

PaCC Position Statement: Brighton and Hove City Council's proposed budget 2016/17

Updated February 10th 2016

Background

While acknowledging the pressure on local authority budgets and welcoming the 'value for money' approach, PaCC has significant concerns with the proposed Council budget as it stands. We ask Councillors and officers to ensure that the needs of children and young people (CYP) with disabilities and their families are prioritised by protecting much needed front-line services, and ring-fencing and reinvesting any savings made to the SEND budget. PaCC strongly questions the ability to maintain current levels of front-line services in view of these budget proposals, yet this is what is being proposed.

PaCC highlights three overarching issues which should be considered when analysing cuts to the SEND budget:

- Capacity to meet demand in some key areas is already very over-stretched e.g. parent carers report lack of specialist support in mainstream schools; unacceptably long waiting lists for CAMHS and other therapies, Direct Payments are unavailable for many families in need etc.

Investment in CYP with SEND and their families must be increased, not reduced.

- PaCC is concerned about the pace of change required to meet these savings targets and lack of development capacity and transition planning in many areas e.g. charging for home-school transport; personalisation of budgets; reduction in budgets for short breaks in the community and voluntary sector etc. Any change without a full and proper transition plan will inevitably impact on vulnerable members of the community and lead to an increasing lack of confidence in the system. Even a short-term reduction in provision can have devastating impacts on families, pushing them into crisis. It is essential that every change is appropriately paced and planned in order to avoid any cohort of children missing out. PaCC believes some of the savings identified within the budget are premature until the details of transition plans emerge.
- It is essential that the proposed savings to SEND services are considered in the context of cumulative impacts of all cuts in the city (e.g. other children's services; housing, youth services), which also impact on CYP with SEND and

Parent Carers' Council (PaCC), Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XG

• Tel: 01273 234 862 • email: admin@paccbrighton.org.uk • www.paccbrighton.org.uk

their families. SEND is over-represented in many other minorities and vulnerable groups, e.g. recent data in our Schools clearly show the strong link between SEND and deprivation and the need for greater intervention in school to improve outcomes educationally. PaCC has significant concerns regarding this cumulative impact and we ask for evidence of how outcomes for this vulnerable group will improve in the context of these cumulative savings. We recognise citywide concern regarding the educational gap for children and young people with SEND and the additional impact of deprivation in the city. PaCC also highlights the poor NEET figures in the city and we raise again that these cumulative cuts will negatively impact these figures.

Integrated Specialist Provision

PaCC welcomes senior managers' intent that the bold redesign of services will not impact on frontline services and there is genuine hope that redesign can lead to better, more joined up, provision. Senior managers have given a clear message to PaCC members that the proposed £1.1 million savings from redesign of special school provision (p62 of Budget Proposals 2016/17 to 2019/20) will be reinvested back into SEND provision. We now request a firm commitment from councillors and officers to ring-fence all savings for SEND provision.

PaCC has been broadly supportive of the direction of travel of Brighton and Hove's Integrated Specialist Provision redesign. However, whilst Integrated Specialist Provision is in its consultation phase PaCC requests that budget decisions reflect the time line of the consultation.

Short Breaks and Direct Payments Budget

PaCC believes the savings to Family Support, Social Work and Short Breaks budgets (p61) are premature. We acknowledge the national agenda of personalisation, and where this increases real 'choice and control' for families we think this can provide exciting, value for money opportunities. Having taken part in many board-level discussions relating to personalisation for CYP in Brighton and Hove, PaCC highlights that these talks are in their infancy and strongly requests the clear need for a transition plan. Any detrimental impact on services will push some families into crisis, costing the Local Authority more money in the long term.

We acknowledge and welcome the removal of the proposal to save £28k from the family outreach support service but we question the static level of the direct payments budget. Personalisation of services will increase demand on this currently overspent budget. We also think more investment is needed to advise and support families to access personal budgets, since otherwise this is not a real option for many families.

Budget proposals to reduce funding via the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) in years one, two and three (£86k yr 1, £166k yr 2-4. p61) are very alarming for the parent carer community. PaCC members report the significant positive impact that the CVS have in the city, providing vital services such as: a range of short breaks; Information Advice and Support; support with DLA

applications; the Compass Card, etc. PaCC would like to understand more how these budgets can be cut without impacting front line provision.

