



16 October 2023

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your letter, dated 27/09/2023 regarding the 'My Views Matter' report. Please see my responses to the issues that were raised: -

- *Norfolk needs to develop more specialist placements for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, in all areas of the county, particularly to provide places more promptly for young people when they become adults. Current efforts to develop these placements should therefore be continued and strengthened.*

Norfolk has a clear vision for supported living. We need to increase accommodation options for people with LD & A in line with their stated aspirations of living independently, in their own home with the care and support they need.

Our analysis shows we need around 300 units of supported living housing in the next five years. We have set up an £18m capital programme to support and facilitate new developments and aim to provide a wrap-around information service to ensure that individuals and professionals have the information they need to make informed choices.

People have told us that:

- There needs to be choice, so people do not have to 'fit' the home
- The building design and space needs to make them feel safe and secure
- Housing should be in walking distance to shops, services, and parks

Housing for people with LD and A does not come in one shape or size. Developments range from bespoke individual developments for people with complex needs, enablement schemes that support young people to transition successfully into adulthood, to larger schemes with self-contained homes that enable people to live independently in safe and supportive environments.

Commissioners are collating data provided by the Preparing for Adult Life (PfAL) team. PfAL are providing information about individuals with LD and A from the age of 14 so that we can start planning the type of accommodation required based on their future needs. This work is ongoing and is already informing developments in Norwich and across the county.

- *As people age and their support requirements change, steps should be taken to ensure that they are able to remain active and stimulated if they need to move home.*

We are writing a Residential Strategy, to help with setting expectations for our providers and for the Council. We need the strategy to improve consistency and practice, to express clearly what good quality care looks like, and what it costs to provide a high standard of care within residential settings. The strategy will also look at the opportunities that are available in the current Norfolk marketplace, in supporting the holistic needs of someone living in residential care.

- *Some relatives were paying for some types of day service that NCC had declined to pay for, but which service users and their families found very beneficial. It might be worth investigating whether funding could be found for a broader set of day services might be funded. When considering funding decisions on day services, feedback suggests that people's social lives and long-standing relationships should also be considered, and not just participation in activities.*

The Residential Strategy will consider the needs of all those receiving care in a residential setting. Many will have highly complex needs and, in such cases, the Council's expectation of residential providers is that high-quality, meaningful activities are provided as part of the overall package of care, delivered by a consistent staff team who are confident and competent in meeting the identified needs in a person's Care and Support plan.

However, there may well be some activities that the individual or families continue to pay for, as social care can only fund services in line with someone's Care and Support plan to meet eligible Care Act needs.

There are occasions when a residential setting cannot wholly meet the needs of a resident and where a creative solution must be found. Work is planned with the residential market to understand this better, particularly as the financial resource available to the council is decreasing. Our ambition is to work alongside providers to achieve the best outcome for each individual resident. The aim is for each provider to deliver a high quality residential service, but when a resident is identified as needing something that cannot be offered by their residential service to also determine how the service can best tap into extra support to meet an identified need, such as maintaining a friendship or activity. Social workers will ensure that they consider what support people need to have successful friendships/relationships and how to enable people to be active citizens in their local communities.

- *Some thought could be given to the fear of some relatives of being labelled 'problem parents' or similar, and how these fears could be allayed, and safeguards put in place to make sure that these labels are not used inappropriately.*

Norfolk County Council takes the concern that relatives of the people we support fear that they will be labelled as 'problem parents' or similar very seriously. Norfolk County Council expects staff to seek and listen to the feedback of people who use our services and their carers, and to use it to improve the care and services we provide. NCC's expectations of staff are expressed clearly within its customer service charter, here, <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/have-your-say/customer-service-charter>. Many of our staff are also registered with Social Work England, which is also clear about expectations regarding professional standards.

We would be keen to work with Health Watch to understand this issue better, and to set up an action plan with Health Watch to address it.

- *Given that some people living in residential care value relationships with non-disabled people, some consideration could be given as to how to support homes to support people to form these relationships, or even to re-establish a gig buddies scheme, or similar, in Norfolk;*
- and*
- *Our findings suggest that people living in residential care are being denied the opportunity to form romantic relationships. More support could be given to homes to help them to build the capacity to support people to establish these relationships, where this is an aspiration”.*

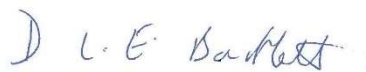
All providers that are regulated by the Care Quality Commission are expected to meet regulations in terms of relationships and sexuality. These expectations are clearly articulated by the CQC , here <https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20190221-Relationships-and-sexuality-in-social-care-PUBLICATION.pdf>. The Council expects all providers bound by this framework to be working in compliance with the regulations. This includes all residential settings, all regulated supported living services and home care services.

Day Opportunities/Services are a bit different, as they are not regulated by CQC. However, one of the overarching outcomes developed as part of the Council's new Life Opportunities Framework identifies being part of the community and making friends. The Enriching Lives pathway pilot (a day opportunities pathway for those

with the most complex needs) got underway in July this year. The specific outcomes/goals for this piece of work is being co-produced with people with lived experience and providers, and is highlighting the importance of maintaining friendships as a priority. The importance of friendships, including intimate relationships will be highlighted in the rest of the day services transformation as it happens.

I hope that this information is helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. L. E. Bartlett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Debbie Bartlett

Interim Executive Director Adult Social Services