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Jay Stickland, Director of Adult Social Care, Children's and Adults' Services
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Councillor Richard Livingstone Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Financial Inclusion

25 October 2017

Dear Councillor Livingstone, Jay, and Genette,

I wanted to thank you, on behalf of the Committee, for the opportunity to participate in the early discussions about the future of learning disability provision in Southwark.

At the Healthy Communities Committee meeting on Tuesday 17 October, we heard from service users and providers about the current provision of services, and where they thought changes could be made in future. This was conducted through a number of roundtable discussions that focused on three key questions:

- What is important to service users?
- What do people like about the present services?
- What could be better?

Please see below a collated version of the comments provided by service users, service providers and members of the Committee.

What is important to service users?

- **Relationships:** The staff relationship with individuals is extremely important, as it helps to build trust that staff are acting in the best interests of users.
- **Person-centred approach:** At the same time, service users like personalised support from people and organisations who know them, and know their needs, likes and interests.
- **A sense of belonging:** Service users want to feel like services are being tailored for them, and that they are playing an active part in service provision. But they also want to feel like they are getting an ordinary life, and are not creating further burdens.
- **Empowerment:** Both staff and users want to feel empowered by the provision of services
- **Respect:** Service users want respect and to be valued for their opinions about the future of services that should be provided by the Borough
- **Transition:** Services users families are particularly concerned about the transition from childrens service to adult services, and want this recognised in any changes that the Council and CCG make
- **Progress:** Services users, their families and providers all want to ensure that future services provide a sense of progress, and allow for personal achievements of the service users in achieving things they would not have done without service provision. Linked to this, there is a real desire to ensure that people with complex needs are still able to develop goals and aspirations and see these met through adequate service provision

- **Respite for carers:** There was a notable concern to allow for respite of carers, especially with the changes in the way services are provided. It is important that their concerns are also considered as part of any future changes.
- **Co-production of services:** There is a keen desire for the Council, CCG, service providers and users to work together to come up with the best service provision for the future, which should include quantifiable outcomes through any changes to service provision, alongside any consideration of value-for-money

What do people like about present services?

- **Services that meet needs:** It is important that services actually provide adequate solutions for service users. People like that they currently have this with a number of their services.
- **Progressive and engaging services:** Many believe that there is a good relationship between service providers and the Council and CCG, and these should continue to ensure that services are changing and adapting appropriately to need
- **Variety of services:** Service users and their families and carers like the diversity of provision currently offered. They particularly mentioned music therapy services, as well as the range of bespoke services that have grown up in the absence of day services, with the third sector and the Council working together.
- **Connectedness:** All participants noted the relationships that have been built up between staff, the Council, CCG and individuals and like that this bond exists, with mutual respect and trust
- **Charity sector involvement:** Users are grateful for the role that smaller charities play in service provision, often feeling that they can develop more of a relationship with staff and service users, and offer better outcomes. They also see a wide range of bespoke services have grown up in the absence of day services with 3rd sector and council working together
- **Continuity:** Whilst wanting better services, there is also concern about continuity of provision for service users, ensuring there is no unnecessary changing of services where they are adequate

What could be better?

- **Setting a challenge:** Participants recognised the need for challenge setting from all involved in learning disability provision. There should be critical challenge, with the Council and CCG not just taking the easy option in service provision. Linked to this, participants believe that there should be positive risk taking to improve on service delivery
- **Better commissioning:** Whilst recognising that the Council, CCG and charity sector seem to work well on commissioning, there is a need to ensure that this continues and is being done as well as it can, to achieve appropriate outcomes for service users
- **Person-centred approach:** There should be a focus on ensuring that future commissioning takes a person-centred approach, with better communication to service users about the range of options available to them. There needs to be a recognition that one size fits all models do not work in this sector
- **Community awareness and involvement:** Participants were concerned that communities could do more to be welcoming to those with learning disabilities. They noted that huge contribution that these individuals can make, and want to see communities more readily getting them involved in local participation
- **Employment:** The Council should do more to support those with learning disabilities into employment.

- **Future of day services:** There was a discussion by participants about the potential for amalgamating some of the services provided at day centres into community centres, both activating the uses of community centres, and providing continuity of much-used services
- **Housing:** There was concern raised about future housing needs for those with learning disabilities. The Council should consider a priority need status for these individuals, allowing them to access affordable housing. Solutions in the private sector also need to be considered, especially with the growth of private rented sector developments in Southwark, and the Council should consider what opportunities there might be within these schemes for supporting those with learning disabilities.
- **Mapping need:** The Council and CCG should undertake a mapping exercise to understand very precisely the needs vs available services and activities currently available in the Borough, identify gaps and ensure future service provision to fill these
- **Recruitment and retention of staff:** This sector sees a high turnover of staff. The work of the Council on London Living Wage is welcome, but more needs to be done with providers to ensure that they have adequate recruitment and retention plans for staff
- **Service user involvement:** The keenness to involve service users was greatly appreciated, and participants hope that they will continue throughout changes to the service provision being made. Service users should be consulted about the future design of services to ensure that they meet their need

We would be delighted to receive updates as appropriate as your discussions continue, and please do let us know if we can be of future assistance.

Yours sincerely



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