

The Parent Carers Council (PaCC) Position Statement re Brighton and Hove City Council's (BHCC) budget 2025/26

Introduction:

PaCC acknowledges Brighton & Hove Council's overall commitment to continue to invest in SEND provision within this year's budget. Increasing funding from £72.4 million to £77.5 million.

However, we flag significant ongoing risks within budgets linked to SEND provision and raise concerns that static budgets do not withstand increasing demand for services that are defined as statutory by the Government.

PaCC reminds readers:

- Just 12 months ago, PaCC headlines stated Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities risk being left behind.
- A year on, the pressures in the system remain evident.
- PaCC highlights the petition and deputation presented at two council meetings by Send Us a Break, an active campaign group in the city who in addition to PaCC articulate clear inequalities for families with CYP with high support needs.

PaCC acknowledges that central government delays to the Brighton and Hove financial settlement have contributed to a budget setting process which is time limited for stakeholder groups to navigate the proposals.

- PaCC highlight the areas of BHCCs 2025/26 Budget proposals which if not remedied will lead to deeper inequalities for CYP with SEND and their families in the city and push more families into crisis resulting in increasing financial risk to BHCC.

The Labour Administration and the Council must fulfil their commitment to "a fair and inclusive city where everyone thrives". To date this is not the case for families with CYP with SEND.

We set out below, our areas of concern where there is

- budgetary insufficiency to meet statutory duties
- missing information that prevents us from being able to fully assess Equalities Impacts and Risk

£250k Short Breaks Holiday Activities budget:

Councillors are fully aware of the significant pressures on this budget.

- Committee papers, November 2023 identified 1,959 children and young people aged from 4 – 18 years who would be eligible for this statutory provision. The paper recognized the Council's duties under the Breaks for Carers and Disabled Children Regulations 2011.
- Since early 2024, PaCC has consistently raised the risks around the lack of Specialist provision within commissioned services.

- Fast forward to February 2025, BHCC commissioners informed parent carers of CYP with exceptionally high support needs (1.1/2.1 adult to child ratio), that from April 2025 a maximum of just six holiday sessions would be available over the whole year for just the 139 families replying to their survey. Commissioners agree that need is far greater than this sample group of 139 families.
- BHCC commissioners also informed parent carers that introducing a charging policy for Short Breaks holiday provision would only create a marginal increase in places available.
- The combined efforts of PaCC, Send Us a Break and the wider SEND community has kept this concerning area of provision as an ongoing high-profile issue.
- PaCC notes that families with CYP needing specialist support feel as if they are on the receiving end of having ‘just scraps’ of provision offered to their high need’s community.

PaCC recognise Cllr Taylor’s important acknowledgment at February’s People Scrutiny Committee saying ***“It’s obviously a vitally important area, and we need to make sure that we’re meeting our statutory duties, and if we need to think about and consider more funding in following years, or indeed in-year...then the council will do that”***

PaCC note Cllr Daniel’s commitment to a meeting with PaCC, Amaze and the Send Us a Break campaign group in March 2025. **The community asks for cross party scrutiny and support at this meeting and going forward.**

Parent Carers ask for a sufficient budget to ensure the Council fulfils their duties and to close the inequitable gap between the current minimal Short Breaks offer, and what is ‘typically available’ for CYP without SEND.

Drove Road Respite: Prioritization of Revenue Generation Exercise, over Increasing In City Provision to meet existing and future Demand:

Budget Papers state - Generate income £225,000 and improve short break offer through external use of vacated flat at Drove Road. Delivery Risk: Income generation target not met due to low take-up of offer. See EIA 6 in Appendix 7.

BHCC have shared comms with Drove Road families <https://paccbrighton.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BHCC-comms-to-families-re-BHCC-2025-26-budget-line-proposed-change-of-use-of-the-standalone-Drove-Rd-flat.pdf> This sets out the proposal to offer the standalone flat to other Councils as an income generator, and to consider whether this flat could be used in an emergency for CYP living in Brighton and Hove, to ensure families can maintain their family bonds. The comms clearly states that using the flat to generate income is the only current way to maintain the service and that there is no other investment being offered.

- PaCC highlights that using the flat for income generation removes the opportunity for the flat to be used for in city emergency placements, citing that all the Drove Rd flats have CYP who have lived there for a considerably long time as moving on accommodation is hard to find.
- PaCC have received permission from 3 families receiving Drove Rd respite provision to share with BHCC that they are in crisis and have asked or are close to asking for full time residential placements for their children.

- PaCC acknowledge that BHCC rightly prioritise up to 5 CYP coming back into the city to live at Rainbow Lodge. However, PaCC flag the obvious, where will the current and future CYP in crisis live when their families can no longer cope. Just one child going into full time residential outside of the city would wipe out income generated from a whole year of rental income.
- PaCC have concerns that the consultation window for parent carers to ask questions and provide their views is not long enough, and any decisions regarding the Drove Rd flat must not happen until meaningful consultation has taken place.

As well as the community's concern that CYP from neighbouring counties' respite needs are prioritised for income generation, PaCC states.

- There remains significant ongoing concern that the current provision in both Drove Road and Tudor House is inadequate to meet families' actual needs, with some families barely coping with a low number of overnights allocated to them; and for those on the waiting list, timescales regarding future availability of overnight respite is reported as unclear.
- PaCC remind decision makers that the aims and recommendations of the 2024 review of Drove Road and Tudor House provision was to increase overnight respite and to date this has not happened.

