Learning Disability Partnership Board
MINUTES
29 October 2025 at 11:00
Randlay Community Centre

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

Attendees:
Julie Noble **(Chair) –** Commissioning Specialist (Autism & Learning Disability) TWC
Amanda Benton – Service Delivery manager TWC
Abbie Guest – Telford & Wrekin CVS
Zoe Benfield – All Age LD Navigator – T&W CVS
Jason Smith – Telford Voices
Stacey Pitt – Telford Voices
Anne Cartledge – Telford Voices
Sherrie Powell – Telford Voices
Gemma Sanders – Adult Practitioner ALD Team TWC
Katie Shaw – Co- Production Officer TWC
Sarah Morgan – Commissioning Officer TWC
Kirsty Griffiths – Commissioning Support Officer TWC
Diana West – Public Health TWC
Andy Ackroyd – Parent/ Carer One
Sarah Poole – Co Production Lead TWC
Ewan MacLeod – Parent/Carer Two
Val Edgley – Parent/Carer Three
Malcolm MacRae – Parent/Carer Four
Karen Cope – Parent/Carer Five
Simon Buckley-Robins – Parent/Carer Six
Liz Bickford-Smith – Parent/Carer Seven
Sophie Haddock – **(Minute Taker)** Business Support Officer TWC

Apologies:
Julie Ann – Telford Voices
Elsa Crone – Carer with Lived Experience
Gemma Morris
Vicky Shenton – Parent/Carer
Rebecca Trifunovich – Social Worker – TWC
Denise Rock – Parent/Carer
Johanne Brodrick – Interim SDM Children's TWC
Darren Weaver – Parent/Carer
Elaine Thomas - MPFT

2. Activity For All project updates

Diana West provided an update on a project she has been working on in her role as a Health Improvement Practitioner. She explained that around a year ago, a gap was identified in services for adults with learning disabilities in Telford & Wrekin. In response, she began gathering views from the community about the types of activities they would like to see available.

Based on this feedback, Diana developed a package of activities and submitted a grant application to Sport England on 18th August. Additional information was requested and provided on 28th August. Diana shared the good news that the application was successful, and a grant of £15,000 has been awarded to kickstart the programme.

She confirmed that the project will be delivered in partnership with SNAC (Special Needs Activity Centre). Further paperwork has been requested by Sport England, and an update was sent on 21st October. Diana said she is expecting the funds to arrive soon, and once they are in the bank, she will begin contacting providers to start delivering the activities requested by the community.

Diana listed the activities that had been requested, which include gym, foot golf, yoga, gymnastics, cycling, multisport, movement to music, bowling, basketball, boxing, and general fitness. She expressed hope that everyone will help promote these activities to families in the community to ensure strong participation.

Additionally, Diana mentioned that the grant also includes funding for training. She highlighted a Funetics training offer, which includes a licence, equipment, and training for staff, parents and volunteers to run Funetics club activities. She invited anyone interested to contact her for more details and said that this training could enable people to deliver their own activities in the future.

Parent/Carer Six raised a point about children with complex needs, explaining that while it's great to have different groups available, his daughter might attend a session she enjoys but could stop going if it becomes too quiet or lacks engagement.

Diana West reassured the group that sessions won’t be dropped if people enjoy them. She explained that the grant funding guarantees a minimum delivery period of 12 weeks, which allows time to assess interest and engagement. Diana also acknowledged that each provider has a set capacity and confirmed that Katrina Baker and her team at SNAC have agreed to manage bookings to ensure sessions are not overwhelmed.

Parent/Carer Six asked whether the sessions would be mixed, expressing concern that children who are actively dancing might be disrupted by others who are less engaged or behaving differently.

Diana West responded by confirming that the activities were chosen by the community and that each provider is an expert in their field. She emphasised that the providers selected are highly skilled and experienced in managing diverse groups, ensuring that sessions are delivered appropriately and inclusively.

Parent/Carer Five asked whether the providers involved in the project would have the authority to accept or decline participants, noting that Arty Party had previously refused someone.

Diana West explained that staff would be responsible for taking bookings and that individuals would be assessed based on their specific needs to ensure appropriate support and access.

Parent/Carer Four asked what provisions would be available specifically in Newport.

Diana West confirmed that swimming would definitely be available in Newport. She added that other activities would be spread across various locations including Horsehay, Sutton Hill, Donnington, Wellington, Priorslee, and Telford Centre. She emphasised that efforts had been made to distribute the activities as widely as possible across the area.

Parent/Carer One asked for clarification regarding the involvement of PODS, noting that he had understood their services were only available up to the age of 25. He commented that this seemed critical.

Diana West responded that PODS is now moving towards supporting older individuals and aspires to expand their age range. She acknowledged Parent/Carer One’s concern but emphasised the positive outcome of securing £15,000 in funding. Diana reminded the group that the activities were based on what they had asked for, and she had worked to bring it all together. She expressed hope that the project would not only get off to a strong start but also continue to grow and encouraged everyone to help spread the word within the community.

Parent/Carer Two asked how many of the planned activities would be available during weekdays, evenings, and weekends.

Diana West responded that she had encouraged providers to offer a variety of time slots, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate different schedules. While many providers tend to offer sessions during the day, she emphasised that she had done her best to push for flexibility and ensure a range of options were available to suit people's varying availability.

Amanda Benton raised a few questions. Firstly, she asked at what point the activities would be reviewed within the 12-week period. Secondly, she queried how situations would be handled where a group activity may not be successful in a group setting, but one or two individuals benefit significantly from it. She asked how such cases would be communicated to commissioners, so they could identify gaps and potentially work with the voluntary sector or charities to support those individuals.

Diana West responded by clarifying that she does not work in commissioning. However, she acknowledged that if a particular activity proves popular but isn’t sustainable due to low numbers, it’s still important to recognise its value. She explained that the first review could take place on a weekly basis and would not only consider attendance numbers but also feedback from participants. Reviews can be carried out as frequently as needed to ensure the activities are meeting people’s needs.

Parent/Carer Two asked whether a timetable would be made available for the activities and whether it would be included in the council’s Inclusive Leisure SEND programme. He noted that for some young people, options like swimming may not be suitable, and alternatives such as skiing need to be promoted more widely. He emphasised that awareness should go beyond word of mouth to ensure better reach and engagement.

Diana West agreed and confirmed that this had already been discussed in the meeting.

Julie Noble added that they could speak to Lauren and use family-focused public platforms to share the information more broadly across Telford.

Parent/Carer One commented that if SNAC and PODS are involved in delivering the activities, it sounds like a fantastic initiative.

Diana West confirmed that SNAC is working in partnership with the project.

Julie Noble clarified that this programme sits outside Adult Social Care (ASC) and is intended to complement existing services. She added that they can work closely with Diana to understand what’s happening and help develop the programme further.

Amanda Benton emphasised the importance of having a clear and accessible timetable. She explained that although activities are often assumed to be for children, this programme is intended for both children and adults. The goal is to create a timetable that social workers can distribute and that families can access online via council webpages. This would support wider work, including initiatives delivered through My Options. Amanda stressed the need for the timetable to be easily accessible to all.

Parent/Carer Six asked whether the activities could be booked through SNAC via the My Options platform, and whether this had been discussed as a potential route. He suggested it could be a good way for people to access the sessions.

Amanda Benton responded that this option had not yet been discussed but questioned whether it might be possible to explore those booking routes.

Parent/Carer Five raised concerns about the reliability of leisure activities through My Options. They shared an example where a swimming session was cancelled by the leisure centre due to half-term, highlighting that leisure services appear less invested in SEND provision. She noted that while neurotypical children have a wide range of options during half-term, SEND sessions are limited—sometimes to just one hour, which may be cancelled—indicating that more collaboration with leisure services is needed.

Parent/Carer One added that, in their experience, My Options frequently cancels sessions, often due to staffing shortages.

SPi agreed, stating that although My Options does run a programme, she is reluctant to commit to dates with them because of repeated cancellations.

Julie Noble responded by confirming that, from a commissioning perspective, the entire My Options service is currently under review.

SPi reiterated that staffing shortages are a significant issue affecting service delivery.

Julie Noble spoke about future service development, explaining that they are currently undertaking a transformation project. This involves reviewing what the service should look like going forward and working closely with parents and carers to shape that vision.

Parent/Carer Six commented that the current time of year may be contributing to staffing issues, with many staff off due to sickness.

Julie Noble responded that while sickness is understandable, there should be contingency plans in place to manage such situations and maintain service delivery.

Parent/Carer Six shared that although My Options usually takes their daughter swimming, there have been issues due to insufficient staffing—particularly with transport and support needs. They emphasised the importance of fairness in ensuring all individuals can access activities.

Parent/Carer Two raised a point about equality of opportunity, asking whether the timetable would include any restrictions based on preferences. They suggested that if someone's first choice is unavailable, there should be a system to offer a second choice once others are accommodated.

Diana West agreed that this was a valid point and said it's something that can be considered as the programme develops.

Parent/Carer Two commented that they, like others, might take advantage of the activities offered.

Amanda Benton responded that access would depend on demand. If a particular activity becomes oversubscribed, it will provide evidence of the need to create additional groups. She emphasised that the aim is not to deny anyone the opportunity to participate. If there is capacity to include more people, then fairness and equity must be maintained. She added that as the group grows and awareness increases, the process will naturally evolve.

Diana West confirmed that people will be able to book onto activities. She noted that SNAC is supporting the project in addition to their regular workload and are not being paid for this extra involvement. However, if any issues arise, they will be reviewed and addressed accordingly.

Parent/Carer Two expressed concern about how demand might affect funding allocation. They gave an example where one activity might attract 20 participants but only have capacity for 8, while another activity has space for 4 but only 3 people book onto it. They worried that the more popular activity could dominate funding, leaving smaller groups overlooked.

Amanda Benton responded by emphasising the importance of ongoing review and monitoring. She explained that regular evaluation is essential to ensure all needs are recognised and addressed, regardless of group size.

AC expressed their frustration, recalling that similar activities were stopped around ten years ago, which they found upsetting.

SPo added that families had previously established routines and accessed various services, but a similar situation occurred where a well-supported initiative was discontinued despite strong community backing. They shared that there is a fear this new programme might follow the same pattern.

Diana West reassured the group that the activities will only be discontinued if there is no participation. She emphasised that the providers involved are committed and will not prevent people from attending.

Parent/Carer Two commented that the funding should serve as a starting point, and that each activity should eventually have a realistic and sustainable cost model.

Diana West agreed, stating that the costs provided by the activity providers are based on real figures and participant numbers. She added that there is no reason why any of the activities should need to stop if they are well attended.

Parent/Carer Six raised concerns about the booking process, sharing that trying to book a session, such as swimming on a Saturday morning, is often difficult. They have to call the leisure centre early, and within half an hour, all slots are usually taken. The office staff on Monday mornings face similar challenges and they stressed the need for a fair booking system that gives everyone an equal opportunity to participate.

Diana West responded that they would work to develop booking systems that prevent SNAC from becoming overwhelmed. Block bookings will not be accepted for extended periods, as participants may decide not to continue after a few sessions. If every session is fully booked and successful, that would be a positive outcome, and one they hope to achieve.

3. Partnership Board updates

Parent/Carer One shared a question on behalf of DR. They explained that a woman named Steph, who is an expert in mental health, had attended a MIRB session and was actively gathering input and feedback. DR wanted to know whether a similar approach had been considered for capturing feedback from the learning disability (LD) community, such as through groups like Arty Party. Parent/Carer One suggested that using creative methods to engage and capture diverse voices would be beneficial.

Amanda Benton confirmed that the individual referred to was Steph Wain.

Julie Noble added that Steph is the Adult Mental Health Commissioner and is currently working alongside the Children's Mental Health Commissioner to develop an All-Age Strategy. She noted that the strategy is still in the early stages of design and development, and a draft is being prepared.

Amanda Benton said that once the details are confirmed, Steph would be able to attend a future meeting to present the strategy.

Sarah Morgan shared that efforts are underway to involve mental health services more closely, aiming for a joint approach between Adult Social Care (ASC) and the NHS.

SPo praised the work of Telford Voices over the past 4–5 years and expressed that the initiative should not be limited to My Options. Other providers, such as Lexrae, should also be involved and that the responsibility for learning disability (LD) services should be shared more broadly across providers, rather than sitting solely with My Options.

Parent/Carer One added that while mental health integration is important, it's crucial that LD services don't get overshadowed. They thanked everyone involved and said it was great to hear from the group.

Parent/Carer Six raised a concern that mental health support often focuses on children and young adults, while parents and carers - who also struggle with their own mental health - can be overlooked.

Parent/Carer Four asked whether there is a central register or system in place that allows communication with all relevant individuals and services in the area, to streamline outreach across different routes.

Julie Noble responded that there is a health Learning Disability (LD) register.

Parent/Carer Four noted that some individuals with LD may not have a social worker, which could make it more difficult to reach them through traditional channels.

Amanda Benton noted that many people with learning disabilities (LD) may not be known to Adult Social Care for a variety of reasons. She highlighted the work being done as part of the Mental Health and Carers Strategy, led by Councillor Kelly Middleton, which focuses on supporting carers, a key area of overlap with LD services. Amanda confirmed that her team works closely in this space, and any work being undertaken by Steph is aligned with these ongoing conversations.

Parent/Carer One reiterated a concern they have raised on multiple occasions: that the transition from childhood to adulthood often results in the loss of voices for individuals with LD. They mentioned their upcoming attendance at the TWIP meeting on Thursday and a recent meeting with

Hilary McGlynn, the NHS LD Champion. A further meeting is scheduled with Councillor Shaun Davies, with Councillor Kelly Middleton also attending, to discuss these issues. Parent/Carer One expressed concern about the lack of a diagnostic pathway for individuals over the age of 18, unless they are able to pay privately. They added that while professionals may find the system frustrating, they at least know how to navigate it, unlike the majority of people with LD, who are often left without support or direction.

Julie Noble shared that she has been contacted by the ICB regarding plans for a diagnostic pathway. She noted that the ICB released a statement in March acknowledging the impact on young people who do not have a formal LD diagnosis.

Parent/Carer Four responded to Parent/Carer One's earlier point about individuals with LD not being known to Adult Social Care. They questioned whether the current system of social worker engagement, where individuals do not have a named or dedicated social worker, might contribute to people falling through the cracks, resulting in a loss of engagement and support.

Amanda Benton responded to the earlier discussion by acknowledging that, yes, people can fall through the gaps in the current system. She explained that this issue is being looked at, particularly in the context of the formation of the Autism and LD team. Before this team was established, many young people coming through transition were not necessarily identified as having a learning disability—some may have experienced trauma or come from care backgrounds. Amanda noted that there are different levels of need: some individuals and families require long-term support, while others may only need occasional assistance, such as with housing. She described this as an opportunity to review the service model. For those known to LD services, they are generally tracked, although some may not have an allocated social worker if their situation is stable, they are awaiting a review, or support is not currently needed. Amanda also shared that additional funding has been secured to support social workers working with the "My Options" service, in response to increasing pressures from the autism pathway and the number of young people transitioning into adult services. She clarified that this is not a restructure, but rather a redesign of the service model to ensure appropriate support are in place.

Parent/Carer Six shared their personal experience, stating that although their family had a social worker allocated for four years, they did not see her for 16 months. The last contact they had was when she informed them, she would be leaving at the end of the month. Parent/Carer Six expressed that they would appreciate having an allocated worker but noted that the relationship is not the same as it was in previous years.

Amanda Benton stated that the discussion ties into ongoing conversations about redesigning the team to improve how it functions. She confirmed that updates will be shared as the work progresses.

Parent/Carer One referred to a group chaired by Natalie Bevan called WTPC (Working Together for Parent Carer Consultation). They mentioned that a wide range of discussions took place within the group, but admitted they were unsure of their current role or involvement, as they had gradually drifted away from the meetings.

Amanda Benton suggested that moving forward, items like this could be brought to the Partnership Board. She proposed that relevant information be circulated through the board to ensure wider awareness, not just from that particular meeting, but across the various conversations where people may not always receive updates.

Parent/Carer One added that their son was under 18 when the process began, but the only part he has been actively involved in is the diagnostic journey.

Julie Noble said she would speak to the SEND lead to clarify the purpose of the meeting in question. She assumed there would be a term of reference behind it and added that if other representatives are needed, this should be clearly communicated.

Parent/Carer Six suggested that the information could be shared via the Facebook group, so that others are aware and can access it.

Amanda Benton emphasised that if someone is representing a group, it is their responsibility to share relevant information with others. She noted that this is exactly the kind of clarity needed and that it's important to ensure information is shared appropriately. Amanda added that there may be a need for a representative from Telford Voices to help facilitate this.

Parent/Carer Four expressed that there are various meetings they would like to be aware of, even if they are unable to attend, as having the opportunity to stay informed is important to me.

Katie Shaw explained that formal minutes are not produced for some meetings because certain individuals were uncomfortable with information being shared. However, she noted that actions are recorded to reflect the key points discussed.

Parent/Carer Six responded by pointing out that those actions stem from a series of discussions, implying that context is important.

Katie Shaw added that, in relation to the Making It Real Board (MIRB) process, it is assumed that the Partnership Board would be responsible for feeding back to this group.

Parent/Carer Six raised a concern about how people can be sure that the Partnership Board is aware of the issues being discussed, and whether it is the right forum to bring those matters forward.

Parent/Carer Five reflected on the loss of the Working Together group, which was originally intended to lead into a focus group. They shared that this is the only group they currently attend and mentioned that although they had expressed interest in joining the carers group, their application was declined, and they had been told they needed to reapply. Parent/Carer Five also questioned how many people in the room are involved in multiple boards, noting that they had no visibility of what happens in other groups.

Julie Noble explained that while she doesn't attend all the boards, she had intended to request updates from the Carers Board and any actions arising from it. However, she acknowledged that there may be a broader expectation to receive updates from all relevant boards.

Parent/Carer Two commented that it often feels like all the different boards and meetings operate in isolation, with little communication between them.

Sarah Poole shared that the MIRB has undergone further changes and now meets quarterly. In response, a new Making It Happen meeting is being established. She suggested that further discussion is needed around attendance at this meeting. Subgroups are also being set up to focus on specific topics of interest, ensuring representation across ASC. Key areas of focus include financial advice, occupational therapy (OT), and safeguarding.

Parent/Carer Two asked how the subgroups relate to the focus groups.

Julie Noble explained that the subgroups are specific to learning disabilities (LD), whereas the "Making It Real" initiative is for everyone who accesses Adult Social Care (ASC). She emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication and noted that, as services are being reconfigured, it's essential to ensure discussions are streamlined and that everyone's time is used effectively.

Parent/Carer Six raised a concern that many parents who wish to represent others are not currently part of the main board.

Sarah Poole responded by explaining that, in the previous setup, board membership was fixed term, with an application process and a two-year term. She confirmed that this process will be repeated.

Katie Shaw added that participation may depend on who responds and expresses interest. She clarified that if the subgroups are LD-specific, they would report through this board, but if the issue affects all service users, it will go through ASC channels.

Julie Noble concluded by stating that membership of the Partnership Board will not be restricted.

Abbie Guest asked whether there are any carer representatives on the PODS board.

Sarah Poole responded that there are currently no carer representatives, as this was not in place at the time of recruitment. However, this will be addressed going forward.

Parent/Carer Two expressed frustration, stating that they had been attending those meetings for five years and feels that the system remains fractured. They noted that carers' representation on the MIRB often seems to happen only if a carer happens to be present, describing the situation as disorganised and unchanged over the past four years. They questioned where the confidence lies that things will improve in the near future.

Parent/Carer Six shared that they want to be involved in something that leads to real change, rather than simply attending meetings without seeing meaningful outcomes.

Parent/Carer Two added that half the people in the room are salaried professionals who are paid to attend. They reflected on the past five years and questioned what has actually been achieved during that time.

Amanda Benton asked Parent/Carer Two to provide an example of something they had requested through the MIRB that had not progressed.

Parent/Carer Two responded that, looking back over the past five years, one of the key achievements had been preventing a few initiatives from being discontinued. However, they noted that the only activity that had been maintained was the 17–25 skiing programme. They added that TWIGS has been partially reintroduced into the My Options service, which is a positive development. Nonetheless, they pointed out that while My Options offers a range of facilities, there have also been losses in other areas.

Parent/Carer Five reflected on the previous "Working Together" group, noting that when it ended, their understanding was that it would be replaced by smaller working groups.

Parent/Carer Two added that one of the proposed working groups was focused on employment, but unfortunately, they were unable to get sufficient engagement to move it forward.

Parent/Carer One shared that they had spoken to Councillor Kelly Middleton about the lack of progress with the subgroups. They expressed concern that the situation is unacceptable and suggested that it be made a priority in early 2026. They emphasised the need for someone to help free up individuals and give them permission to engage with the group.

Parent/Carer Two commented that there is a general impression that people simply do not care.

Amanda Benton responded by saying that sometimes it's necessary to pause and reflect on what the board has achieved. She stressed that the board is not intended to be a council-led initiative, but rather a partnership involving health services and other stakeholders, with a focus on sharing information. Amanda acknowledged the frustration of repeatedly raising the same issues and explained that this is why the development of subgroups is so important.

SPi shared that they used to attend Club 17 but had to stop once they turned 25.

Parent/Carer Two added that their son also had to stop attending last year.

Julie Noble confirmed that the decision to separate the age groups is still going ahead. She explained that there had been technical difficulties with the booking system, and it now appears they will be using a system similar to the one used by the Bike Hub. However, the system is not yet ready, so the planned start date of the 3rd will need to be delayed slightly.

Parent/Carer One asked whether people now need to book in order to attend Club 17.

Julie Noble responded that yes, booking is required.

Amanda Benton asked whether the information would be shared more widely.

Julie Noble confirmed that it would. She explained that, following discussions with Simon Froud, the communications team is on standby to support once everything is set up. The plan is to engage both current and former members, and the information will also be shared via social media channels.

Parent/Carer Two expressed concern that children's services appear to have significant influence over decisions affecting adult services, yet communication between the two is lacking. Speaking on behalf of adults with learning disabilities (LD), they stated that there is little interest in children's services from this group, and that adults are being discriminated against.

Amanda Benton responded by confirming that Club 17 is an adult service and will be run specifically for individuals aged 18 and over. She acknowledged the frustration caused when Julie informed her that the event could not be held on the 3rd due to issues with the booking system but assured the group that this should be resolved soon.

Parent/Carer Two questioned whether, if there were an activity for neurotypical adults that required tickets, the same delays wouldn't occur in getting the event listed on the system. They asked if it would really take months to make it accessible.

Julie Noble replied that it wouldn't take months but explained that they are currently trying to identify a system that allows My Options staff to operate it effectively. The goal is to find a mechanism that is user-friendly and suitable for their needs.

AC shared that they know someone who attends Club 17 and enjoys taking part in various activities there.

SPi expressed concern upon learning that trips to places like the Lake District are no longer being organised. They were told that the pandemic had a significant impact on these outings, but efforts are being made to gradually reintroduce them. Spi reflected that although they could have continued attending and supporting the club, there wasn't much available for them at the time. They added that it is a good club, and they particularly enjoyed the trips to the Lake District, including two visits to Arthog.

Sarah Poole provided reassurance regarding the *Making It Happen* initiative, stating that only two sessions have taken place so far. She mentioned that another email would be sent out today with details relating to occupational therapy (OT) and finance subgroups, and encouraged anyone interested to engage.

Parent/Carer Six asked whether there were staff available to support the initiative during weekends.

Julie Noble responded that discussions had taken place, but currently staff are only contracted to work on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Amanda Benton added that this issue would be considered as part of the ongoing development of the My Options service.

Julie Noble explained that the current focus is on transitioning Club 17 into an adult service offer. She noted that a meeting had taken place earlier in the week to agree next steps and confirmed that all attendees will now be referred to the My Options service so that Kirsty can begin engaging with those sessions.

Parent/Carer Four asked for an update on whether there is a designated group or board focused on housing provision and supported living. They queried whether such a group is still active.

Julie Noble responded that internal discussions are ongoing, but there is currently no parent/carer meeting specifically focused on accommodation. She explained that, as a commissioner, she is working alongside the housing commissioner to review data. Julie acknowledged that housing has been a frequent topic of discussion and praised the Newport housing survey as a valuable piece of work. However, she apologised for any confusion caused following the survey, noting that while there is a waiting list for specialised and bespoke accommodation, there is no generalised waiting list. She stressed the need to send a clear message that, regardless of individual needs, people can access a range of housing options. Julie emphasised the importance of resolving the confusion and confirmed that a housing meeting will be set up, with support from Katie, to ensure people are informed about the different housing pathways available. She also mentioned receiving a document from Denise that incorporates both the *Planning for the Future* and *All About Me* frameworks, which can support conversations with young people and families about future housing needs.

Parent/Carer Four added that only four people had registered for housing, and many were unaware that registration was required.

Julie Noble clarified that the assessment process determines whether someone qualifies for housing with support and what that support should look like. If the outcome is a specialist housing requirement, an accommodation referral should be completed and the individual is placed on a waiting list. She noted that over the past five years, a significant amount of accommodation has been built in Telford & Wrekin, and at one point, there were over 150 people on the waiting list. Julie explained that recent conversations have revealed a lack of communication, which is why a survey was proposed, to gather better information and help develop accommodation options for younger adults, particularly in the Newport area.

Parent/Carer Four raised concerns about the suitability of some homes for individuals with learning disabilities (LD), noting that they may lack necessary support or adaptations. They suggested that housing associations could be approached to consider areas like Newport for future development.

Julie Noble responded by explaining that one of the challenges in working with adults with LD in social housing is limited access to funding. She noted that where housing includes support, there are restrictions imposed by the CQC for example, buildings with communal spaces cannot have more than 11 units if on-site care is provided. She emphasised the importance of avoiding institutional settings and instead creating smaller, community-based homes. Julie added that while there are many grey areas, other factors also influence decisions. She confirmed that meetings with housing colleagues, including the Director of Housing, take place weekly. She also outlined the available pathways for accessing social housing through WHG or exploring home ownership via a mortgage.

Amanda Benton addressed the issue of housing waiting lists, clarifying that she has been in regular contact with housing directors and that weekly commissioning meetings are taking place. She explained the process for families with children who have support needs: when a social worker completes a Care Act Assessment or a Review, even if the family indicates no immediate changes are needed, the social worker should still complete an accommodation form. This form includes details such as preferred locations and helps build a picture of future housing needs. Amanda stressed that the housing list is not a traditional waiting list based on priority, but rather a data-driven tool used to identify individuals who may be suitable for specific housing opportunities.

Parent/Carer Three shared that they had a conversation with a social worker the previous day, during which they mentioned wanting to be added to a list for accommodation. However, they were told, “I don’t know anything about that,” which caused some confusion.

Amanda Benton clarified that the social worker likely wouldn’t be aware of the accommodation process, as it falls outside their area of responsibility. She emphasised that it’s not about being placed on a waiting list, but rather about making an accommodation referral, which allows the team to extract relevant data and take appropriate action.

Parent/Carer Seven agreed and explained that the focus is on data and the accommodation referral process. They mentioned that a document had been created to encourage people to make referrals. The team had explored reasons why referrals weren’t being made, including assumptions that individuals were too young, didn’t need accommodation yet, or simply didn’t know how to make a referral. Parent/Carer seven stressed the importance of working together to find a suitable approach.

Julie Noble stated that the team is providing clear instructions on what individuals need and where they should go for support.

Sarah Morgan added that accommodation referrals are being considered through this process. She emphasised the importance of having this clearly stated, as currently it is not, and this needs to be addressed to ensure clarity.

4. **Refresh terms of reference and Partnership Board membership**
   To be discussed at next meeting

5. **Telford Voices update**

Online Resources

SPo & AC shared that they had found some useful online resources, including activities offered by the Royal Voluntary Service through the Virtual Village Hall. She mentioned they had explored options such as chair-based exercises and arts and crafts. Sarah Poole had also shown them materials from the last Telford Voices session.

Universal Credit

JS added that they and SPo had tried to access an online session through the Jobcentre, but they were unable to attend due to issues with their carer.

SPo shared that, like others, they had experienced issues with changes to benefits such as Universal Credit. They were given a set timeline to respond and followed the required steps but then had to stop and wait for a scheduled call. This caused anxiety for JS, who waited for the call that never came.

Katie Shaw added that she had experienced the exact same issue.

