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Statement on impact of Comprehensive Spending Review 2010

Following the announcement of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 20th October 2010, Enfield Disability Action (EDA) has the following comments to make on the effect these changes will have on disabled people, both nationally and in Enfield.

Increases in Funding and Initiatives Supporting Disabled People

Though the CSR has been typified by the cuts announced in line with the coalition's intention to offset the deficit within one term of parliament, there have also been some new funding streams and expansion to existing work as follows:

- A further £1bn for local authorities to spend on social care. The aim of this funding is to ensure that access to social care is maintained, though in real terms this seemingly impressive figure only amounts to an average of £2.3M per local authority (less than 3% of Enfield's total budget for Health & Social Care), and is not ringfenced, as such it may be offset by other cuts and not benefit disabled people.
- A further £1bn for the NHS to provide reablement services to bridge the gap between health and social care. During a recent consultation event, EDA's members were skeptical about the emergence of reablement as a means of increasing independence, and the implications it might have on the level of ongoing support they are eligible to receive.
- The £470M 'Work Choice' initiative will help 23,000 of the most disabled people per year get back into work. This is being paid to 200 organisations to deliver, at an average of £587,500 per year - one such organisation only aims to support 53 people in its first year. In terms of value for money, we strongly feel that this type of funding should be diverted to the local voluntary sector where user-led groups like us can use it more effectively and fairly.
- The Chancellor announced that the scope of Personal Budgets would be increased to include support for children with special educational needs and people with long-term illnesses. Personal Budgets are an extension of Direct Payments - a cash payment in lieu of council services for people to use to self-direct their care arrangements. EDA has long supported disabled people to maximise their independence through self-directing their care and welcomes any extensions that enable more to do so.
- The commitment to preserve older people's entitlements to winter fuel payments, free eye tests, free prescriptions, free TV licences and concessionary bus travel will be of comfort to many of Enfield's older people facing financial hardship.
- EDA welcomes the lifting of capped household benefit income where one claimant receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA), as this would go some way towards addressing the additional costs disabled people face compared to our non-disabled peers. However, the

consistent application of this measure amid ever-increasing complexity within the system will be a challenge for disabled people and the Department of Work & Pensions alike, and add to our workload in supporting people to apply for benefits and appeal decisions.

Reductions in Funding

As predicted, disabled people are facing a large reduction in welfare benefits during this parliament, but it is also worth remembering that it is disabled people and families that are often heavily reliant on public services, all of which are affected by cuts. Any changes in eligibility criteria for social care would affect disabled and older people most, cuts in health promotion would put those hardest to reach communities - such as deaf people and people with a learning difficulty - at risk. Even an action not directly linked to disability services, such as the closure of a local library, could mean a vital lifeline for disabled people is removed. The most significant cuts are commented on below:

- The removal of DLA for mobility for people living in residential care will have a huge impact on the quality of life of residents. Whilst the standard of residential care is improving all the time, it is EDA's belief that access to the wider community is essential for the wellbeing of disabled people - and important for the rest of society to interact with their disabled peers. This step will leave many in residential care bored, isolated, under-stimulated and depressed, and is a huge step backwards in how the most severely disabled people are treated.
- The grant for local government transport will be cut by almost a third. Enfield does not have a rich network of accessible public transport compared to more central London boroughs, and at EDA we often support disabled people to get funding for transport to access the community. In one such case recently, a young woman with severe autism faced losing her only connection with the outside world - a course at her local college - because her transport services were removed. She is unable to use public transport and would be effectively isolated in her home if she lost this vital service. This further reduction will mean even more disabled people will find themselves in this position, and again the most disabled people will be isolated from the rest of the community, rather than contributing to it's diversity and asserting their right to participate.
- The 1-year time limit on Contributory Employment Support Allowance (ESA) will have a huge impact on families where one person is disabled. 1.7million people switched from Incapacity Benefit to ESA when it was introduced, and many will fall into this category. Under the planned changes, after a year those with savings, capital or a working partner will have no independent income. During a time when employment opportunities are extremely limited, and where people have been out of work for a long time, achieving employment within a year is extremely unrealistic. The key points here are that:
 - Disabled people and families are amongst the poorest in our communities. The 'cost of being disabled' is almost never fully met by benefits income and the needs of disabled people are rarely met fully by services provided by a local authority or the NHS. The shortfall is often borne by a working spouse, and this measure will put further strain on working people who also provide care, as well as on relationships.
 - At EDA last year we provided information, support and services to approximately 14,000 people. As the system becomes more complex, and more tests for eligibility are introduced, this demand can only increase. Even if our funding continues, our dedicated team of staff and volunteers who provide this advice, most of whom are disabled themselves, will not be able to meet the demand. That means Enfield's disabled people



will not get their fair share of the limited benefits available. This will be a huge loss to the local economy and have an immeasurable impact on the lives of many.

In summary, the future for disabled people in Enfield is certainly a bleaker one following last week's announcements.

What we at EDA know makes a huge difference is the support available from within the voluntary and community sector in Enfield. There are many groups set up to provide expert support, advice and information backed by hundreds of volunteers. If funding for these groups fail then the future will indeed be bleak.

EDA will be inviting our three local MPs to a meeting to discuss the effect of the CSR with disabled people and other disability groups in the near future.



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Quality Mark

General Help including Casework

Disability Casework Category