Early years

PaCC is very concerned about cumulative impacts to children with SEND in the early years, including closure of children's centres, savings in the early help and childcare budgets and a potential reduction in the Presens service. Early intervention is key to improving outcomes for children and young people with disabilities, and cumulative impacts to this group must be highlighted to help avoid a crisis in outcomes for these children in the future. We therefore reiterate our proposal that all savings within the SEND budget should be reinvested into provision with CYP with SEND and their families.

Post 19

Senior officers frequently report that the new Children's and Family Act has brought a raft of new responsibilities to this cohort of young people. PaCC welcomes the new opportunities for Post 19 contained within the Act. However we share officers' concerns of budget issues in this key area. The information from officers that 'no extra money' has been supplied by central government to support post 19 priorities is of great concern. Again PaCC requests a costed transition plan is made available to the community.

EIAs

PaCC is unsure how the EIAs add to the process as they can be scant in detail or absent altogether. We believe a full EIA should accompany any relevant area with a proposed budget saving. This will provide greater transparency and permit elected members to properly scrutinise proposals from an equalities perspective.

Capital sales reinvestment

PaCC welcomes both councillors' and officers' plans to ring-fence revenue from the sales of buildings in the city into SEND provision in the city and we seek confirmation that this will happen (and what % of sales will be protected in this way). We understand that savings made from capital sales can be reinvested into revenue projects. If this is the case, we assume this money could be protected to develop the new buildings required for the Integrated Specialist Provision as well as provide seed funding to promote social and leisure care opportunities for children and young people and post 19 projects. Children and young people in Brighton and Hove do not have equity of social opportunities in comparison to their non-disabled peers. PaCC is keen to work with both the LA and CVS to develop these essential initiatives.

Home-school transport

A significant cut has been identified in years two and three of the home to school transport budget (p65). The LA has told PaCC of plans to introduce charging for post 16 transport from September 2016. We believe this saving is premature as the detail of charging is yet to emerge, particularly in view of the high levels of stress to CYP and their families following the rushed implementation of the home-school transport policy for pre-16 children.

PaCC members are keen for us to look into whether this proposal can be challenged on the grounds of equality.

Co- production and capacity

PaCC welcomes officers' co-productive approach and believes that the SEND community will benefit from an even higher level of co-production at later stages of the redesign. The views from parent carers' can impact positively on service design and delivery. PaCC remains committed to continued working with senior officers and the SEND community to achieve this.

PaCC acknowledges that capacity in all key areas of service provision is of significant concern. A recruitment freeze at the Local Authority coupled with cuts to all LA services and CVS are already having a negative impact on the delivery of front line services. The context of existing capacity issues must be considered whilst making budget decisions.

Conclusion

PaCC has a responsibility not only to ensure that the redesign of services works in the best interests of CYP and their families, but also to ensure families currently accessing or needing services are not impacted during the period of change.

We welcome the questions raised by Community Works on Children's Services and support the need for these questions to be answered. <http://bhcommunityworks.org.uk/budget-engagement-2016-17/> We request an update on this.

PaCC requests that councillors consider developing transition plans for all savings within the SEND budget before agreeing any proposed savings. We anticipate that City Councillors in Brighton and Hove will take equalities very seriously and will be keen to protect some of the city's most vulnerable children and young people in the city – those with SEND.

PaCC welcome any communication on any of the issues contained in this document. You can contact us by emailing Fiona England

PaCC Chair **fiona@paccbrighton.org.uk** or calling **01273 234862**

The Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) is a parent-led forum which represents parent carers with children and young people with any kind of physical disability, learning disability, complex or long-term medical/health condition, or special educational need. The group was formed to enable parent carers to work closely together to help improve services and support. It aims to help parents get more directly involved in the strategic delivery of services for disabled children in Brighton & Hove and now has about 270 signed up members. This position

Parent Carers' Council (PaCC), Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XG

• Tel: 01273 234 862 • email: admin@paccbrighton.org.uk • www.paccbrighton.org.uk

statement was developed through discussions with our Steering Group members and our partner groups; mASCot, Kaleidoscope, Barnado's Link Plus, Extratime, Pebbles, Sweet Peas and T21.