



05.02.2024

PaCC Budget Briefing- Brighton and Hove City Council budget 2024/25

PaCC recognise the enormous budget pressures of the council, alongside the efforts of senior officers to address issues for families with SEN and Disability in their budget strategy. We appreciate the open dialogue we have had with officers and Cllr Taylor around budget proposals. PaCC recognise and thank BHCC for their commitment to widen the social care offer for neurodivergent children and young people (CYP), CYP with social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and CYP without a learning disability.

In our statutory role as the Parent Carer voice in the city, PaCC flag significant concerns that the budget proposals risk leaving Children and Young People (CYP) with severe learning disabilities (SLD) and associated high support needs behind, increasing inequalities for this highly vulnerable cohort and risking higher costs for the council if reduced support leads to families reaching crisis point.

We ask that Councillors read this PaCC statement alongside the background context towards the end of this document.

£504k saving across the council's in-house respite provisions Tudor House and Drove Road.

- PaCC are supportive of a thorough and transparent review/consultation with families with CYP receiving overnight short breaks, the wider community and PaCC.
- PaCC thank senior officers and Councillors that this proposed saving is predicated by the outcome of a thorough and transparent consultation/review, it is essential that this is communicated to the wider community.
- PaCC flag concern, the budget proposals articulate a commitment to increase overnights at Drove Road for a wider cohort of CYP. PaCC and the community have concerns around how this will be achieved in one building. **The final report must evidence how this will be achieved, and the information in the report must be transparent and accessible for all readers.**
- PaCC state that overnight respite is allocated according to individual family's needs and not via an unlawful blanket policy.
- PaCC raise significant concerns that EIA 1 states that with the remodelling of Drove Rd BHCC *aims* to be able to continue to support those young people who will no longer be able to attend Tudor House. The language in the budget papers

must be strengthened to articulate a commitment to ensure overnight respite provision for this cohort.

- PaCC feel it is essential that there is informed Councillor scrutiny of this review, which ensures that Councillors visit Drove Road and Tudor House, to understand the buildings and the differences in needs of the two cohorts, and to demonstrate full understanding back to the community of the needs of these vulnerable young people, and their families. PaCC thank Labour leads for agreeing to these visits with PaCC, and we will extend our invite to other political groups. These visits will take place in line with review timings.
- **PaCC are fully supportive of CYP returning to the city**, and we believe this commitment should go further: BHCCs strategies must mitigate risks to avoid out of city residential placements; we ask that the review of Drove Rd and Tudor House recognises this core principle, a principle that can only be achieved by ensuring sufficient overnights, a wider holiday offer for CYP with LD, early transition planning and improved housing options for young people becoming adults.
- PaCC fully support the widening of an overnight offer for neurodiverse and non-learning disabled CYP as stated in the budget papers, however this must be implemented alongside the commitment to increase the respite offer for CYP with LD as stated in BHCCs letter to service users at Drove Road and Tudor House (families with CYP with LD). It is essential that Councillors fully understand this commitment to families across LD and non-LD, the numbers of CYP involved and what building capacity is needed going forward. **PaCC take a firm view that to provide sufficient respite for the community, the use of space at Drove Rd and Tudor House for respite must be considered and not compromised.**

Reduction of Outreach Service 115k in budget papers. (EIA 3 states to achieve savings by ceasing funding the Outreach service)

- PaCC ask Councillors to be fully aware that the CYPs (Children & Young People) receiving Outreach provision have typically, due to SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) profiles, and high staffing ratio support needs, have not been so easily matched to the wider short breaks offer, hence the historic need for Outreach provision.
- PaCC note that the EIA states that the more varied holiday offer will offer support. However, PaCC are concerned that to date, the recently undertaken commissioning process for holiday provision has not resulted in sufficient providers coming forward to offer the level of 1:1 or 2:1 support needed.
- PaCC are aware that the outreach service is currently staffed by men, which means SEND girls/women have not been able to access it, and it is therefore already a depleted offer to some families. The same risks apply when recruiting Personal Assistants. The shortage of appropriately skilled PAs presents an ongoing risk to these families.
- CYP receiving Outreach support are at risk of expensive placements if appropriate support is not achieved.

- PaCC supports the proposal for recruitment of a new role in BHCC, of Personal Assistant Co-ordinator, this role must also benefit the wider use of direct payments.

