

Mrs Amanda Jupp
Cabinet Member for Adults & Health
Cabinet Office
County Hall
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RQ

26 November 2018

Dear Mrs Jupp

Re: Minimum Income Guarantee proposal

We are writing to you regarding the proposal by West Sussex County Council to reduce the income of working age adults who receive funded social care from April 2019. On behalf of the people we support, we are objecting to your proposal for the following reasons.

- 1. The proposal should take into account the impact of cuts which people we support have already experienced.** The Equality and Human Rights Commission has highlighted our poorest households face a "bleak future", with more cuts due over the next 4 years. The Institute for Fiscal Studies confirms government plans for future cuts will significantly reduce the incomes of low-income working age households. Indeed, families with a disabled adult are already predicted to lose an average of **£3,300 per year by 2022** due to changes in eligibility and the introduction of Universal Credit. Families with a disabled adult and a disabled child are predicted to lose more than **£5,500 per year**, equivalent to a 13% reduction. The West Sussex proposal adds to a significant cumulative impact to reduced income for disabled people.
- 2. The cost of being disabled:** people we support tend to be on fixed incomes, and have limited means of increasing their income to compensate for the additional charge West Sussex County Council are proposing.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's research indicates that to avoid poverty, the current cost of living, net of rent, is **£213.60** per week. In reality people with learning disabilities are already falling below this amount. Here are two examples:-

X receives 15 hours per week support to live in the community and attends a day service 1 day per week. X is being charged £95.24 per week by West

Sussex County Council for this essential support. His only income is from welfare benefits. His net weekly income is **£114.65** per week for his food, clothing, cleaning materials and his social/leisure activities. This is before taking into account the West Sussex County Council's proposals to deduct a further £5.28 per week.

Z receives 6.5 hours of support per week to live in the community. He is charged £388.68 per month by West Sussex County Council. His net weekly income is **£96.03** per week for his food, clothing, cleaning materials and his social/leisure activities.

Please also bear in mind that inflation, currently running at 2.4%, hits people on fixed, low incomes – every time essentials like food, heat & basic living expenses increase in price this puts further pressure on household finances.

- 3. We have real concerns that people with learning disabilities will experience deterioration in their quality of life.** People with learning disabilities have poorer outcomes compared to people who do not have a disability. People with learning disabilities are much more likely to experience ill health across a range of indicators: psychological distress, arthritis, diabetes, epilepsy and multiple morbidity. A number of risk factors for poor health are more common for people with learning disabilities including obesity and poor lung function. Behavioural risk factors are also more common such as poor diet, low levels of physical activity, smoking, alcohol use and hospital admission for a newly diagnosed condition.

Pervasive inequalities are experienced by people with learning disabilities, who are less likely to be surviving financially or 'living comfortably', be employed for 16 hours or more per week, live in a high quality neighbourhood, feel safe outside in the dark, have two or more close friends or go out socially. People with learning disabilities are also more likely to have experienced threatened or actual violence and be a victim of hate crime. People with learning disabilities die almost 20 years earlier than the general population, and it is estimated a third of these deaths may have been prevented through access to treatment (The Learning Disabilities Mortality Review).

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities suggests an acceptable quality of life for all of us includes:-

- Having meaningful relationships – friends, family and partners
- Having a safe and stable home
- Having meaningful purpose to your days
- Being healthy
- Having financial security

- Being respected and feeling heard
- Having choices.

Many of the people we support have had their social care reduced over the past 8 years, resulting in less contact with peers and fewer life opportunities. The Just Fair Consortium's submission to the United Nations concluded:- *"the cuts that are being made across the country are having an impact that we can see now in the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families, will also yield further long term devastating effects on people's lives. People's lives are being diminished, their options & opportunities reduced, their access and visibility in their own communities becoming more limited, reliance on family increasing and voices lost."*

We are already seeing the impact of Universal Credit and welfare reform, which has added complexity and barriers (through digital implementation of systems) to enable people to access basic levels of income. People with learning disabilities will continue to require assistance to ensure they are not pushed any further towards the margins of society.

4. Transaction costs: we are regularly supporting people with learning disabilities who are in debt. We are witnessing people cancelling their support as they think the charges levied by West Sussex County Council are actually from providers of services, and they think if they cancel their support they will save money. Debt often introduces a range of other challenges, and our information advice and guidance services then need to refer people to the Community Teams for more interventions and support.

It will be important to monitor people's outgoings, particularly with the cost of living increasing. We are concerned we will need to request more frequent financial assessments to ensure all disability related expenses are regularly reviewed. This will increase transaction costs of providers and the County Council.

This is in effect an increased Care Tax on people who need social care. We understand under section 14 of the Care Act your decision to charge, and the amount you levy on people is discretionary. The Care Act emphasises the importance of wellbeing. We believe that the impact on people's wellbeing will be detrimental and the income received by West Sussex will be offset when higher needs arise as a result of fewer opportunities and resources for disabled people. **We ask that you robustly & transparently assess & publish the impact your proposal will have on the wellbeing of individuals and their families and do not implement the increased charge.**

Yours sincerely