Overnight respite 0-25 needs further investment to be able to stabilise and grow to meet statutory assessed need and eliminate the risks of families being forced to ask the council to fund full-time residential placements.

£500k investment in Direct Payments for Children and Young People 0-25

[Personal Budgets and Direct Payments Policy for children and young people aged 0-25 with special edu.pdf](#) Page 3, 3.9: A budget pressure of £500k has been put forward for 2025/26 in anticipation of an increase in demand [General Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) Form 2023](#)

- PaCC note that no consultation took place with PaCC or the wider community regarding the decision to increase this budget by 500k; while on the surface additional resource is to be welcomed, we have concerns about how this budget will be deployed, due to lack of clarity around plans for its use. The above links indicate a target of a wide reaching spectrum of Personal Budgets, potentially requiring scrutiny for sufficiency.
- PaCC note in the EIA, a comment regarding development of a PA workforce. However BHCC commissioners continue to inform the SEND community that workforce development remains at very early stages.
- The workforce issue corroborates both historic and to date consistent parent carer feedback - namely the vicious circle of families being unable to recruit PAs due to lack of workforce, driven by low pay rate, surplus funds accrue which are then 'clawed back' by the Council.
- PaCC notes the barriers that low pay rates have in recruiting PAs. Families highlight that BHCC has paid higher hourly rates to agency staff to plug the workforce gap around Short Breaks holiday provision. Families feedback that if they could also pay a 'decent' hourly rate, they would be more successful in finding and retaining PAs and this area of provision could work satisfactorily for more families.

- PaCC reminds councillors that statutory need remains unmet when there are no PAs to recruit for Direct Payment provision.

PaCC seek further detail around intentions for this additional investment.

PaCC acknowledges Cllr Taylor comment that this 500k investment can be looked at flexibly, as to where this investment should sit.

Social Care Reduction page 279

The Budget information doesn't contain specific information around proposed workforce reduction.

PaCC seeks more detail on this proposed saving and how it will impact SEND CYPs

Healthy Child Programme page 48:

The budget papers state that the financial saving would only affect young children with SEND and their parents who are in the crucial early phase of their family journey.

- There is no clear mention of whether specialist health visiting staff will be impacted.
- Early intervention and family support is critical.
- Some children have care pathways that should be followed, which include regular health checks.
- All babies and young children, including those with SEND should be able to access support to protect and improve their early outcomes.

PaCC seeks more detail on this proposed saving.

Designated Social Care Officer role (DSCO):

PaCC highlights that the proposed budget has not made provision for this role to become a standalone role, as it currently sits within the job description of the Head of the Specialist Community Disability team, a role that also includes the statutory Responsible Adult role for Drove Road and Tudor House.

- PaCC repeatedly question how this essential strategic role can sit within such a far-reaching and responsible job description and fulfill the strategic purpose the DSCO role requires.

The role of DSCO has been widely adopted by Councils across the country, and there is good evidence of the value brought in terms of government grant applications, improvements to service performance, workforce management; plus encompassing effective working that closes the gap between SEND and Social Care with better outcomes for CYP. [DSCO Handbook - Implementing the role of the Designated Social Care Officer for SEND.pdf](#)

- The development of this role as a standalone strategic role could dramatically improve Social Care delivery in Brighton and Hove, creating safer outcomes, better use of budgets, and reducing the number of families who are nearing or already at crisis point.
- PaCC note that East and West Sussex have appointed to this standalone role.
- PaCC ask decision makers to adopt a lessons learnt approach, considering could the crises in the delivery of insufficient sessions in the Short Breaks holiday programme 24/25, and the pressures on delivery of overnight respite been averted.

PaCC acknowledges Cllr Taylor's comment that this role will be reviewed.

Brighton and Hove senior lead restructure:

PaCC recognise that Anna Gianfrancesco, Director Commissioning and Communities, Families, Children and Wellbeing and Kirsty Hanna, Interim Director Family Help and Protection are both new in post; both Anna and Kirsty have attended difficult parent carer meetings facilitated by PaCC, making space to enable parent carers to share with them the enormous impact that families face regarding the paucity of provision.

PaCC look forward to working alongside the new directors to address the issues within this statement and embed future coproduction.

In Summary

Social care provision for families with CYP 0-25 with high support needs continues to be in crisis.

- Families are unable to cope, parent carers are unable to work or are at risk of losing or giving up their jobs.
- Opportunities and outcomes for siblings are heavily compromised.
- Families are forced to opt for full time residential provision as overnight respite for YP age 18 and over is limited.

PaCC acknowledges that this statement does not give due attention to the housing crisis for young people with SEND, and the evident gaps in Transition to Adulthood planning – the cliff edge remains.

Further we stress coproduction across many areas of provision is hampered when there is a lack of information and dialogue, ditto sufficient timescales and funding for coproduction for standalone and/or ongoing projects hamper the meaningful and longer lasting impact needed for CYP with SEND.

PaCC advises senior leads that there is an escalating lack of confidence in BHCCs SEND decision making; we seek the Labour administrations support to address the significant gaps laid out in this statement and accompanying cross party scrutiny to ensure that the commitment to 'level up' is planned, financed and achieved.

PaCC welcome any communication in relation to this Position Statement. You can contact us by emailing admin@paccbrighton.org.uk

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, SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health) issues 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 over 710 signed up members.