



Councillor Birch  
Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing  
Councillor Kendall  
Executive Member for Education and Libraries  
Bracknell Forest Council  
Easthampstead House  
Town Square  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 1AQ

Date: 06/04/2009

Dear Councillors Birch and Kendall,

### **SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

As you may be aware, an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group has been reviewing the Council's progress on the Government's social care modernisation agenda, with particular reference to services for adults with Learning Disabilities (LD). This has included exploration of the role of Further Education establishments in providing training opportunities for adults with LD.

Our usual practice is to issue reports of Overview and Scrutiny reviews, for formal response by the Council's Executive. However, we do not think that this would be appropriate on this occasion as the Government's new Transforming Adult Social Care agenda, and to some extent the 14-19 Years Education Plan, have now significantly overtaken the subject matter of our review. Consequently, we do not think it would be of utility to report at length on what this Working Group did, which is briefly summarised in the appendix to this letter. However, we believe that some issues arose during the course of our review which are pertinent to the current and future provision of services for people with LD and recommend that the following actions be pursued:

1. The Working Group visited Day Services at Eastern Road and, notwithstanding the valiant commitment of the staff to make the best of the facilities there, we regard the building to be wholly and woefully unsuitable for the modern and effective provision of services to residents. Also, use of the building is diminishing and it is the subject of a long and costly lease which further challenges its viability. Accordingly, we urge the Executive to explore a suitable alternative site as soon as possible and make every effort to dispose of this building. It must prove a highly unnecessary and wasteful drain on the Council's limited budget. Disposal should be considered the highest priority.

### **SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

#### **Chairman – Councillor Mrs Birch**

Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ  
T: 01344 352000 Minicom: 01344 352045 [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

2. From our discussions with the Principal and Chief Executive of Bracknell and Wokingham College and the Head Teacher of Kennel Lane Special School, we were encouraged to hear that the College is becoming more familiar with the needs of students with LD. We would like to see this developed further, as we consider that the College are not yet delivering the LD services which could be reasonably expected of them. Specifically, we were disappointed that the new building for the College is not planned to have any dedicated provision for LD and there are no full-time LD training courses provided. The Working Group recommend that the Council fully uses its new powers, consequent on the transfer of funding from the Learning and Skills Council to the Local Education Authority, to further influence the College to be more responsive to the local needs of Bracknell Forest residents with LD. We appreciate that this will need to be achieved in collaboration with other Councils and colleges in Berkshire.
3. A related issue to the shortage of local LD provision concerns transport. The sourcing of most full-time LD courses from Henley, Reading and other locations outside Bracknell Forest has a doubly negative impact: the cost to the social care budget of taxi journeys is substantial; and travelling long distances by taxi instead of short distances by public transport directly undermines the modernisation agenda, and most importantly inhibits the development of the independence of our vulnerable residents.
4. The Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel would want to be provided with regular updates on the matters raised in this letter, and the Council's overall progress on Transforming Adult Social Care, perhaps through the departmental Performance Monitoring Reports.

We would welcome your comments on these observations by 3 June 2009.

The Working Group has also passed to officers some comments about Care Plans, for their consideration. The Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel will continue to take a close interest in the Council's progress, with its partners, on the Transforming Adult Social Care agenda and the 14-19 Years Education Plan.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered and endorsed the contents of this letter at their meeting on 1 April.

Yours Sincerely

**Councillor Ian Leake**  
**Lead Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group**

Copy: Councillors Edger, Mrs Birch, Mrs Shillcock and Virgo  
Chief Executive  
Director of Social Care and Learning

**SERVICES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES (LD)  
Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Review Work**

**Briefing Session with the Chief Officer: Adult Social Care**

1. The Working Group commenced its work with a briefing session given by the Chief Officer: Adult Social Care in respect of the Social Care Modernisation Agenda, a national government initiative lead by the Department of Health (DoH). The main thrust of the agenda was to move away from service providers determining exactly what services were provided to users, towards the service users taking control themselves. This was aimed at improving lifestyles and outcomes for service users and was funded through 'Direct Payments' (DP) to people who had been assessed as needing assistance from Adult Social Care and who wanted to arrange and pay for their own care and support services instead of receiving them directly from service providers. The briefing informed the scoping of the review, the main purpose of which was to build an understanding of the Social Care Modernisation Agenda and to assess the Council's progress in implementing it with reference to the 'Valuing People' (VP) guidance from the DoH, with particular reference to services for adults with LD. A key objective of the review was to establish the role of Further Education establishments in providing training opportunities for adults with LD.

