



West Sussex Learning Disability Partnership Board 14th July 2022, held in Horsham

Who came:

Mike Smith – WSCC Commissioning Officer (Co-Chair)
Andrew Walker – Self Advocate Speakabout
Casper Beade Rioseco – Co-production Manager, Aldingbourne Trust
Richard Hamilton - Self Advocate, Voice
Wendy Byrne - Self Advocate, Speakup
Cathy Cassim - Self Advocate, People Come First
Lisa Loveman – WSCC Commissioning Manager
Harriet Wilson – Team Leader, Impact Advocacy
Debbie Elleston – Impact Advocacy Supporter Speakabout
Paul – Self Advocate, VOICE
Chris Button – Self Advocate, Speakabout
Ron Little – Self Advocate, Speakup
Hollie Ferrie – BSL Interpreter
Sarah Maynard – BSL Interpreter
Sue Cousens – Health Facilitation Team
Faye Delaney - Impact Advocacy Supporter
Tim Claydon – DEA Lead Coastal, DWP
Julia Pascoe – Workaid, Aldingbourne Trust
Abby Lonsdale – Sussex CCG, LEDER Reviewer
Diana Bernhardt – WSCC Senior Commissioning Manager
Tracey Light – WSCC Communities Team
Sheryl Bunting – Carers Support West Sussex
Lesley Durbin – Impact Advocacy

Guests:

Charlie Young – Projects Manager, Citizens Advice



Minutes and Workplan

A copy of the minutes and workplan will be posted on the council's webpage [here](#).

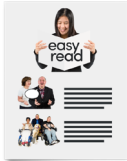
The workplan includes actions agreed in each meeting.



Introduction

The meeting theme was 'having enough money'. This is in the Boards workplan as a priority area.

Everyone was sent a [briefing paper](#) to look at before the meeting.



The briefing paper included links to easy read information on:

- [Top Tips for saving money](#)
- Council Survey about financial reassessments (closes 7th August 2022) – [Letter](#) and [Survey](#)
- [Disability related expenditure](#)



Money is a very hot topic because the cost of living is going up and up and we know that everyone is worried about it.

Cost of living covers how much it costs to pay for the things you need like heating, lighting, and food. Things you must pay for.



In the news is record high petrol prices, increases in energy bills, keeping warm in the winter and the cost of food going up with more people needing foodbanks.



The meeting focussed on the big money issues for people with a learning disability and where to get information and support if you need it.



Self-Advocates Presentation and discussion

[Link to presentation](#)



Advocates and self-advocates told us their big money issues are:

- Financial assessments
- Help with energy bills
- Support to budget
- Help with calls to companies
- Accessing easy information
- Understanding and asking for Disability Related Expenditure
- Making money go further

Foodbanks

Self-advocacy groups have found out about foodbanks in their area. We heard there are lots of different food charities who are part of a local food network. Information was sometimes difficult to find and not easy read. There are different ways to get food vouchers, sometimes you don't need one and this is confusing.

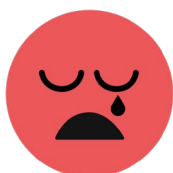
The Board talked about using the local library to find out about community based support using their database called Clio3.

Organisations that support people can also ask the library service for a login to Clio3. All types of community support are listed on this database.

District and Borough websites give details about their local food network.

Table discussion:

The Board discussed the big money issues. There were some extra things added to the list:



- Knowing about things you can do that are no cost or can save you money.
- Benefits checking advice. Using [Turn2Us](#) and the Benefits Adviser in My Network hubs was recommended.
- Digital Support – local libraries can help with their digital volunteers.

We ranked the money issues in order of the most pressing or having the biggest impact on people with a learning disability. The top 3 were:

Easy Information

The Board recommends that all information should be available in easy read. This should be from the launch/start of a project/service. Care letters must be sent in easy read.

Making information easy read should not depend on it being requested as this leads to delays in getting it.






