



Removing Barriers, Finding Answers

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Press Release

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Disability Charity Calls for Big Changes to Bucks County Council's New Ideas to Support Carers and Disabled People

Leading local charity Buckinghamshire Disability Services has called for significant changes to be made to Buckinghamshire County Council's new proposals to give carers and seriously disabled people 'short breaks' from their regular routine. The charity, which is run by disabled people and independent of the Council, says it has identified three key problems with the Council's ideas.

BuDS Chair of Trustees, Andrew Clark, said:

"We completely recognise that cuts to central Government funding mean that Bucks County Council has to look again at how it supports disabled people and carers. But it has to do so honestly, openly and in a way that respects its legal obligations. BuDS has examined the Council's ideas and we see three big issues:

1. The Council's ideas neglect the specific needs of family carers of seriously disabled people, many of whom need occasional respite from the heavy demands of caring. It's absolutely right that seriously disabled people should be given more opportunities to engage in society, but carers have legal and moral rights too, and the Council cannot ignore these. **By neglecting the legitimate needs of unpaid carers, the Council's draft policy might in fact be illegal – it is certainly misplaced**, given that family carers save the Council millions of pounds by providing unpaid care to thousands of disabled people. BuDS is calling for the needs of both disabled people and carers' needs to be considered and assessed and, where possible, a common-sense joined-up package of support offered that helps both the disabled person *and* the carer.
2. The Council is proposing that seriously or profoundly disabled people can 'take a break' without Council help by simply using mainstream leisure and social activities like pubs, cafes, clubs, the cinema, etc. While disabled people certainly *ought* to be able to do this, the Council itself accepts the brutal reality that most such places are not accessible or welcoming to these disabled people. **Most people would think it would be a shabby trick to play on seriously disabled people and their carers to offer them a 'break' at places that the Council know are not really open to them.** BuDS calls for the Council to set out a serious plan looking at how mainstream leisure and social venues can be made more accessible and welcoming *before* offering 'breaks' for disabled people and carers at them.
3. The Council is refusing to say how seriously disabled people will get to places to have a break – the cost of accessible transport, such as adapted minibuses or taxis, is not included in any financial support they may receive for the break and must be separately negotiated. **We feel it is wrong to offer seriously disabled people and their carers activities and breaks which they cannot even get to.** BuDS calls on the Council to do the obvious thing and *include* the cost of accessible, appropriate, transport

within the financial package of support offered to help disabled people and carers access short breaks and activities in the community”.

Ann Hedges, who leads the Learning Disability project at BuDS, added:

“BuDS has been talking to carers, disabled people and organisations that support them, and we know that there is widespread serious concern about the Council’s proposals. We fully recognise the financial pressure facing the Council, but it cannot solve this by wishing away problems or proposing bogus ideas”.

To read BuDS’ full response to the Council’s draft new policy, go to <https://buds.org.uk/short-breaks-for-disabled-people/>

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Notes

BuDS is Buckinghamshire’s only independent pan-disability charity. Run by disabled people, it works to improve the lives of all disabled people by fixing the big problems that they encounter, such as bad accessibility, poor services, wrong attitudes or inadequate help. It has 18 active projects across Buckinghamshire, all run by volunteers, including Fair4All and BucksWorkability.