Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to provide informal evidence to the Committee on Monday 21st March on behalf of Learning Disability Voices. I hope that I was able to put across the uniquely difficult circumstances imposed on learning disability (LD) providers, which are affected significantly not only by the introduction of the National Living Wage, but which also see these effects compounded by:

- The high staff-to-client ratio within our services, meaning that approximately 70% of our fees go towards staffing costs
- The way in which we are commissioned to provide care: on an hourly rate, meaning we cannot reap the financial rewards of reducing the care needs of our client, and
- The lack of self-funders within our services.

During the course of our discussions, I referred to a presentation* made to providers by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) on 26 January 2016. From my point of view, the following key points emerged:

- Currently, LCC commissions 50 weeks of care per year per service user
- In December 2015, it was considering reducing the weeks of care per year to 48
- Following the CSR, the new proposals are to restrict weeks of care to 46 weeks, and to exclude service users in long term nursing and residential care from community care (reducing the ability of the service users to participate in the community and increasing costs for providers, because residential care providers will have to provide additional staff for the period when the service users would have been receiving care)
- LCC market testing shows that ceiling prices are being set at levels at which a significant proportion of providers cannot afford to bid at all for some categories of support, and
- Reductions in the council’s overall and social care budget are clearly driving the need to take these steps.

The final results of the consultation have yet to be published, as far as I am aware. If it would be helpful to provide an update when they are, I can do so. I am scheduled to meet with Leicestershire on 10 May so should be able to provide an update after that meeting.

I would also like to share with you evidence that has emerged since the 21st March regarding the relationship between the introduction of the social care precept and the rates paid by commissioners for LD care.
Intelligence from members of LD Voices demonstrates that even when the full social care precept will be levied, this increase in council funding does not make its way into LD service provision contracts to meet the cost increases caused by the NLW. For instance, while Dorset, Dudley, Hampshire and Surrey Councils are all raising the full 2% precept, all three are imposing a 0% increase in their hourly rates for LD care and support, meaning that none of the additional tax income raised by the precept is being passed onto LD service providers in these areas.

*Not published


7 April 2016