**Meetings with the Head of Adults and Commissioning**

2. Members subsequently met the Head of Adults and Commissioning who gave a presentation in respect of the 'In Control' programme, a national initiative which was a leading factor in the area of social care modernisation. The Council was a second wave pilot of 'In Control' and was developing a local approach to self-directed support based on the model. The LD Team facilitated the modernisation agenda which sought to transform the historically isolated lives of people with LD to more fulfilling lifestyles including employment, leisure and relationship opportunities.
3. The Working Group met the Head of Adults and Commissioning on a second occasion to discuss college provision for people with LD from the Adult Social Care perspective and clarify the number of students with LD undertaking courses at BWC. As the College did not provide full time courses suitable for people with LD, including Kennel Lane Special School leavers, those who wished to pursue full time education were obliged to travel to colleges outside the Borough. Such students required transport by taxi at significant cost to the Council whilst being denied the opportunity to develop the independence and life skills that travelling to a local college on public transport would offer.

**Meeting concerning the DoH's National Agenda for 'Valuing People' (VP)**

4. Dr Jean Collins, Regional Adviser South East, VP Support Team, DoH, met the Working Group to outline the history of the VP programme that stemmed from the VP White Paper published in 2001. The Paper was the first major government policy statement in respect of LD for thirty years and it identified legal and civil rights, independence, choice and inclusion as main priorities to improve the lives of people with LD. The Government had subsequently decided to 'refresh' VP policy and had issued the consultation document VP Now as a draft of how it intended to achieve the next stages from 2008 to 2011. Although VP Now was a wide ranging document, it focused on the four priority areas of the personalisation agenda to give people more choice and control over their lives and services, day and evening activities including employment prospects, being healthy and having access to good health services, housing choices and sought, as a fifth priority, to ensure that the policies were

delivered. In order to ascertain whether VP policy was making an impact and improving the lives of people with LD, it was necessary to measure how many people with LD were being accommodated in residential homes or being supported in their own homes and whether day centres remained necessary. The rate of take up of DP, which had increased significantly in Bracknell Forest, was also an indicator of the success of the modernisation agenda.

5. Previous assumptions had been made that people with LD and their families needed certain services provided in particular ways and VP Now recognised that this was not the case. Instead, it emphasised the need to establish what support was needed by such people leading to the delivery of person-centred self-directed services. Gradual changes towards achieving this goal of personalisation were occurring and DP were an example of person-centred care plans. A view had begun to form in the 1970's that the community was the best place for those people with less severe LD who could be supported there allowing family ties and support networks to continue. Provision for people with severe LD was more costly as they required more support, often in the form of residential care. Many, who usually fell into the autistic spectrum, found social interaction difficult and pressures arose where there were a number in one facility which required greater staff support, often on a one-to-one basis if funding was available. Independent one-to-one environments proved more successful for them. Staff worked with such individuals to identify the triggers of tensions and problems with a view to overcoming them and informing services purchased via DP.
6. Dr Collins advised the Working Group of housing and supported environment issues, particularly in the light of the closure of NHS campuses. Responsibility for such people previously accommodated in the campuses would pass from the NHS to councils. The transfer of funding to support people with LD from the PCT to the local authority would be a matter of local negotiation, ending in arbitration if necessary. The transfer would take place during 2009/10 with negotiations occurring in 2008/09. The Working Group's attention was drawn to health issues associated with VP policy which would be taken account of in the PCT's funding formula for expenditure in the Borough and possibly have a financial impact. Although there was a possibility of receiving some LD Development Fund grant from the Government, there was no formula relating to housing which would be dependant on the co-operation of housing associations and the outcome of funding bids to the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **The Role of Bracknell and Wokingham College (BWC)**

