

**Strong  
voices**

**Big  
ideas**



**A Joint Commissioning Strategy for  
people with learning disabilities in East  
Sussex 2007 – 2010  
(Executive Summary)**

**July 2007**

## **1. Forward (Part II)**

We are pleased to introduce “Strong Voices, Big Ideas”, our first Joint Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy in East Sussex. It is both our hope and expectation that it will enable people with learning disabilities who use our services, their parents and carers and all our stakeholders and partners to understand our priorities for the commissioning of learning disability services over the next three years. It can also provide a foundation for future dialogue and help to secure a consensus for how services develop in the future.

This Commissioning Strategy comes at a critical time for Adult Social Care and NHS services. With increasing demand for services and rising costs of service provision, there is now unparalleled pressure on the resources available to meet the needs of vulnerable adults living in our community. At the same time, people who use our services, and their parents and carers, are rightly expecting more from the services they use and more support to participate in work and social and leisure opportunities along side other people in their communities. These changing needs and expectations demand different responses from commissioners and providers of health and social care services.

Investment in learning disability services will increase over the next three years, but there will still be difficult choices. Within this difficult climate, it is essential that we are as clear and transparent as possible about our priorities and what we can and cannot commission with the resources available to us. We must obtain best value for every pound that we spend so that the pot of money available to us goes as far as it possibly can.

During the development of this Strategy we have listened to service users, parents and carers and other stakeholders, who have said that things need to change. We need to acknowledge what’s working well and build on our successes. We also, however, need to change and shift the balance of the services we provide and commission so that we continue to meet the needs of those people who need support, in a way that is fair, transparent and equitable.

The Government is also asking for changes. Following on from Valuing People (2001), the Government has set out a clear vision for health and social care services in its recent White Paper, Our Health Our Care Our Say (2006), which we embrace. This Strategy, however, also acknowledges the importance of continuity for service users and carers:- not change for change sake. Many of the services we provide and commission will continue as they are now, although we will always try to do things better and in a more person centred way.

There is still a long way to go before the vision set out in Valuing People becomes a reality for many people with learning disabilities. This Strategy, however, demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement and is an opportunity to deliver real improvements in people’s lives. We hope reading it is both interesting and helpful.

Thank you,

*July 2007*



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## **Executive Summary**

“Strong Voices, Big Ideas” is a Strategy to improve the lives of adults with learning disabilities and their families. The Strategy has been based on extensive consultation with service users and other stakeholders. The consultation focussed on four “Big Ideas”:

1. Supporting people with learning disabilities to make choices and have more control.
2. Better health for people with learning disabilities.
3. Supporting people with learning disabilities to be part of their community.
4. Supporting people with learning disabilities to maximise their independence and keep safe.

The two main sections of the document, Demand for Services and Resources and Developing Services and Supports, highlight the current issues faced by people who use learning disability services, their parents and carers and commissioners. Each section includes examples of good practice, personal stories and summarises the views of stakeholders who were consulted. Each section concludes with a summary of “What we will do” to address the key issues. All these plans are reflected in a three year Action Plan which accompanies this Strategy. A detailed implementation plan will be developed in 2007.

Together, the Strategy and Action Plan provide a clear and strategic direction for developing services and improving the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families over the next three years. The key strategic objectives outlined in the Strategy and Action Plan are:

- Review all commissioning arrangements to ensure best outcomes for people with learning disabilities and best use of resources;
- reduce reliance on residential care placements and increase investment in community based services;
- commission services that are committed to service user involvement; Person Centred Approaches and Total Communication;
- address health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities;
- improve services for people with learning disabilities and mental health needs;
- increase the range and quality of housing and support options;
- move forward with the modernisation of day opportunities;
- improve support to parents and carers;
- continue to develop approaches to independent living and self-directed support;
- strengthen care management;
- continue to develop advocacy services;
- ensure equality for all people with learning disabilities;
- ensure a skilled, confident and flexible workforce;
- support the development of a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector; and
- develop services that help people to keep safe.

The Strategy describes how demand for learning disability services will increase in the future and how, despite commissioners committing an extra £7 million (including £4 million for inflation) on learning disability services over the next three years, pressure on resources will continue to increase. The plans in this Strategy provide a

platform for managing these pressures, for example, by ensuring best value for every pound spent, by working closely and effectively with partners and communities and by ensuring services are delivered to those people who need them the most.

Building on the County Council's Best Value Review of Learning Disability Services (2006), this Strategy places great emphasis on making best use of resources. To this aim commissioners will seek to ensure that all services are competitively priced and that individuals' needs are met for a reasonable cost. For example, where an individual's choice of service is inconsistent with the service representing best use of resources, a direct or indirect payment, to the value of the service representing best use of resources, will be offered.

A further commitment is to review existing service provision to ensure efficiency and quality. A review of services directly provided by the County Council and a wider review of all residential service provision, will seek to ensure that people's needs are being met effectively and efficiently. Where this is not the case, services may be re-commissioned or fees renegotiated.

The Strategy describes how, over the next three years, resources will be diverted away from traditional models of service delivery, such as residential care, and invested in more community based services. This is a change local stakeholders say they want and which the Government is also committed to. Figure 1, on page 9 below, graphically represents this indicative shift in the balance of investment in services over the next three years.

This Strategy, and the plans for shifting the balance of expenditure and developing services and supports will, it is hoped, improve services and life chances for people with learning disabilities and their parents and carers in East Sussex over the next three years. For some people change will be difficult, and increasing pressure on resources means that not everyone will get what they want. However, by continuing to work closely with people who use services and all our partners, this Strategy will provide a solid foundation for continuous improvement in learning disability services and better lives for the people who use them.