services across Buckinghamshire

Schedule of evidence gathering

30 th October 2015	Zita Calkin – Senior Joint Commissioner – Adults with Learning Disabilities Alex Britton - Project Coordinator, Talkback Considering contextual, performance and consultation evidence.
5 th December	Adam Payne - Service Manager Learning Disabilities, Transitions and Continuing Health Care Considering Care Management process and Care Plans
7 th December	Dan Hussey -Business Change Support Manager, Adults & Family Well-being Considering models of best practice and the development of the Care Advice Bucks web site
14 th January 2016	Learning Disability Partnership Consultation with users regarding use of IT and accessibility of the Care Advice Bucks web site
18 th January	Wendy Dunn, Social Link Manager
19 th January	Martha Edwards – Community Safety Coordinator To discuss Safe Places Scheme
20 th January	Dean Eales - Head of Business Development (Local Authorities) – DisabledGO
26 th January	Bev Frost – Customer and Communications Team
29 th January	User Focus Group facilitated by Talkback
1 st February	Fay Ewing – Adult reading Development Coordinator To discuss Kent CC Libraries work with adults with learning disabilities and applicability in a local setting
4 th February	Carers Focus group facilitated by Carers Bucks
10 th February	Learning Disability Provider Forum
24 th February	Natalie Flemming – Brokerage Service Manger

Summary of User, Carer and Provider Feedback

Transport

The User experience

- The high cost of taxis to enable participation in any evening activities. Users also reported paying high charges for journeys and a feeling that they were being exploited.
- Bus and Taxi Drivers having a lack of disability awareness. Users gave examples of brusque and unhelpful staff which acted as a disincentive to access transport independently.
- The taxi and transport service provided by Amey was used by significant numbers of the focus group to transport them from home to college. Experiences of this service were mixed. The multi-user taxis were daunting and made more stressful by incidents of users being dropped off in the wrong location.
- Schools using community buses were highlighted as a problem – bags were left on empty seats and seats were not available for users or the elderly. Wheelchair access was also compromised during these times.
- Bus timetables are not accessible to the majority of users and display boards are vital to enable users to access the right bus service.
- National bus companies (Arriva) are not accepting bus passes before 9.30am. On local buses (Carousel) it is 9.00am, which causes confusion and difficulties getting to appointments, work placements and college.
- Travel training was an important part of accessing transport independently and users would like the provision to be more extensive.

The Carer experience:

- Significant concerns were expressed regarding taxi and bus services supplied through Amey¹² used to take users to college and activities at Day Opportunity Centres. In particular the following was highlighted:
 - Users are experiencing long journey times due the volume of people each taxi is taking home. Examples were given of a normal 20 minute journey taking around 1.5 hours. This is exacerbated by delays. Carers would like a direct line to call in the event of a serious delay, to find out what if any issues there are. Presently a Carer has to call a Social worker, who calls Amey, who then calls the taxi company.
 - Instances of single female users collected by male driver and male escort raising safeguarding concerns amongst carers.
 - The poor condition of transport used by one company leaving scrape marks on the leg of one user.
 - An apparent lack training of drivers and escorts noted by Carers due to the way their son / daughter is spoken to and physically lifted / manoeuvred.
 - A general lack of consistency of drivers and taxi firms which leads to greater anxiety in users. Carers felt in the past their son / daughter could build a rapport with drivers from one firm.

¹² <https://www.amey.co.uk/amey-in-your-area/london-south-east/buckinghamshire-transport-services/>

- There is a lack of clarity around the types of bus passes that can be used and clarity around restrictions of use. There was a perception that bus passes' could not be used on national bus services within Buckinghamshire from 9am. This is not the case as the local policy allows for bus passes to be used in Buckinghamshire from 9am. There have been issues with Arriva bus swipe machines accepting Smart Cards between 9-9.30am but bus drivers should be aware of the local policy of use. The review group understands that the issue with the smart card bus pass is resolved.

At the Learning Disability Partnership Executive Board in November 2015 it was noted that transport is a significant issue that is constantly raised in during consultations but no changes are made. The College to home transport service is highlighted as a particular concern.

