

Why Haringey Council should reject proposed cuts in services to people with autism and learning disabilities

- I speak as the mother of a young man with autism and severe learning disabilities, and as a member of the Haringey Learning Disabilities Partnership Board and the Haringey Autism Working Group. As a senior lecturer in social policy at the Open University, I have recently published research into the impact of cuts in services on people with learning disabilities in Haringey.
- There are **three reasons** why you should reject the proposed cuts in services in Haringey (which include the closure of the only residential facility in the borough, the closure of three out of four day centres (including the only one dedicated to people with ASDs), and reduced spending on care packages.
- **Firstly**, these cuts will bear down most heavily on the most vulnerable people in the community and impose an increased burden of care on families and other carers – despite earlier commitments to protect vulnerable groups from austerity measures. Not only is there no evidence to support this policy, it defies the results of the study we published in the journal *Learning Disability Today* last month, which confirm the value service users attach to day services and their concerns if they are withdrawn.
- **Secondly**, these cuts are likely to prove a false economy, as the increased burden on home carers leads to the collapse of existing arrangements precipitating urgent hospital admissions to Winterbourne View-type institutions. This is exactly what the Bubb Report, published last month, aims to prevent.
- **Thirdly**, these cuts have been proposed in the absence of proper consultation with those who are likely to be affected by them, including service users, families and other carers. After the end of year holiday period, there are only a few weeks before the budget is set.
- Members of the LDPB and the AWG have submitted the following proposals to the council:
 - 1. **Cuts**: Rescind all proposed cuts in services pending an inquiry into alternative means of meeting budget constraints;
 - 2. **Care packages**: Commitment to making no changes to care packages without comprehensive assessment of needs;
 - 3. **Consultation**: Extend consultation period.