# CARERS ISSUES

17th May 2021

# Reflections on Covid 19

National guidance has concentrated on physical health and completely ignored mental health.

Letters to those assessed as clinically extremely vulnerable routinely arrived weeks late and with no easy-read version.

Contact arrangements with family for those living independently caused avoidable pain and hardship (and still do, to some extent)

Access to vaccines – reliance on GP records demonstrated that these were highly unreliable.

The initial eligibility criteria , based on outdated categories of moderate/severe/profound labels demonstrated how little real knowledge was held by national policy makers.

Locally, many carers found themselves coping without support, as replacement arrangements for routine support amounted to very little

Congratulations to those locally who managed to create alternative paths for carers access to vaccines (eg via Carers Count mailing lists)

# Direct payments

# The contract that you sign to become responsible for direct payments is dangerously out of date and long overdue for a complete re-write

# Changes in direct payment rates (eg because of minimum wage increases) are not notified to those using direct payments for some reason – and not applied unless approved by a social worker – which is an extraordinary waste of limited professional time. Why isn’t any increases just applied automatically ?

# Rates for respite care are even more difficult to update, and are also dependent on getting a social worker to update and approve.

# Those using direct payments would welcome clarification of the Council’s intentions with regard to sleep-in payments, following the High Court decision.

# Has there been any progress on the idea of a specific Direct Payments team ?

Social work practice

Still the biggest area of concern for carers – and issues raised go without being sorted because social work management do not attend the LD Board

A disturbing account from a carer who has had to deal with their daughter’s fifth social worker in less than two years. Six weeks between allocation of a worker and first contact with the person concerned. Whatever happened to the importance of continuity for people with a learning disability ?

An account from a carer who was refused the chance to see the assessment carried out on their daughter without their involvement, even to check it for accuracy. Whatever happened to ‘working together’ ?

Real disappointment that when people with a learning disability and their carers were fighting for recognition as eligible for the Covid vaccine, social workers and their managers were not there as their advocates

# Workplan for the Board for the next 12 months

CONTINUE with ‘Local changes’ - to include ‘Quality checkers’ initiative – what happened to it ? Carers saw it as an essential means of ensuring the quality of independent (not contracted) day care provision .

CONTINUE with ‘Health’ – with a particular look at mental health

CONTINUE with Money – as benefit changes and local charging policies continue to kick in

ADD

1) Housing – there is strong concern that people with a learning disability who want to move away from home and live with a degree of independence are being presented with an increasingly limited choice. A ‘one size fits all’ offer that takes no real account of their wishes.

2) Liberty protection safeguards – how will they work locally ?

# Finally

The Carers Sub-group has not met in person since the beginning of the pandemic, although it has provided a lot of mutual support and information-sharing throughout. However, in order to fulfil its task of drawing together issues from the widest possible network of carers it really does need to meet regularly. We have no budget for this, unless we can reclaim what was promised for the year we have just missed. Help !