7. The Working Group met Mr Howard O'Keeffe, Principal and Chief Executive of BWC, and Vicki Browne, the Supported Learning Section Head at the College. Ms Browne explained how the supported learning courses provided by the College were designed to assist students with LD. There were 65 part-time LD courses on offer at BWC on which 412 students were enrolled (including students living outside Bracknell Forest). Courses were split into the four curriculum areas of employability skills, skills for life, literacy and numeracy skills and 'soft' skills for students with profound LD. There was a programme progression route which commenced with pre-entry and then entry levels. The course pre-entry process was based on a scale of 8 levels known as milestones. There were core curriculums for literacy and numeracy skills and to assist those with poor sensory development to enhance their self awareness and recognition of others. Courses were required to be wide ranging to meet the variety of need. One part time course could offer between two and ten hours of education per week whilst twenty hours per week was the maximum coverage for those undertaking multiple courses.
8. Kennel Lane Special School was seen as being the Bracknell Forest provision for special needs from 16 to 18/19 years and BWC provided part time courses for those of 19 years plus with LD. Although the College wished to offer full time LD courses

and had a level of independence and choice being managed by a governing body, it was government funded via the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which made final funding decisions including whether to fund specialist provision. The LSC had not funded full time specialist accommodation at the College to date and took the view that there was no need for funding of such courses at BWC as there were other providers in the area and it wished to avoid duplication. Although Disability Compliance Regulations applied to the new College building under construction at Church Road, Bracknell, accommodation to provide for students with LD was not designed into it.

### **Discussion with Education Officers of the Social Care and Learning Department**

9. The Working Group met the Council's former Director of Social Care and Learning together with the Senior Secondary Advisor and the Senior Lifelong Learning Officer to learn about the role and funding arrangements of the LSC and the outcome of the meeting with representatives of BWC and the headteacher of Kennel Lane Special School to discuss LD provision.
10. The LSC funded the majority of adult learning students except where they met their own fees. This funding was split between LEAs and colleges and employers also received some funding from the LSC towards staff training and development. 16-19 years education was also funded by the LSC through the Council according to a formula in the case of schools and directly to adult education providers in the case of colleges. Funding was subject to negotiation and there was no prescribed pattern of provision as different colleges offered varying courses and the LSC needed to demonstrate that a full range of courses could be accessed across an area. Changes effective from April 2010 would result in the transfer of funding in respect of 16-19 years and LD up to 25 years from the LSC to schools and colleges via LEAs. The Council would have greater influence over education provision in these areas after 2010. A needs analysis was planned to establish the adult learning needs of those with LD to inform provision after the expiry of the current strategy and strengthen negotiations with BWC beyond 2010. If the Council was able to show that a viable LD cohort would exist post 2010 it would add weight to the case for developing an appropriate specialist resource to address the perceived gap in local provision for people of 19 years plus with LD.
11. The meeting held between the Senior Secondary Advisor, the Head Teacher of Kennel Lane Special School and representatives of BWC and the 14-19 Years Partnership, which planned provision in partnership with the local authority, to discuss future LD provision was seen as a significant step forward and had been successful. At the meeting it had been agreed that from September 2008 Kennel Lane pupils of 14 years plus could spend some time at the College to assist with pupils' transition from the School to the College at 19 years. The Working Group was pleased that BWC was becoming more familiar with the needs of local students with LD and wished to see this developed further.

### **Bracknell Forest LD Partnership Board**

12. The Working Group attended a meeting of the Bracknell Forest LD Partnership Board on 8 February 2008. Membership of the Board included service users and relevant professionals and it was co-chaired by a client and an officer. Agenda items included the LD Development Fund, VP Now consultation, Larchwood video, the Family Carers Network contribution to funding and the LAA and Community Strategy Consultation.

## Visits

13. During the review the Working Group visited Bracknell Leisure Centre, Eastern Road Day Services and Bracknell and Wokingham College (BWC) to meet service users, learn about LD provision, build their knowledge of the Social Care Modernisation Agenda and assess the Council's progress in implementing it. At Bracknell Leisure Centre Adult Social Care and Leisure Centre staff were successfully working in partnership to support people with LD who were enjoying a game of 'Boccia' at the time of the visit. Although the Eastern Road Day Services building was thought to be unsuitable for the modern and effective provision of services to residents, the Working Group found that the staff working there made the best of the facilities and did all they could for their clients. The Working Group visited BWC's Wick Hill site and were escorted on a tour of the facilities for students with LD. Members visited a social enterprise 'Crafts at Work' course, a citizenship class where students were learning about the election process and an ICT Skills for Life course involving the creation of students' own websites. The students were enthusiastic and appeared to be enjoying and learning from their classes. The Working Group concluded its visit by sharing the 'Tasty Bites' lunch with staff and students with LD. The lunch was held weekly and prepared by students studying a social enterprise cookery course. Members spoke to numerous students during the lunch and discussed topics including college courses, transport to and from college and their housing arrangements.