

Council social care support for people with lifelong disabilities

Simple English version

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Alma Economics carried out this research for the Local Government Association.

The views expressed are those of the report authors. These views are not necessarily shared by the Local Government Association. These views do not represent the policy of the Local Government Association.



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Introduction

Many people in the UK have a disability. Disabled people often have more challenges in their life than people that do not have a disability. For example, disabled people are more likely to feel lonely.

Disabilities affect people differently and some people have more than one disability. This means that disabled people need different types and amounts of support.

The main way to receive support with a disability is through the social care service. The social care service provides support in different ways depending on what they think a person needs.

Alma Economics researched this for the Local Government Association.

The aim of the research was to understand how people with disabilities get support provided by the social care service. We tried to understand what works and what does not work.

The research led to important findings that can be used to improve social care support.

Disabled people and their families

Disabled people want and need **different types** of support. Some people want support with practical tasks like transport and finances. Other people want emotional support like being able to share their worries.

Disabled people need support that is **consistent**. This means that the support stays the same during the time that they need it to. Examples include:

- Receiving the same number of hours in their care package.
- Having the same social care staff involved, for example the same social worker and the same personal assistant.

Disabled people also need support that is **flexible**. This means that services should be able to respond to someone's needs if they change.

It is important that services are well **coordinated**. This means that different services speak to one another. It also means that there is good communication between a service and the disabled person. When it is not well coordinated, disabled people are forced to repeat their stories unnecessarily.

Many disabled people and their families felt like they were not receiving the type of support that they needed. This had a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Here is what a parent carer said about this:

"It was difficult to get people to understand, to listen properly."

It is important that services consider a person's **identity**. Just like non-disabled people, a disabled person can consider different parts of themselves important. An example of an identity is someone's cultural identity. It is important that services and staff consider these identities when designing and providing support. It is also important that no one is treated differently because of their identity.

Disabled people also want to be **involved** in the decisions that are made about them. Their needs and wants should be taken into account when deciding what support will be provided to them.

Social care support should be **tailored** to each person that needs help. All disabled people are unique and so are their needs. It is important that the support that they receive reflects this.

Social care staff should be willing to:

- Listen to the person that they care for.
- Learn from the person that they care for.
- Spend time with the person that they care for.

Disabled people also have different preferences for how they want to be communicated with. For example, some people want the communication to be relaxed and enjoyable.

It is important that information is **shared** with disabled people and their families. This is important so that they know things like:

- What types of support the social care service provides.
- What support they are eligible for.
- Where services are located.

It can be difficult for disabled people and their families to find the information that they need. This can be because a person's disability makes the task difficult. It can also be because the information is not always easy to find. Essential information should be communicated clearly and should be easy to access.

Here is what a parent carer said about this:

“It’s just a constant battle between health, education and social as to who’s going to fund what.”

When disabled children reach a certain age they may move from services for children to services for adults. Disabled people and families should be **guided** through this. Information about the move should be given to them. The two services should also communicate with each other and make sure that the disabled person does not experience a gap in their support.

One individual can have a big impact. It is important that the people involved in the disabled person's life understand this. Advocating for a disabled person should be encouraged.

Social care staff

Like disabled people and their families, social care staff highlighted that services should be well **coordinated** and **collaborative**. This means that there needs to be good communication within a service and between different services. Good relationships between social care and health care and between services for adults and services for children are important.

Good communication allows social care staff to be proactive. It can also help staff feel like they are part of a team. Keeping records and sharing information are two ways that can help staff communicate with each other.

Social care staff should develop good **relationships** with the person that they care for. This allows them to identify the disabled person's needs. This can be important in case their needs change or they move from one service to another.

This can be helped by:

- Monitoring and re-assessing a person's needs from time to time.
- Having a named key worker to support the transition from children to adult services.
- Ensuring that there is consistency in care staff.

It is important that services protect a disabled person's **autonomy**. This means that someone does not lose the ability to think and make decisions for themselves. This can support their personal development. It can also lead to satisfaction for the

person providing their support. Promoting autonomy can be done by:

- Listening to the disabled person.
- Allowing the disabled person to make choices.

Social care staff need to determine the appropriate amount of autonomy that they will encourage. This should depend on the type of disability a person has and how it affects them.

It can be hard to work in social care. Sometimes social care staff have to deal with difficult situations. Therefore, social care services should:

- Show staff appreciation for the work that they do.
- Train staff appropriately.

This will make staff feel supported. It will also make them feel more confident in their ability to provide support and deal with challenges. Staff can provide better support for the people that they care for when they feel supported.

Social care services should also be sufficiently **staffed** and **funded**. Social care staff do not always have all of the resources that they need to provide support. These resources are important to make sure that all individuals that need support receive it.

Here is what social care staff interviewed shared with us:

“We do everything that we can.”

“Some cases get under your skin. They stay with you forever.”