

Newsletter of Disability in Camden • spring 2011

DISC DISCOVERY



**CUTS
SPECIAL**

>> PAGES 4-9

Comment

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Discovery*. Sadly this edition is given over to the prospects we will all be facing with regards to cuts.

Ever since the banking crisis first threw the worlds' economy into free-fall we have been using these pages to argue that those in power nationally and locally must not make the poor, the vulnerable, and those most in need pay for the errors, stupidities and greed of the rich and powerful.

We were not 'all in it together' when bankers were enriching themselves beyond our wildest dreams, nor are we 'all in it together' when it comes to huge bonuses, and in reality we are not all in it together when it comes to cuts.

The benefits and services under threat are precisely those most used by people on low incomes, by those facing high care needs, by those requiring the most support and help, in other words the majority of our readers.

Against this background it is difficult to reconcile what is happening with notions of 'the Big Society'.

There is much that appears to be laudable about the notion of community and voluntary sector organisations providing services and support to their communities, but one look at the list of cuts in Camden shows that it is precisely such groups that are feeling the hammer of the cuts. The picture in Camden is fairly typical of what is happening throughout the country.

The big fear is that those most in need of support will have to fall back on the largesse of volunteers, become hugely dependent on family members, or be at the mercy of charitable do-gooding.

Such a change would not represent a great leap forward into the new, but rather a depressing retreat in to the values of Victorian Britain.

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Hard PIP's to swallow?

The government have introduced the Welfare Reform Bill which will be the biggest shake up of the benefits system in 60 years

Disability Living Allowance will be replaced by a new benefit known as Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) for those of “working age” – 16-64. PIP's will have a new “objective” assessment procedure which is being developed at present. The nature of the assessment is worrying disability organisations. It is thought that it will be a points based system similar to the Work Capability Assessment for Employment and Support Allowance. As we have written in previous issues this assessment has been heavily criticised by disability groups and by the government commissioned Harrington Report. We are concerned that this will increase the number of incorrect decisions.

There will be a reduction in the number of rates within PIP's. There will be two components with two rates in each component. This may mean the loss of the lower rate care component. At present the government's figures show there are over 800,000 in receipt of the lower rate care component. The loss of the lower rate may also mean less housing/council tax benefit for some claimants if they have a non dependent (e.g. adult son or daughter) living with them.

The qualification period for the new benefit will be increased from three months to six months. The claimant will have to have the care and/or mobility restrictions for at least six months before they can claim. This will mean a longer period without benefit when early payment can help the claimant's recovery or stop them deteriorating as quickly.

The government states that they will allow the new benefit to be “regularly reviewed”. The government has made much of the fact that some claimants receive indefinite awards and implied that the present system does not allow awards to be checked or looked at regularly. However there is ample provision within the present system to review awards. An award can be for any length of time from six months to an indefinite period. This is determined by the DWP. The vast majority of awards are for fixed periods, at the end of which they are reviewed. The government are making out that there are large numbers of claimants sitting on benefits and their claims are never checked.

Claimants who receive the mobility component and stay in care homes will lose payments after March 2013. There has been an outcry from disability groups at this plan. Long term residents in care homes receive reduced subsistence payments already. To lose their mobility component payments will reduce their limited independence even further.

The Bill states that the changes are necessary to “ensure that support is focused on those with the greatest barriers and that expenditure is sustainable”. The DWP hope to save £2bn with this reform. The change to DLA is only one change in a wide ranging Welfare Reform Bill. The government hopes to save £18bn from the welfare budget over this parliament. This will inevitably hurt the most vulnerable and marginalised, in other words those least able to afford such cuts.

Cuts Special: Interviews



Cuts to the adult social care budget is a huge issue for many of our readers. In the following pages *Discovery* will talk to those responsible for implementing the cuts, those active in resisting them and activities that are taking place around them



Patricia Callaghan, right, is a Labour Councillor representing Camden Town with Primrose Hill. When Labour won control of the council in May she was appointed Camden Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care and Health

The coalition government insists they have not cut social care budgets and that any cuts are purely the responsibility of local councils. In your opinion is this a fair view of the situation?

PC I don't think that this is fair because there are cuts to every part of local government as they have cut our budget by 80 – 100 million, which is a huge slice of our finances, and will impact on some of our general service delivery. Obviously as our vulnerable and disabled residents use all these services they are going to be affected. Overall in Camden we are trying to reduce the impact of service withdrawal, and reshape our services more effectively, but each department in turn has had to take a cut. It is disingenuous of the government to say that 'they have not cut social care budgets' as the council have to take care of essential services, such as housing maintenance, waste collection etc. So when they give us less money each department takes a 'hit'. The extra money which is coming through the NHS is specifically to reduce bed blocking and for people with long term limiting illnesses so that they do not have to be admitted to hospital, and are treated within the community.



