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Edinburgh care contracts suspended pending inquiry

by **Vern Pitt** on December 3, 2009 in **Adults, Domiciliary care, Social care leaders, Workforce**

Edinburgh Council's controversial retendering of its adult care services will be shelved pending an independent investigation of the process, the authority has announced.

The council angered disabled people in the city when it [suspended the awarding of direct payments](#) while retendering for the contracts earlier this year. Disabled people's organisations also had concerns over the level of consultation accompanying the process, which covered home care and supported housing, saying it had not been accessible.

In November the [council's Scottish National Party and Liberal Democrat leadership was defeated](#) by an opposition motion specifying that the backlog of 209 direct payment applications should be cleared before the award of any new contracts.

Inquiry 'should examine individuals' role'

The Learning Disability Alliance Scotland (LDAS), whose members include four providers set to lose contracts and one of the successful providers, welcomed the inquiry and said it should examine the roles of individuals involved in the tendering process.

[In a statement, it said:](#) "We have to wonder what the future will be for council officials and councillors who have tried to drive through this process at the expense of disabled people all over the city."

The remit of the inquiry is yet to be specified.

Human rights and disability discrimination

In a letter to council chief executive, Tom Aitchison, LDAS urged him to give it a wide remit including the use of equality impact assessments, compliance with both the Human Rights Act and the Disability Discrimination Act and the application of case law to the direct payments process.

Following the evaluation, council officers will present a report to a meeting of the council's finance and resources committee on 21 January.

Council leader Jenny Dawe said the tendering process must be shown to be robust. She said: "I have been in regular touch with senior council officials on this and have just been advised that there remain a number of outstanding issues surrounding the care and support services tender."

Reassurance for disabled

She reassured disabled people in the city that the council would continue to try to clear the backlog of direct payment applications, and that services would be maintained. The council has also asked successful providers to keep their tenders open.

She added: "We are determined to ensure the integrity of the tender process and believe an independent evaluation is the best way to achieve this."

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