This would help libraries, Citizens Advice, Advocates or My Network to print off easy read advice or information to pass on to people who may or may not have any support.

Financial Assessments

The West Sussex County Council survey is where people can give feedback. Board members were asked to take part in the survey before it closes on 7th August.

Disability Related Expenditure (DRE)

Advocates are helping people to appeal decisions. Advocates think people need help to understand what they can claim and

	<p>there is sometimes a missed opportunity to get the assessment right first time around.</p> <p>Impact have written an easy read checklist. Impact asked if financial assessors could use this checklist to help support people to understand what DRE might include for them.</p>
   	<p>Energy Bills – Charlie Young</p> <p>Link to Charlie’s Presentation</p> <p>Charlie shared 2 easy read booklets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Smart Meters (2) Saving money on bills <p>Charlie is the Project Manager for the ‘Energy Service’ she is based in Arun and Chichester Citizen Advice.</p> <p>Project set-up because of rising energy bills. Bills will increase by 60% in October and there will be another rise in February.</p> <p>All bill payers will get an energy grant and people on income related benefits are getting extra grants. Important to save and use this grant on helping to pay energy bills in winter.</p> <p>Charlie shared some top tips such as using a slow cooker rather than oven.</p> <p>Important that you speak to the energy company if you are struggling. There are schemes in place to help people. For example, large suppliers have the warm home discount.</p>



Make sure utility companies know you have a learning disability. Ask to go on their 'Vulnerable persons' register. This means they must make reasonable adjustments like easy read bills and someone reading the meter for you.



Free carbon monoxide meters are available at Citizen advice offices.



Citizen advice energy service (open Monday-Friday 10-4pm – covers all West Sussex residents) can help with contacting energy firms, filling in forms for grants, applying to other trust funds, managing debt, checking bills, and giving you hints and tips. Contact phone: 01243 974063 and email: energy@arunchichichestercab.org.uk

Charlie said there is a Big Energy Saving Network and up until March 2023 they can offer free training sessions to front-line workers. Contact Charlie to set this up.

Discussion:

What responsibility does your landlord have?



Charlie said there should be a yearly safety check of the boiler and it should have an energy performance certificate.

We are worried that the grants won't cover the price increases.



Charlie said that Citizen advice is still lobbying the government and campaigning. There are other pots of money to help, for example, Household Support Fund and British Gas trust Fund.



Money Saving Tips

Mike Smith gave a presentation, and you can download the slides [here](#).

Mike said its ok to ask for help. If you have money worries tell someone you trust. You might be speaking to them about something else and you can mention it then.

Lots of places to go to get help talked about already. Other things not mentioned was: [Community Banks](#) which include giving you advice and loans.

[Repair Cafes](#) that might help prevent having to buy new stuff.

The Board enjoyed the money saving quiz.



Bringing it all together

Keys messages are:

People with a learning disability already have low-incomes and are being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

All information should be in easy read from start of publication. Care related letters should be easy read.

People with a learning disability need support to make sure financial assessments are fair and accurate.

There is a cost-of-living crisis and organisations should have plans of how they will support people with a learning disability.



People need reminders that the energy grant needs to be saved to help pay energy bills in the winter.

Assessment teams will consider if person needs support with budgeting and their review should check how well this is working.

The following actions will be added to the workplan:



Strategic Food Network – Tracy Light will ask Neil Cotton to review the easy read information and how easy it is for people with a learning disability to find information.

Everyone will promote completing the WSCC Financial Assessment survey.



Self-advocacy groups will contact energy companies with their easy read campaign.

Impact Advocacy will share the DRE checklist with the Welfare Benefits Team and Lifelong Services.



My Network service to check on people they know who do not have any funded or family support.

My Network workers, Personal Assistants (via Independent Lives) and outreach support services to consider some training from the Energy Network.

September

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Next meeting:

29th September 2022

Venue: County Hall North, Horsham

Table feedback:

