

Report Number: SWT 118/22

Council – 6 September 2022

Motion to Declare a Learning Disability Emergency

Author: Cllr Mark Blaker (Wiveliscombe and District)

Proposed by: Cllr Mark Blaker

Seconded by: Cllr Loretta Whetlor

Introduction

Since 2017 LeDeR (an NHS backed service-improvement programme for people with a learning disability and autistic people) has published an annual report “Learning from Lives and Deaths People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People”

The 2021 LeDeR Report shows few improvements in social, health and life expectancy outcomes and significant areas of stagnation and regression. Figures relating to the Covid pandemic are particularly bleak.

Notable indices from LeDeR and other sources include:

- On average, males with a learning disability die 22 years younger than males in the general population, and females 26 years younger than females in the general population. (LeDeR Annual Report 2021)
- Over 50% of people with a learning disability are likely to be in poverty when they die. (LeDeR Annual Report 2021)
- In 2020-21, just 5.1% of adults with learning disabilities aged 18-64 and known to Councils with Adult Social Services responsibilities were in paid employment (British Association of Supported Employment).
- 9 out of 10 people with learning disabilities have been a victim of hate crime and/or harassment (Mencap)
- Covid death rates among people with learning disabilities were between four and six times higher than the general population. The death rate for people aged 18 to 34 with learning disabilities was 30 times higher than the rate in the same age group without disabilities. (Public Health England)
- 6 out of 10 people with learning disabilities die before they are 65, compared to 1 in 10 among the general population. (LeDeR)
- 49% of deaths were rated as "avoidable" for people with a learning disability. This compares to 22% for the general population. (LeDeR)

In short, if you are born with a learning disability in England today there is a probability you will live without opportunity, in fear, in poverty, and die young.

Additionally:

- Somerset West and Taunton Council has been awarded Government funding to deliver two new Changing Places toilets. SWT has been allocated £96,360 from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities towards facilities proposed for Taunton and Minehead. While both Discovery (in Minehead) and The Albermarle Centre (in Taunton) have Changing Place Toilets nearing completion, both of which will have some level of public access, there remains a need for good, accessible facilities at the heart of both towns.

Recommendations

This council resolves:

1. To agree that reduced life outcomes for any section of the population are unacceptable and every member of our community has the right to a fulfilling, safe life.
2. To adopt the Communication Bill of Rights (Appendix 1) , with a written briefing to all staff and members, and copied to senior managers of all contractors providing public-facing services on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
3. To publicise this resolution via a press release from Somerset West and Taunton Council which will highlight key figures from the 2021 LeDeR report (<https://leder.nhs.uk/resources/annual-reports>) and promote the value of the Communication Bill of Rights.
4. To commit to delivering a completed, functioning Changing Place Toilet in Taunton by the end of March 2023, with bi-monthly progress updates to members throughout development until then.
5. That the Leader of the Council will write to both Somerset West and Taunton area MPs, along with the Leaders of the other three District Councils and the Leader of Somerset County Council asking them to note the concerning data highlighted by the LeDeR 2021 Report and to raise awareness of the Communication Bill of Rights.

Background

- The LeDeR 2021 Report can be found here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/leder>
- The Communication Bill of Rights was initiated by Scope Australia and has since been adopted by organisations around the world. It recognises the interconnectivity between social and health outcomes, and particularly the link between improved communication and improved life opportunities.
- Changing Places are designed to be completely accessible and provide sufficient space and equipment for people who are not able to use the toilet independently. They must be an extra facility in addition to accessible toilets for independent use. They will include a toilet, changing bench, hoist, wash basin, grab rails, non-slip floor and sufficient space for a wheelchair and people supporting the

wheelchair user. Until 2022 the entire SWT area only had one compliant Changing Place Toilet, in the Iron Duke pub in Wellington.

Appendix 1: The Communication Bill of Rights

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights:

1. The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships
2. The right to request desired objects, actions, events, and people
3. The right to refuse or reject undesired objects, actions, events, or choices
4. The right to express personal preferences and feelings
5. The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives
6. The right to make comments and share opinions
7. The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment
8. The right to be informed about people and events in one's life
9. The right to access interventions and supports that improve communication
10. The right to have communication acts acknowledged and responded to even when the desired outcome cannot be realized
11. The right to have access to functioning AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
12. The right to access environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that promote participation as full communication partners with other people, including peers
13. The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy
14. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
15. The right to have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications