



Issues and challenges in social care

Dan Scorer
Head of Policy, Public Affairs, Information & Advice

About Mencap

- **We work across England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- **We support 5,000 people with a learning disability, mainly in supported living settings**
- **We work with a network of over 400 independent local groups**
- **We provide a range of other services, including apprenticeships and employment support, early years services and have information and advice services**
- **We campaign for change across areas including social care funding and workforce, tackling health inequalities, employment, de-institutionalisation, victimisation and online harms and education**

About Mencap

- **We work through cross-sector coalitions on key areas of policy and reform**
- **The Care and Support Alliance on social care funding and reform, representing disabled people of working age, older people and unpaid carers.**
- **The Disabled Children's Partnership, on access to health and care services for disabled children and their families and carers.**
- **The Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG) on care and support service provision for disabled people**

Covid-19's impact

At the start of the pandemic we expanded our information and advice service with funding from Department of Health to maximise the support we could offer. Key issues that quickly came up-

- Reasonable adjustments on new government policies around one session of daily exercise, going out as a group with care staff, where permitted to travel to for safe recreation
- Closure of key services, such as short breaks and Day Centres
- Flexibility in use of personal budgets
- Sustainability of support within the family home as staff went off sick
- Additional unsupported pressures faced by family members caring 24/7
- Access to acute care and NICE guidance on use of the clinical frailty scale

Survey of families during lockdown

We carried out online surveys of families around their experiences in both lockdowns and how their loved one and their needs were being met.

- 7 in 10 (69%) people with a learning disability had their social care cut or reduced
- 4 in 5 (79%) family carers had to take on more unpaid care for their family member
- Over two thirds (67%) said their loved one's needs have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 72% of families were scared of more cuts to social care happening in future

“She is reassessed every year. I am terrified they will say that I managed without support and withdraw services in the future.”

- Reinstatement of and access to services like short breaks and Day Services is still an issue our local group network flags as a major concern.
- As well as the huge challenges local authorities are facing with funding and changes that are being planned to local services as budgets reduce over the next spending review period.

Access to healthcare

A range of new policies presented additional challenges

- Access to primary care services via remote consultations: the scope for reasonable adjustments and risks of diagnostic overshadowing
- Access to vital services such as special dentistry, especially for people with complex needs requiring sedation to enable treatment to take place
- Support for people going to hospital, whether from family members or staff teams and restrictions on this and visiting leading to major concerns about needs being met

We worked as closely as we could with the Learning Disability & Autism team at NHSE and Covid cells at DHSC to try and influence guidance development or amend it where problems arose.

The legacy of Covid beyond lockdown

Challenges remain in how we manage significant programmes of reform that accelerated during the pandemic-

- Outpatients transformation, and how well supported people with a learning disability will be in relation to managing follow-up appointments if they are no longer set
- The heated stand off between government and GPs over face-to-face appointments and access to primary care
- The imminent government White Paper on social care, including workforce development and progression, as well as the inequality in funding between the NHS and social care
- The key importance of a future independent inquiry into the handling of the pandemic assessing why people with a learning disability died at such a higher rate than the general population and how we should have worked differently to support and protect people.