

Letter from Mary Langan to the Ham and High

20 December 2014

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Dear Editor,

I write as the mother of a young man with autism and severe learning difficulties – and also as an academic researcher who has recently published (in collaboration with Sarah Miller of the Markfield Project and the Haringey Learning Disabilities Partnership Board) a study of the impact of cuts in services for people with learning disabilities in Haringey. (See Learning Disability Today, Nov/Dec 2014)

In its recently published ‘three year plan and budget consultation’, Haringey council proposes to ‘review the appropriateness of care packages through a reablement approach’. But it offers no evidence that such an approach is appropriate to any of the groups currently using these services (including people with autism, learning disabilities, dementia). Nor has it indicated what ‘alternatives to traditional approaches’ it proposes – when the consequences of these cuts will simply be to increase the burden on families and other carers. By contrast, our research confirms the importance of day centres and other services to the health and wellbeing of service users and their families. Cutting these services contradicts another council goal, that ‘all residents will be as healthy as possible for as long as possible’.

These cuts are more likely to result in the more frequent breakdown of existing care arrangements (particularly because of an increased burden of care on ageing family carers) and hence more crisis admissions to Winterbourne View-type institutional care – exactly what the recent Bubb Report seeks to prevent.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Langan