



Hated ‘Fair and Affordable Care’ policy is back, by the back door.

In February 2024, BRIL was pleased to be told that Bristol City Council’s (BCC) ‘Fair and Affordable Care’ policy had been withdrawn, in response to our campaign, legal concerns and the outcry shared across national media.

However, on a closer look at the BCC’s Budget for 2024-2025, it seems that a version of ‘Fair and Affordable Care’ is being brought in through the back door, with more unlawful practices, in the name of so-called ‘best value’ and ‘cost-effectiveness.’

What does BCC mean by ‘best value’? Who are these cuts ‘cost effective’ for?

In the [Care Act 2014](#), it is unlawful for local authorities to set arbitrary upper limits on how much it is willing to fund to meet an individual’s care and support needs. However, BCC’s budget states that people receiving either 40 hours or more of homecare per week, or funding over £920.00 per week to employ support workers or personal assistants (Direct Payments), will be targeted for a review to see if a more ‘cost effective’ way of meeting their needs can be implemented.

The Care Act is clear that councils must not make decisions based on cost alone. Yet BCC are now proposing to review, at least initially, the care packages of 190 people with support above a level their business partners have told them is not ‘cost effective’. The 190 are all Disabled people living at home, with the highest levels of need. As we stated in [our response](#) with Doughty Street Chambers to the ‘Fair and Affordable Care’ policy, cuts that destabilise the support of autistic people, people with learning difficulties and people living with serious mental illness, could result in crises and increased risk of hospitalisation.

BCC have also said; *“Those who received complex homecare packages as defined by Peopletoo workstreams will be more likely to receive an annual review or reassessment of their care and support needs. This will better enable BCC to ensure it is compliant with Care and Support statutory guidance, that people’s needs are being met and we are delivering best value.”*

Peopletoo are a management consultant firm, who have been paid £1,550,000 to act as [‘Strategic Partner for the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme.’](#) (pdf) Or, in other words, BCC have used public funds to pay a private company to help them cut support for Disabled people.

BCC says it will use 'strengths based' reviews. A 'strengths based' reviews, we are told, will look at what each person has in skills, assets and what is available in the community . But our experience is that, in the hands of Council's determined to make cuts, 'strengths' are used as a smokescreen to justify these cuts, with people told they can go without support.

These reviews will be carried out by locum social workers from recruitment agencies. Due to national pressures and poor working conditions, BCC has not been able to keep, or attract, in-house social workers. Employing agency social workers will mean significant cost implications, and disabled people fear that these agency social workers are being brought in purely as a cost cutting exercise. This may also risk legal challenges to BCC, as it is unlawful under the Care Act to conduct a review with the intention of reducing support. As most of the Disabled people targeted for review will need an independent advocate, we have concerns that decisions will be made about the person without them having support to know their rights, due to the pressures on, and under resourcing of, advocacy services in Bristol.

Alongside these concerns, we are aware that extra funds from government have gone to pay the enormous fees charged by profit making children's homes (see [Bristol Cable](#)), to the detriment of disabled people reliant on homecare. "Child protection" spending keeps increasing, while the support families need has shrunk. The children of Disabled parents are often removed for [social reasons](#) including poverty, racism and disability discrimination against mothers.

Cost must be weighed against the best outcomes for the individual, in order to establish cost effectiveness and therefore best value. BCC claims, as it has in previous years, that it is meeting all its statutory responsibilities under the Care Act, so what has changed now?

We can only conclude that BCC has decided not to invest in the lives and futures of Disabled people and families, and instead taken a short-term and budget led approach that will cost all of us more, in human, social and economic terms. BRIL are holding a open meeting online on Wednesday 17th April at 6.30-9pm Please email bristol.ilag@gmail.com If you would like to participate.

(ENDS)

Note for media outlets.

BRIL is a Disabled Peoples' Organisation (DPO) based in Bristol, and receives no local authority or NHS funding. BRIL is a member of the National DPO Forum and National Survivor Users Network (NSUN).

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