Communication and information

The User experience

- Users are finding out about services through the BCC Contact Centre, leaflets and are not using the Bucks CC website. To have a 'what's going on' dedicated space on the web would encourage users to look at the Bucks CC site.
- A lack of Easy Read leaflets to enable users to find out what is going on – the cinema was given as an example where users find it difficult to find out what is on – 'there is a lack of leaflets and can't telephone to find out' . Odeon cinemas however were given as examples of services having helpful staff.
- Aylesbury Waterside Theatre was cited as a local good practice example. The theatre sends out a readable what's on guide in the post and credit (free theatre tickets) is given in exchange for voluntary work.
- Facebook and Facetime was an important part of keeping in contact with families and some users were aware of potential dangers with unwanted contact. Users did highlight a need to be able to use social media safely and to have a person they could talk to if they did encounter any difficulties. Outside of the college environment minimal awareness training or support is available for using the internet and social media safely.

The Carer experience

- Carers expressed difficulty in finding out about services and finding the appropriate level of support / help. Not all carers accessed the web and therefore were not aware Carers Advice Bucks web pages. Older carers used the telephone, word of mouth and Carers Bucks to find out what services are available.
- There are difficulties in finding out about activities and clubs as they are not well advertised. The problem is exacerbated by a lack of sustainability in the provider market and availability is limited.

Provision of services and activities

The User experience

- Users would like more support and training to access mainstream services independently, with their friends and partners.
- 'Taster' sessions were highlighted as a mechanism to find out about what they liked to do and to stimulate interests / hobbies.
- Schools and colleges were providing a vital role in instilling confidence and transition to adult life and all Users provided very positive feedback of the transition from school college life. Talkback stated that Buckinghamshire is leading the way in post 16 provision and Buckinghamshire County Council funding enables 5 days a week college and community provision instead of the normal 3 days a week. The tapering of college days is also supported through links to work placement provision and community activity provided by Talkback.

Buckinghamshire's apprenticeship programme has also recently featured in the Guardian as an example of good practice.

<http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2016/feb/16/apprenticeships-young-disabled-people-social-care-employment?CMP=ema-1696&CMP=>

The Carer experience

- Carers underlined the importance of bespoke activities to fit a wide range of needs. One carer gave the example of her daughter's willingness to only participate in smaller group activities which made it difficult, when the provider market was so small.
- A lack of breadth of group activities across Buckinghamshire has implications for the expensiveness of social activities for users. It means that users who want to go to activities such as the cinema and need support will have to pay for themselves and an escort. It means a cinema trip with a £15 per hour escort could cost over £50.
- Carers said that limited use was made by their sons / daughters of the Day Opportunity Centres. One of the constraints is the expense of frequent use. More use was made of 'Gateway Clubs' facilitated through local Mencap and were extremely popular due to price and provision of mainstream activities.
- There was confusion amongst carers regarding the scope of the use of Direct Payments. This is not always clearly evidenced in the support plans. There appeared to be anomalies in what carers could access.

Views gained from the Learning Disability Provider Forum

- Users with less complex needs do not want to use Day Opportunity Centres; they are looking to access mainstream services.
- Smaller providers find it difficult to sustain provision and cannot weather dips in use or the time it takes for usage to grow.
- A number of carer organisations commented that they will find an activity for the person they care for and then the organisation folds. In addition comments were made that the time they spend looking for activities impacts on the time left for actually participating in the activity for those they care for.

- The Changes in the Disability Living Allowance for those in semi-independent and supported living has led to reductions in the amount available to spend on transport costs and social activities. A contraction in what users can afford further impacts on the stability of provision.
- Ngage (run by Talkback,) The Gateway Clubs (facilitated by local Mencap), Get Active and Social Links (a Social Enterprise) were given as examples of success stories. It was felt that users need to be offered a variety of taster sessions to stimulate choice and interest in activities.

Safeguarding

Feedback from the User, Carer and Provider Forums has raised significant concerns regarding the provision of support and awareness training for Users, Carers, and Care Support Staff

Unanimous feedback from providers is that no one service is offering safeguarding and awareness training across the county.

In terms of communication and information the following was highlighted:

- Training and awareness information needed to be available for carers and staff to provide appropriate advice and information to those in their care around relationship management, sexual health. Examples were given where this advice falls to care assistants with no support materials or training.
- Money management and prevention of exploitation were identified as real risks. A carer provided the review group with an example of her son in semi-independent living who had given sums of money to an individual whilst she was away on holiday.

Providers felt there needed to be leadership and advice from the CHASC Directorate and the Adult Safeguarding Board to run training sessions and produce easy read literature (or links to freely available resources) that care staff can use with their clients.

In addition users need to have support and awareness sessions reinforced throughout their adult life around key risk areas such as relationships and managing money. Dedicated awareness raising sessions could be reinforced through drop-in sessions

A consultation with 14 users who are using social media regularly indicated that half would like more support on how to use social media sites safely. Users did indicate they have encountered problems using Facebook and Facetime.