Why haven't local councils made their position clear and stood up to national government?

PC Local councils have made their position clear, but if we stood up to the government by refusing to make cuts then our finance officers would have to balance the budget, and obviously still carry through the cuts. We will join with local people to lobby the government and also join the Unison march on 26th March.

The cuts to the social care budget are causing real concern and fear to some of the most vulnerable members of our community, what is your message to disabled people in Camden?

PC My message to disabled people in Camden is that we will still provide services for those with substantial and critical need. Camden, at present, spends double that of any other local authority on discretionary services and we are proud to do so, unfortunately because of the savings we have to make we have to cut this budget by approximately £4m, which means that some services will stop, and others will be reduced, but we will still be putting £3m into discretionary services.

The cuts this year will be followed by more cuts next year, when do you see any light at the end of the tunnel for social care in Camden.

PC The cuts are harsh, and some people will lose their service which is difficult, but there is some light at the end of the tunnel in that we will be getting new purpose built residential homes for older people who are no longer able to remain independent. Under our Homes for Older People "HOPS" project our elderly residents will have 'state of the art' personal rooms with ensuite facilities and smart living areas. We will be rebuilding the Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, and hopefully under the comprehensive investment programme old disused buildings will be sold and monies reinvested to provide for new community resources, fully accessible purpose built resources, which people with disabilities will be at the centre of designing. On the finance front we have to look carefully at our budgets as do all Adult Social Care Providers as these are unsustainable in the long term. We have to make efficiencies, but, in my opinion, if we had more time to reduce the budget in Camden, we would have had more time to help organisations readjust to the changing landscape each organisation faces.

Cuts Special: Interviews



Rebecca Harrington is Camden council's assistant director of Housing and Adult Social Care, she will be overseeing the cuts on a day to day basis

When the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) bandings were introduced in Camden, much was made of universal preventative services being available to make up any shortfall in peoples needs being met. Most of these services appear to have been rebranded as discretionary and are now either having their funding reduced or being cut altogether. Are preventative services now a thing of the past?

RH The guiding principle in the discussions which we have had in Adult Social Care is to protect our main duty, which is to support people with the highest levels of social care need, and to continue to provide the high quality, personalised care services which we

have been proud of for many of the years. These are difficult times and the social care budget will have to find £16m over the next three years. We are doing the majority of our services with our own staff and budgets but we cannot avoid some cuts on services. We have had a very difficult decision to make in cutting to some popular services. We are level services in order to protect our funding for people with the highest needs, and though it is not ideal we believe that this is the best way to do in these circumstances.

Camden meets the challenge at the substantial levels. In the past we have been very happy to provide a range of general services for people



Phoebe Watkins, above, is UNISON co-convenor for Housing & Adult Social Care, and Branch co-chair. She is at the forefront of the campaign against the cuts

Given the policies of the coalition government, can the council really be held responsible for the cuts they are making?

PW While it is clear that the policies of central government are what is driving the cuts agenda, the local Councillors still do have a responsibility to stand by what they say they believe in. They were not elected to bring in such damaging cuts, and at every public meeting they have attended, local people have been demanding they make a stand against the cuts and vote against the budget. Their answer has always been that if they do not set the budget, then Government commissioners will come in to do it. But if even a few Councils stood against the cuts, they would be a beacon for resis-

tance, and could be used to protect our services. We are not going to put in a budget that will cut over the next 3 years. We are taking the blame and the heat up against the Government. We believe they will be seen to be responsible to the Coalition.

What do you feel the impact of the cuts will be on services?

PW The impact of the cuts will be devastating. At a meeting recently held in the High Street over the closure of the resource centre, the meeting were cancelled, for compensation, for council against the cuts, people could die through. The prevention of services

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What is the impact of cuts on social care?

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or moderate needs even though
there is no statutory duty to do so,
therefore these are properly de-
scribed as discretionary services.
In fact Camden spends twice as
much as any other London bor-
ough on these 'non-care man-
aged' services – nearly £7m a year
from the social care budget. We
intend to reduce our funding here
by about £4m. Many boroughs
provide very little, and many pro-
vide this type of support through
their voluntary and community
sector.

Where now can people go if they need such services?

RH Camden already holds a rich
mix of voluntary sector organisa-
tions which provide many activi-

centres for vulnerable adults,
meals on wheels, good neigh-
bour schemes etc. is difficult to
quantify in monetary terms, but
all the research shows that keep-
ing people independent in their
own homes for as long as pos-
sible saves thousands of pounds
by avoiding the need for longer
hospital stays, residential care or
expensive intervention services.
More importantly, the effects on
peoples self worth will be ex-
tremely detrimental.

What are the aims of the campaign?

