

# What does a good life look like for people with learning difficulties in Cumbria?





# What was the project about?

We wanted to find out what was working well and less well for people with learning difficulties

We talked to

- People with learning difficulties
- Parents/carers
- Commissioners
- Social Workers
- Service providers





Healthwatch Cumbria  
engaged with over **540**  
people

We talked to **120** people  
face to face

**109** people filled out our  
survey





# Key Findings

Funding cuts  
have had an  
impact on how  
good services  
are





“The uncertainty over staffing and budget levels and the challenge for meeting the needs of users is very worrying.”

“Adult Social Care needs to think about social support more creatively and think outside the box.”



**It is important to  
include everyone  
in the shaping of  
services**







**“No one asked me or my family about the decision to close my local centre.”**

**“Maintaining services is a thankless task for commissioners yet this affects people’s lives.”**



**There was very little mention of intimate relationships or friendships**







“I would like a set of friends to go out with at night.”

“People are very fond of their pets and enjoy being with them.”

“I’m not sure I will ever find a girlfriend/boyfriend.”



**People felt they  
need/want  
better travel  
options**





“Some things I want to do are out in the sticks and I can’t easily get there by public transport.”

“I always need a lift if I’m to meet my friends.”



**Not all employers  
understand how  
to employ people  
with learning  
difficulties**





“Shops are reluctant to take on people with LD, they seem frightened and unwilling to engage.”

“We’ve offered employers change to meet our learners to see their skills first hand but it has not been taken up.”



**People with  
learning  
difficulties  
should have  
more choice  
and control**







“I had to stand my ground when there was a possibility of having to move to supported living.”

“I feel involved in decisions affecting my life.”

“..as a parent I want to see more independence and development for my son/daughter.”

“I would like people to listen to me more about decisions that affect my life.”



# Key Questions

- How can resources be better used to address **financial pressures**?
- What can be done to help  
• employers be **less fearful of employing people**?
- How can people with learning difficulties be supported to have **intimate relationships and friendships**?





- How can people with learning difficulties have more **choice** and **control** over their own lives?
- How can people with learning difficulties and their family/carers be **more involved** in the nature and delivery of services?
- How can more support be given to people with learning difficulties in relation to **travel**?





# Next steps – achieving impact and change





# The Symposium



- 80 people - all groups represented
- People with learning difficulties presented their findings
- Prompted everyone to think differently
- Cumbria County Council pledged to take a lead - Director of People







# Taking the Report Forward

The report publication coincided with the re-launch of the Cumbria Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board.

It;

- Meets every three months
- Agreed to support an Action Plan
- Shape its agenda to address the issues raised with themed meetings
- Monitor progress







# **Joint presentation to Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Board And Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee**

Lou told her story

She talked about what it is  
like to be her;

- On a bus
- Having a day out
- Being involved in shaping services





# Taking the Report Forward

The Partnership Board is focussed on:

- Friends Relationships and Loneliness
- Hate and Mate Crime
- Transport

After each Board a task and finish group is developed to address the issues raised.





# Taking the Report Forward

Friends relationships and loneliness - identified by local people as **the** most important issue to them.

What we did -

- Mapped existing opportunities and support available across Cumbria
- Made links with two organisations Dates and Mates and Meet and Match
- Developed a funding bid with the National Lottery for a dating service in Cumbria ( Still in progress)
- Raised the profile of the importance of personal relationships.





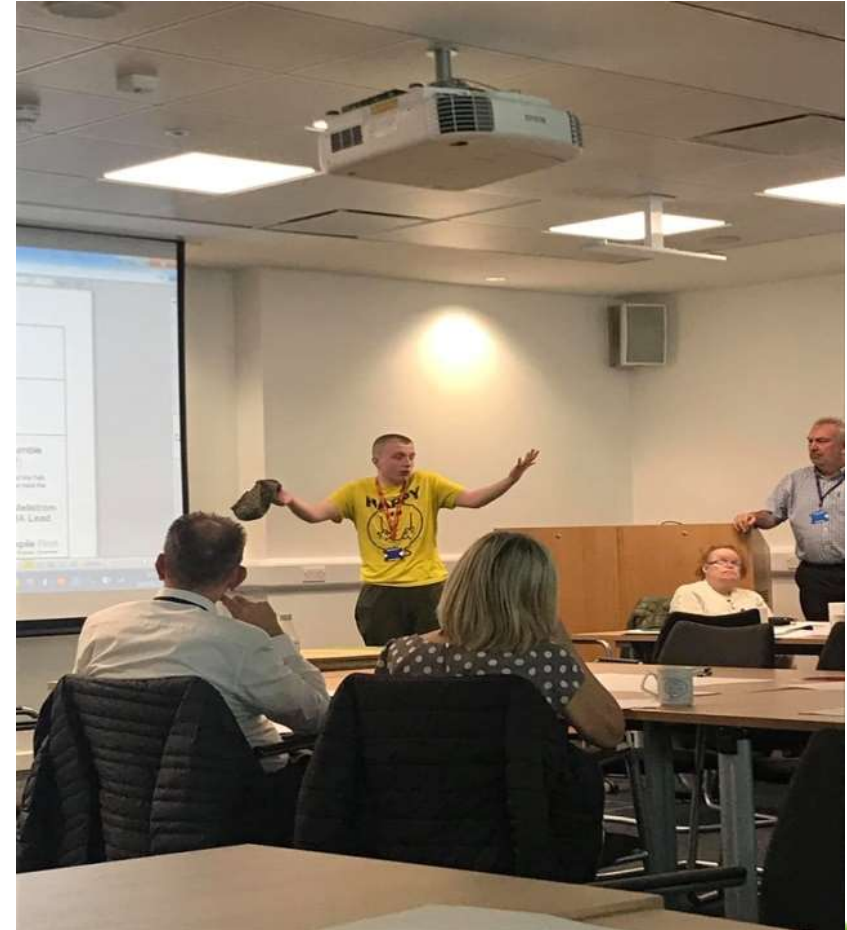
# Taking the report Forward

3 more priorities identified for the Board

- A good place to live
- Work, employment and training
- Support for unpaid and paid carers

Progress will be reported on a regular basis to HWC Board.

And -we are also working with the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership to raise employment opportunities





## Key messages

- Evidence based recommendations
- Shared presentations to key Boards
- Transfer ownership of Action Plan
- Stay involved – but not directly delivering outcomes
- Create accountability to HW for progress





## Activity

In groups consider;

- What's important when working with people with Learning Difficulties and Autism
- How can we support people with learning difficulties and autism to have a voice?
- How do we get professionals to listen and act?