SPo explained that through navigating the benefits system, they discovered that when officials say they will have a "meeting call," it doesn’t necessarily mean a live online meeting. Instead, it often means they are reviewing the case, and if they need to speak to the individual, that person must be available.

SPi added that they are transitioning to Universal Credit but won’t need to attend the Jobcentre in person, unlike most people. They shared that their mum recently called on their behalf, expecting they might need to speak directly to them. However, they dealt with their mum instead and didn’t ask to speak to Spi.

Parent/Carer Five shared their experience of attending the Jobcentre with H, where they were seated in the middle of the room and became distracted, pointing out something funny on their phone. They said they don’t think they’ll be attending again.

SPo added that their mum had gone through a similar process with their brother and was able to manage it over the phone as their appointee. While their mum had a slightly smoother transition, SPo noted that the process is still not fully complete and they’re reserving judgment for now. They also mentioned that JS is keen to be involved, but navigating the system’s terminology can be challenging.

Sarah Poole informed the group that she had reached out to the local DWP, but they were unavailable to attend the meeting. She offered to collect any examples or feedback from attendees and share them with the DWP on their behalf.

Being Active Survey

SPo noted that one of the final topics covered in the last Telford Voices session was the *Being Active Survey*. They asked the group for their thoughts on its length and accessibility.

AC responded that the survey was far too long—around 60 to 70 pages.

SPo agreed, saying it took a considerable amount of time to complete. It was overly detailed, with too many questions, which led to frustration and a loss of interest. They eventually had to express that the survey was simply too lengthy and overwhelming.

Katie Shaw said she would pass that feedback directly to Disability Rights UK, as they are the organisation responsible for the survey.

Becoming a member

Parent/Carer One mentioned that Their son J might be interested in joining Telford Voices and asked how they could get involved.

AC responded that the group meets once a month at Horsehay, on the first Wednesday of each month from 1:00pm to 3:00pm.

SPo added that the group is very keen to welcome new members.

6. Carers Centre Learning Disability Care Navigator Roles

Zoe Benfield gave a brief overview of the *Introduction to the Navigators* programme (please refer to the PowerPoint slides attached to the minutes for further details).

Parent/Carer Five asked where Zoe is based.

Zoe Benfield responded that she can be contacted via email, telephone voicemail, and through Live Well drop-in sessions. She is currently based at Madeley Anstice and, as of last week, also at the newly opened Wellington location.

Parent/Carer Five asked whether Zoe Benfield is connected to the Carers Centre.

Zoe Benfield clarified that her role is part of a separate project, but she is also able to support individuals with learning disabilities (LD). She explained that she is reaching out to anyone with LD or those involved in providing care and support.

For the minutes, Zoe requested that her contact details be shared:

Email: ldnavigator@tandwcvs.org.uk
Phone: 01952 567196

Julie Noble suggested that it would be helpful to create a flyer or similar promotional material as part of the wider carers offer. She proposed that this could be distributed through Telford & Wrekin Council's communications team. Julie also mentioned that the flyer could be shared via the neighbourhood group, which is part of TWIP, to help spread the message further.

SPo asked what days and hours Zoe works, particularly in case she becomes inundated with requests.

Zoe Benfield responded that she and her colleague each work 8 hours, allowing them to be as responsive as possible. She advised that email is the best way to contact her and that she aims to reply within a couple of days.

Abbie Guest asked about Zoe's background and experience.

Zoe Benfield shared that she spent five and a half years working in a LD role in Stoke, within a community setting, which she found very rewarding. After that, she worked for a company that provided products designed to support people in their own homes.

7. Commissioning updates and forward plan

Julie Noble provided an update on Dial-A-Ride, relaying information from the transport team. She explained that work is underway with Adult Social Care (ASC) to review the current transport policy, which will include all existing transport offers, including Dial-A-Ride. The policy review will be carried out in collaboration with the MIRB. Julie also confirmed that as soon as she receives further updates regarding Club 17, these will be shared with the group.

8. Any Other Business

N/A

Date of next partnership meeting:

- 28 January from 11am – 1pm in the Sunnycroft room at Darby House.
- 29 April from 11am – 1pm in the Sunnycroft room at Darby House.
- 29 July from 11am – 1pm in the Sunnycroft room at Darby House.
- 28 October from 11am – 1pm – venue to be confirmed.