PW The campaign aims to pres-
sure the local council into revers-
ing these cuts – particularly to the
front line services such as those
that vulnerable people depend

ties without any funding at all from
Adult Social Care. The council's
Culture and Environment depart-
ment fund many others, and have
been consulting on changing the
way they do this to make it more
equitable, to focus on vulnerable
people and communities, and
to meet the financial challenges.
We want to have a new 'universal
offer' which has a clear remit to in-
clude support for people with dis-
abilities of all sorts as an integral
part of the council's investment in
cohesive and resilient communi-
ties. While it won't be possible to
carry on funding all the organisa-
tions we do now, we believe that
with co-operation and creative
thinking there will still be a wide

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on. We know there is already an
underspend of £6m this financial
year (2010-11), and while that
will not cover the full extent of
the cuts, it can give a life-line to
some. But our main hope is to get
the Council, together with local
campaigners, service users and
trade unionists to take the fight to
Parliament and give a lead for a
united campaign. There are alter-
natives that the government can
consider – claiming back unpaid
or avoided tax; scrapping trident;
pulling out of Afghanistan as ex-
amples. We are also campaigning
against the ideological attack on
the whole concept of the welfare
state from this government who
want to shift this country back to
the 1930's.

[continued on page 9 >>](#)



Cuts Special: Interviews

» Rebecca Harrington: continued from page 7

range of excellent ways for all citizens to participate in the community they live in.

Isn't there a real danger that many of these 'savings' will end up being a false economy as without preventative services people will end up needing much more expensive care and support?

RH Camden social care funding will still invest around £3m on preventive services, but we are focusing this investment on the higher levels of prevention – including re-ablement, support to carers, prevention of falls, support to stroke survivors, and telecare. There is evidence that these work effectively to prevent further ill health or dependency, and make a real difference to the most vulnerable individuals. The lower level services, like lunch clubs and social events at resource centres, which we were able to fund when we had more money, and which are popular and nice to have, have very little evidence that they really stop people from needing critical and substantial services. In fact, Camden has spent a lot on these services in the past but has only gained slightly better outcomes than other boroughs in terms of helping people stay independent.

Whilst keeping our focus on people with the higher levels of need we will still have responsive assessment and advice services to pick up problems early, and will be able to keep supporting the people who need it most.

Don't the cuts completely undermine the Better Care Choices programme, ultimately leading to less funding and therefore less choice and control for service users?

RH We have been very clear that it is our core aim to provide funding to support people who have critical or substantial needs, and it's these people who benefit from the personalised approach of the Better Care Choices programme.

Better Care Choices offers customers the chance to think beyond traditional services to find solutions to their care and support needs. We want everyone to have a direct payment or at least to have a personal budget so that they know the cost of their care package and exercise the level of choice which they want over how it is spent.

The history of Direct Payments has shown many people who hold the money themselves can find lower cost options to traditional services. For example, employing a Personal Assistant to help in the home and also take them on visits to relatives and friends can be better value than traditional home care and buildings based services.

People have been making personal choices to use mainstream activities and facilities including libraries, leisure centres, community centre interest groups, or joining together with like minded people to pursue a shared interest. These have included art activity, theatre groups, organised walks, and keep fit classes. There will still be libraries, community and leisure centres in Camden even after the cuts, and there will still be voluntary sector groups which people with disabilities will be able to be involved with if they wish – as volunteers, participants and as active members of the vibrant Camden community.

>> Phoebe Watkinson: continued from page 7

If our readers are interested in getting involved what should they do?

PW Regular organising meetings are taking place and there are details of dates and other campaign meetings sent out regularly. The contact details for the campaign are:

Camden United Against Cuts

c/o Camden NUT, Freepost (NW 6094),
100 Stanhope ST, NW1 3JX
www.camdentradescouncil.org.uk
camdenunitedagainstcuts@gmail.com

Donations should be made payable to
“Camden Trades Council” and marked for
Camden United.



March for the alternative

marchforthealternative.org.uk

Has details on the march for an alternative to the cuts in public expenditure. This is a national coordinated demonstration on the **26 March** and the website has information regarding accessibility and transport.

The march

The march will gather on **Victoria Embankment** and form up between Waterloo and Blackfriars Bridges **from 11am**.

It will start moving off around noon, but because of the likely size the last marchers will not be leaving until after two, and possibly later.

The Rally

The organisers estimate that the march will arrive in Hyde Park shortly after 1:15pm. They will therefore start the rally around 1:30pm.

Because they expect large numbers they estimate that people will still be arriving in the Park at 4pm – and possibly later. They will therefore keep the rally running until around 4:30pm. The organisers hope that early arrivals will move on to allow those coming later a good view.



Lenny Rodgie RIP

It is with great sorrow that DISC reports the passing of Lenny Rodgie who recently died at the age of 62. Lenny was a long term member of DISC and enthusiastically took part in our recent volunteer training.

Lenny had a form of epilepsy that is resistant to medication and this sometimes made his life very difficult. Lenny was an active campaigner and fundraiser for the National Epilepsy Society and passionately believed in raising awareness and understanding of epilepsy. Lenny agreed to be the first person who had a fit on national television and took part in many drug trials in order to develop people's understanding of epilepsy.

Lenny gave a very informative interview to *Discovery* in autumn 2009 as he felt that talking openly about his life would give people more of an insight into epilepsy.



Lenny also chaired the tenants' association at Delancey Studios, Camden Town and tirelessly campaigned for the rights of residents. Lenny always believed in speaking up if he thought things were wrong.

Lenny was a warm and friendly person who was always willing to give help and support to those who needed it. DISC staff enjoyed getting to know him and we will fondly remember his stories about Camden and his great interest in compiling his family tree. Lenny will be sadly missed by everyone at DISC.

New Numbers

A reminder that the numbers for services at The Peckwater Centre have changed:

Main Office/CEO
020 3317 5099

Access to Employment and Volunteering
020 3317 5072

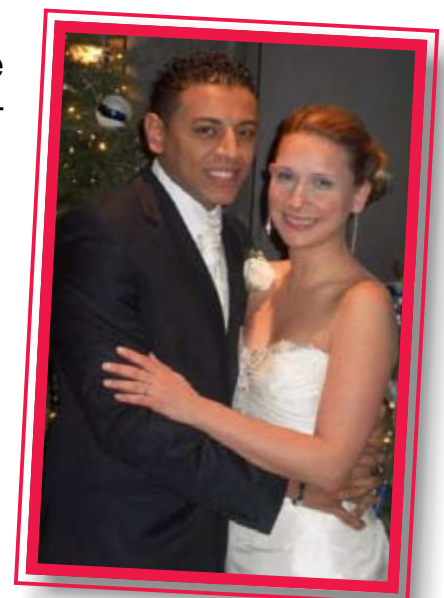
Advocacy Service
020 3317 5071

Self Directed Support Service
020 3317 5070

Fax Number
020 7424 9996

Nancy's big day

A hearty congratulations to Nancy Mainville. Nancy who works on our Self Directed Support Service got married on New Years Eve to Sherif Magid. They tied the knot in Nancy's home town of Ottawa in Canada. *Discovery* would like to wish the couple every happiness for the future.



Sherif and Nancy

Let the Train ...

The chief executive of the Royal London Society for the Blind, Dr Tom Pey was left stranded on a platform in Brussels. He was visiting the Belgian capital to discuss improved rights for the owners of guide dogs at the European Parliament. Ironically it was Dr Pey's decision to travel without his guide dog for the return journey that landed him in such a predicament.

He had made arrangements with the train company for someone to be waiting for him at the station, but when he arrived in Brussels he was left to wander the platform for over an hour, before eventually finding the exit.

A Eurostar spokesman

said: "We are committed to providing support to all our passengers who require assistance and while situations like these are thankfully rare, this incident is being taken extremely seriously."

They have offered Dr Pey two pairs of first-class tickets to be used for fundraising purposes, as well as the offer of a financial donation to the Royal London Society for the Blind.

... Take the Strain!!!

Karen Redmile, a nurse from Thorne in Doncaster, was advised by train staff to stay on her train for an extra ten miles so that she could get the return train in order to exit her local train station.

Ms Redmile has a chron-

ic condition which affects her movement. In the past she has been helped across by staff on a near by 'barrow crossing' over the tracks.

However, due to a recent restriction in staffing after 2pm, Ms Redmile has lost the support from station staff. "Without any signs being put up or any warning at all, the facility has just been stopped and so last week myself and a friend with a baby in a pram found ourselves stuck on the station."

Pete Myers, head of service quality for Northern Rail, said: "We are working with our industry partners to investigate safe ways of assisting customers across the crossing when the station is unmanned."

Parking bay? You're having a laugh

After waiting 8 months for a disabled parking bay Rebecca Fairchild was stunned as she returned home to find that council workers had painted a disabled parking space around a lamp post outside her home in Saffron Walden in Essex.

"I thought it was some kind of a joke. I just couldn't believe somebody could do that. But when I realised it was there to stay I wasn't laughing" said the mother of two.

Mrs Fairchild, whose 5 year old son Joshua has autism, said "I found it very upsetting because Joshua has been ill recently. I burst into tears. The road is very busy and I can't leave Joshua by himself in traffic."

Essex County Council, who had contracted the firm May Gurney to paint the lines, said "We take any poor performance

very seriously and are working with contractors



to repaint this disabled bay in an appropriate location and ensure this does not happen again in the future.

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www.discnwl.org.uk



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Fax: 020 7383 4775 **Email:** advice@discnwl.org.uk

ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Peckwater Centre, 6 Peckwater Street, London NW5 2TX

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SMS: 07919 047146