Press release from Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau

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More support needed in Leeds for adults with learning disabilities

• Local project highlighted as great example of good practice

Adults with learning disabilities in Leeds are in need of more consistent support from the local authority, a research project has found.

The research, undertaken by the University of Leeds at Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau, reveals how current and forthcoming welfare reforms are set to make life harder for households affected by learning disabilities in Leeds. It also finds that adults with learning disabilities in Leeds are in need of more consistent support from the local authority.

This project examined experiences of households affected where one or more adults has learning disabilities and evaluated existing services provided by Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau and Leeds City Council.

The research highlighted that the finance and support people currently receive often does not cover the costs incurred by those affected by learning disabilities. Worryingly, the value social security and community care entitlements is anticipated to fall in real terms over the coming years making it even hard for households affected by learning disabilities to make ends meet.

The research also identified two key areas which Leeds City Council needs to address in order to meet its statutory obligations. Firstly, take account of disability-related expenditure when assessing the level of community care charges for service and client users. Secondly, ensuring that a system is in place to ensure all those households affected by learning disabilities to receive good advice on social security, health and community care support- currently advice provision can be patchy. Leeds City Council is working towards meeting these objectives.

The research highlights an advice service currently run by Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau targeted specifically at households affected by learning disabilities as an example of good practice. The service, which is funded by Leeds City Council, provides crucial assistance which has

enabled some individuals with learning disabilities to get into work, helped carers to balance work with their caring responsibilities, enabled the council to assess the needs and capabilities of households affected by learning disabilities more systematically, supported and empowered individuals with learning disabilities to make informed decisions about their finances and affairs and secured over £250,000 in welfare and care entitlements.
Chief executive of Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau, Nick Morgan, said:

“This report highlights the fantastic achievements that this project has made and the real difference to lives that good advice can provide. Helpfully the research also points to areas that can be improved upon for the benefit of those in our communities that have learning difficulties or disabilities.

“With the current and forthcoming welfare reforms, the services provided by organisations like Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau will become even more important to protect those most vulnerable to social exclusion and deprivation.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. If you have any queries regarding the targeted advice services please contact Nick Morgan: nick.morgan@chapeltowncab.org.uk, 0113 262 2281 or 07852 717 251

2. If you would like any further information about the research please contact Daniel Edmiston: D.Edmiston@leeds.ac.uk