**Kirklees Learning Disability Partnership Board - the views of the Carers Sub-group of the Board**

Carers value the Board for the following reasons….

* It is an avenue to express and explore our concerns, and identify solutions.
* It brings together significant elements of our children’s lives, and recognises the interplay between them, which can sometimes be destructive or limit progress.
* It can be effective in considering both strategic and practical day-to day issues.
* It can be an effective forum for problem-solving, and a cost-effective means of consulting key stakeholders.
* It offers an effective 2-way information exchange – which is important at a time of substantial change.
* It prompts professionals to look beyond their own boundaries, and sign up to a more joined-up approach
* It provides a means of informal as well as formal problem-solving, which can have positive results
* It provides the means to have oversight of the issues for learning disabled people and their carers, and to share key information (eg budget settlements) that is the context for what is on offer.

Carers have strong concerns about the following aspects of the Board’s functioning…..

* The lack of a senior manager to chair the Board is highly destructive, and has led to a drop-off in attendance by other key partners, because of the lack of commitment it appears to demonstrate.
* The Board’s main value is its ability to identify common concerns and seek solutions. In the absence of those who can deliver solutions, the value of the Board is severely under threat.
* The lack of a workplan through which the Board can review performance and identify issues for learning-disabled people and carers, systematically working through key issues that affect our lives.
* In the past there were sub-groups for health and housing which fed into the Board and increased its impact. Neither of these are still in existence.

For the future, the Board must offer….

* An overall vision to which all participants subscribe, and which underpins our discussions. Time to return to ‘Valuing People’ ?
* The ability to produce results, and to establish common approaches to issues. It is often more expensive not to deal with issues, or to let them take a grip and limit options.
* The means of identifying trends and significant interactions that together impinge on, or undermine, the well-being of people with a learning disability. A holistic approach, which recognises the complex web of influences that together impact on our lives in ways that each agency on its own may not be aware of.
* A clear understanding of what is important to us as a Board, and a workplan to tackle identified priority areas of activity.
* Attendance by both the Council and NHS, with priority afforded to that attendance. That is likely to affect the attendance of others positively.

The Board can deliver very little if key partners are not there. In that context, the commitment of a senior manager to chair the Board is not a luxury. It is an essential.

* Unless that is forthcoming, carers will plan to withdraw, and save our energies for something that offers a better means of creating change.

Mark Feeny, on behalf of the Carers Sub-group, which spent time at its meeting on 6th November 2018 to draw up this account.