Direct Payments 50k

- Families and PaCC seek information around the efficiency saving linked to a wider review of Direct Payments (DPs) We understand this is proposed due to families underspending on their Direct Payments budgets. This however is because there is not adequate provision for families to buy into, eg lack of PAs. It risks being shortsighted to reduce the budget. PaCC support the direction of travel for families to be able to use their DPs more flexibly eg: to pay for SEND holiday activities.
- PaCC flag that the pending completion of a revised Direct Payment policy has stalled due to staffing capacity in HASC, and conversations around policy remain at early stages for 0-25.
- PaCC query if the Direct payment admin support to the DP team is smaller than within the Adult DP team.
- Families ask that admin support is increased in the 0-25 team.
- Families ask that 0-25 Disclosure and Barring Service is moved to an electronic process as used by many other organisations. Families lose ready to start PAs as this process can take an excessive length of time.
- PaCC asks that the new Personal Assistant Role includes a review of the hourly pay rate for PAs. PaCC note there is some lack of parity in the PA rate compared to the rate for support staff working across different areas of the council undertaking similar work.

Contracted Services, adaptations, management 32k

- PaCC understand these are contract savings associated with BHCC taking on direct running of after school clubs. However, we are concerned that the after school/extended day provision has yet to start at Downs View, leaving families without support since October half term 2023. Delivery costs are therefore not clear and removing budget risks further jeopardising provision.
- PaCC ask for reconsideration of this saving, as to take money out of this provision risks not addressing the barriers that are impacting building capacity at Hill Park and starting Downs View provision- alongside addressing the barriers that prevent CYP attending eg: transport issues, and in some families the lack of PA to support at the club.

Agency Placements for disabled children. 250k

- PaCC recognise BHCCs comment that this is a demand-led budget that must respond to presenting needs, including high-cost placements.

Further detailed context for Councillors to mitigate risk, budget proposals must be evaluated alongside understanding the gaps in the current offer for CYP with severe learning disabilities and needing high support ratios 1:1 and 2:1.

- 100k allocated to the commissioning process, to widen the offer of short breaks and activities for CYP with SEND, this area of work is moving towards creating a SEND offer for CYP with a wider range of SEND profiles alongside associated lower support needs. PaCC acknowledge the work of officers to drive this programme forward.
- However, there is a concerning absence of organisations applying to offer specialist short breaks and activities for the high need's cohort requiring statutory short breaks; worryingly these family's risk having no support at Easter, or until BHCC plan alternative support. PaCC understand that approximately 70% of the Extratime cohort require 1.1 support, some need a higher ratio.
- PaCC have heard outline plans to achieve support for this cohort, to date we query the operational feasibility of this plan. PaCC seek assurances that new initiatives must constitute a meaningful short break offer, appropriate to the needs of families, and in line with short break guidance.
- The extended day at Hill Park is up and running for some families. Down's View families are still waiting for this support.
- Many families are unable to recruit PAs via Direct Payments, adding to the overall loss of support.
- Amaze have stepped in to cover the offer for CYP age 14+ previously run by Extratime, however the capacity in this provision is lower, particularly for CYP needing 1.1 support.

PaCC ask again for a Designated Social Care officer - since 2022, PaCC have recommended that BHCC recruit to this stand-alone strategic role- a government recommendation. PaCC recognise that BHCC have allocated a strategic element to the job description of the Head of the Specialist Children's Disability. However, we note the reality of undertaking the essential strategic element of this job continues to be hampered by the realities of running the day-to-day elements of the service. The frequent turnover of social workers and pod managers, means the Head of Service must cover management roles and capacity for strategic work continues to be lost.

There have been missed opportunities to apply for national social care funding specific to building a Short Breaks offer, we strongly feel that the creation of this role would have avoided missing these opportunities. PaCC note that both East and West Sussex have appointed to this post, and again we ask that this post is prioritised as a stand-alone post in the city.

Youth Services

We are disappointed to see the proposed removal of youth-led grants which currently fund highly successful SEND youth clubs run by Amaze and the Hangleton and Knoll Project and which provision has been prioritised by YPs themselves. The aspirations for an inclusive and fair city are not demonstrated by these proposals.

Community and Voluntary Services Funding

The proposed 10% saving on the Third Sector Commission and removal of Communities Fund, will have a significant impact in the city, both in terms of destabilising organisations and reducing provision for disabled people. This comes at a critical time, when numerous services are being scaled back due to BHCC and NHS

funding pressures, yet at a time when needs remain very high. It is the final year of this funding programme and therefore difficult to understand why BHCC would choose now to make changes to the programme, leaving the voluntary sector with insufficient time to prepare for change, impacting SEND families to further risk.

This budget briefing has been shared with the Director of Families, Children and Learning, the Assistant Director of Send and the Head of the Specialist Children's Disability Service.

PaCC welcome any questions from Councillors – fiona@paccbrighton.org.uk PaCC Social Care representative.

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.

Find out more here <https://paccbrighton.org.uk/>