



Executive
14 September 2010

**Report from the Director of
Policy and Regeneration**

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Access to health sites for people with learning disabilities task
group – final report**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The access to health sites for people with learning disabilities task group has completed its review and reported its findings to the Health Select Committee. That committee has endorsed the recommendations in the task group's report and they are now being presented to the Executive for approval.
- 1.2 The review was commissioned because Brent Carers spoke to local councillors about the difficulties they faced when using general health services with the person that they cared for, who had a learning disability. People with learning disabilities experience worse health than the general population and the task group found that they often receive a poor service from health providers. The need for improvement has been recognised by seven national reports in the last ten years. Despite so much attention being given to this problem little noticeable improvement has been made.
- 1.3 As a result of their investigations, the task group has made a number of recommendations that it believes will improve services for people with learning disabilities if they are implemented. Most of the recommendations are for NHS Brent, but it is hoped that the council can lend its support to this agenda and recognise the needs of people with learning disabilities within the services it provides.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the recommendations set out in the report.
- 2.2 To thank the members of the task group for their work.

3.0 Details

- 3.1 The access to health sites for people with learning disabilities task group was established because Brent Carers spoke to local councillors about the difficulties they faced when using general health services with the person that they cared for, who had a learning disability. People with learning disabilities experience worse health than the general population and the task group found that they often receive a poor service from health providers. This was a concern to members who felt that the subject would benefit from an overview and scrutiny task group investigation.
- 3.2 During the course of their work, the task group met with Brent carers who reported a number of on-going difficulties when using primary care services in the borough such as dentistry, GP's and opticians. Many of the problems relate to an overarching lack of awareness about learning difficulties issues and failure to implement reasonable adjustments which would make these services accessible to all patients. The task group's evidence found that there are variable standards for patients across the borough.
- 3.3 Additionally, at the national level there is a strong body of evidence highlighting failures across health and social care to provide adequate healthcare services for people with learning disabilities, who are among the most vulnerable adults in society. Brent is not alone in this regard, but the task group hopes that local services can be adjusted to meet people's needs.
- 3.4 The task group visited the Treat Me Right! project in Ealing. This project, commissioned by the local NHS, has developed a range of measures to improve the experience for patients with learning disabilities when they use services at Ealing Hospital. They have produced information in easy to read formats, such as the complaints policy and admission information as well as provide staff training. One of the main recommendations of the task group is that NHS Brent develops a similar model for Brent Hospitals.
- 3.5 In all, the task group made five recommendations. They were:
1. That NHS Brent implements a project – similar to the Treat me Right project developed by Support for Living in Ealing Hospital.
 2. That there are specific actions to address the needs of people with learning disabilities in the Brent Obesity Strategy and other health promotion strategies.
 3. That the Health Select Committee monitor the implementation of the NHS Brent learning disability self assessment framework and improvement of statutory functions such as dentists.
 4. That information is gathered on residents that have a learning disability to ensure that they receive targeted appropriate services.

5. That the go-ahead is given to the council project to look at transitions from children's to adult services for people with disabilities - as a matter of urgency. The appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee should monitor the progress of this work.

NHS Brent's response

- 3.6 The Health Select Committee has endorsed these recommendations and have passed them to the Executive for approval. Members will note that NHS Brent has provided a positive response to the review, which is set out below:
- 3.7 **Carer and Service User Involvement** - NHS London had identified that one of the main areas of progress within NHS Brent's recent Self Assessment Performance Framework was how well service users and carers were supported to input into the general planning and development of new health services.
- 3.8 There is now a health action sub group of the Learning Disability Partnership Board with user and carer representation which will drive forwards and monitor the delivery of the Health Action Plan which has been agreed with NHS London.
- 3.9 A sub group of the Learning Disability Partnership Board is being formed which will have a role in developing learning from the outcomes processes from complaints and incidents involving people with learning disabilities so that a consistent approach is implemented and monitored across agencies. Through this group quarterly learning disabilities thematic reports on safeguarding and complaints will be reported to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.
- 3.10 **Local Population Needs Analysis** - There is an need to improve the information available in Primary Care regarding people with learning disabilities and their family carers, and their particular health needs through the use of existing data collection processes.
- 3.11 Work is currently underway on a specific project to produce a more comprehensive health needs assessment of the local population of people with learning disabilities. This involves working across Public Health and Primary Care using information generated from GP Registers under the Directly Enhanced Service. This will be completed by October.
- 3.12 Work has also been commissioned to develop an Autism Strategy by October which will contain a local needs analysis of this specialist area across mental health and learning disabilities services, including information on people in transition from Children's to Adults Services. Both of these pieces of work will feed into a Joint Commissioning Strategy which is also being developed in tandem by November.
- 3.13 **Ensure reasonable adjustments and access to health services** - Work has already taken place linking Primary Care and the Specialist Community Team in reviewing GP reporting requirements and mechanisms to enable the

Community team to play a more active role in monitoring and updating the information held on the GP Registers and provide training for GP practices. A better system for the recording and monitoring of health screening is also being developed. This has resulted in a large improvement in the number of annual health checks completed and NHS Brent is now above the national average. The Health Action Plan contains a target to improve the number of annual health checks to 100% by 2013.

- 3.14 The admission and discharge arrangements for vulnerable people accessing acute hospital care and appropriately working with families and individuals to meet and understand their individual needs will be improved by the appointment of an acute liaison nurse for people with learning disabilities who has been commissioned to work with the North West London acute sector. This role will ensure robust care pathway's for individuals into acute care ensuring that people's needs are properly identified and meet.
- 3.15 **Treat Me Right Project** - Funding has been identified to develop a local service which will work within local hospital settings to provide training to hospital staff on the needs of people with learning disabilities and to introduce an accessible Hospital Passport Booklet for all people with a learning disability accessing acute care, identifying their needs and wishes so that services that can better understand and meet the patient's needs.
- 3.16 Interest in proving this service has been shown by Support for Living who run this project in neighbouring Ealing. Local providers have also shown interest in delivering the service. The Partnership Board have agreed that interested parties will be invited to submit expressions of interest which will be evaluated by the Sub group of the Partnership Board. It is hoped that the new service will be in place by November.
- 3.17 **Health Self Assessment Performance Framework** - The existing Health Action Plan will be updated in the light of the outcomes of the recent self assessment and taken to the Joint Executive Team and the Sub Group of Learning Disability Partnership Board for approval in August. The targets and actions have been accepted by NHS London as a good strategy for improvement and they will monitor the delivery of the Plan.

Response from Housing and Community Care

- 3.18 The report makes reference to service criteria for people with learning disabilities. The following comments have been provided by the Housing and Community Care Department in relation to the report:
- The Council is committed to the prevention agenda across the whole of Adult Social Care. The current eligibility threshold for Adult Social Care is set at meeting the needs of those people with substantial and/or critical needs and this applies to all client groups. Given the current financial position that Council's are facing it will be important to ensure that there remains equity of access for all client groups across Adult Social Care.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 See comments from Housing and Community Care above.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 As a Public Authority Brent Council has General duties to promote equal opportunities relating to race, disability and gender to remove discrimination and under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and take positive steps, these recommendations are consistent with this function.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 This report makes a number of recommendations for changes to services for people with learning disabilities. As the task group has pointed out, this group is particularly disadvantaged when it comes to receiving health services and generally suffers from worse health than the rest of the population. By completing this work the task group members hope that services for people with learning disabilities will improve and take into account their needs and circumstances. The initial commitments from NHS Brent are extremely encouraging in this regard.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

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