

# HARINGEY

## Fairness Commission

### What We've Heard



A summary of the Haringey Fairness Commission's meeting  
with Carers at the Haringey Carers Coffee Morning

7<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Abide Church, Crouch End

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***Cllr Brabazon, Co-Chair of the Fairness Commission, and Lucy Fisher, a Council Officer, attended the Haringey Carers Coffee Morning at Abide Church on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Attendees gave evidence about their experiences of fairness and inequality.***

The issues that were raised fell into the following broad areas:

- Challenges in getting the support;
- Inaccessibility of social care;
- Difficulty of Council interactions;
- Issues with respite;
- Difficulty in understanding Council systems / communications; and
- Provider Issues.

More information about the evidence given in each area is below.

### **CHALLENGES IN GETTING SUPPORT**

- A number of Carers said it had been a struggle to get the right support they needed for the person they care for. The process for getting support was described as 'long-winded' and 'painful'.
- They thought the difficulty in getting support was the result of inadequate criteria for deciding whether a person is eligible.
- The sense among carers is that the system is unfair if you are someone who doesn't fit into a neat box. If someone wouldn't get up, shower, or leave the house without a carer, how can they be found not to qualify for care?
- Currently if you are told by the education and health service that you should receive support for your child, the social care strand can say no and you don't receive anything. They felt that the criteria need to change.

### **INACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL CARE**

- One Carer and one Support Worker commented that if you have an allocated social worker it is easier to get help when you need it. Otherwise, when you call, you can't get through to anyone that can help you. As one Support Worker said, 'there's just a wall, everything is a fight'. They say that the Council can feel defended and shut down.
- One attendee also said that there is a big divide between what Haringey does and what people know it does. When a Social Worker visits a family to see what their issues are, could they take a leaflet or intro pack?
- Social Workers could also be better at referring to services in the

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community that could help them. One Support Worker said that, if Haringey Council could help her organisation to find a venue, they could provide services that would save the Council money. But having those conversations and getting things done takes too long, with 'things going into a vacuum'. If you go to other boroughs with an idea, it happens, but something prevents Haringey from operating like that.

### **DIFFICULTY OF COUNCIL INTERACTIONS**

- The majority of Carers we spoke to had felt frustration in their dealings with the Council, whether it was in the process of accessing or arranging care, arranging respite, or trying to get help when they'd run into problems.
- Carers cite a lack of communication from the Council, and an attitude from officers that service users are wrong by default. They want to see more respect for service users, and they want partners, parents and carers to be seen as partners to the Council.
- Some Carers had attended meetings before where they've spoken to Councillors or Officers about problems they're having, but then there is no follow up, and they don't do what they had said they would. In such cases, they say they've had to 'go to the top' to sort out the issue. One Carer said that they wouldn't go to the Council with a problem because they wouldn't have faith that the issue would be fixed.

### **ISSUES WITH RESPITE**

- Two carers talked about delays and disruptions to their respite arrangements and pay, with one saying she hadn't received respite payment for two years (she is working with the Council to fix this). Such Carers highlighted the financial and mental strain this puts on them.
- Where Carers had struggled to arrange their respite, they found it difficult to get help to fix the problem, and felt that Council staff could have handled the problems more effectively and more sensitively.
- One Carer said she had been promised respite and had arranged it with the Council, but it was cancelled at the last minute. She had to choose whether to cancel her holiday and lose the money, or pay for private care. She is dreading it happening again. She said the problem was worsened by dealing with people at the Council who were unsympathetic (though when she went higher up they were very nice and apologetic).
- Those who'd had problems with respite emphasised how important it is. When the Council fails to keep people informed or cancels respite at the

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- last minute it makes it difficult for carers, and if they break down the person they care for will go into a home and that will ultimately cost more.

### **UNDERSTANDING COUNCIL SYSTEMS / COMMUNICATIONS**

- One attendee had been a Carer for over a decade, living in a 2-bedroom Council property caring for a family member, who recently died. Three weeks after she died the Carer received a letter asking her to vacate the property. The letter explained that she would have to bid for a flat, but she didn't know what her rights were or understand what the bidding process was. She also wanted to stay and pay the difference, but wasn't sure how she could explore her options. The process is more difficult if you are unable to use a computer.
- One Carer was receiving £500 a year for her son, which wasn't enough to cover the £3,000 a year it costs to send him to Kid City. This was putting her under severe financial strain. She didn't understand, and wanted to know, the process for how the amount is determined.

### **PROVIDER ISSUES**

- While some Carers were happy with the support they received, one reported having had a very bad experience with a Supported Living provider, with just one worker visiting for an hour a day, for 12 people. The worker wasn't making sure people took their medication. They said that inadequate care was being provided, and they didn't think Haringey was monitoring the provider sufficiently.

**The Fairness Commission would like to thank carers for attending and sharing the experiences with us.**

**If you attended but feel that your comments are not reflected here, please contact us at [fairness@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:fairness@haringey.gov.uk).**