

Statement to Adult Scrutiny Committee (19.01.25) Cindy Carter

Chair, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am here in my capacity as a Court of Protection appointed Joint and Several Deputy for a young man who has a profound learning disability and complex health care needs living in B&NES, and also as his Mum.

I recognise that the Council is operating in a challenging financial and operational environment, and I appreciate the difficult decisions adult social care faces. The current consultation proposes achieving savings through future recommissioning of learning disability services and through Care Act reviews with a stronger focus on cost-effectiveness. While these are described as efficiency measures, for people with learning disabilities—especially those with profound and complex needs—they have real consequences for how care is commissioned, reviewed, and delivered.

For people like my son, care is not optional or flexible. It relies on stable providers, skilled staff, and consistent, trusted support. Cost-driven changes can reduce staffing levels, lower skill mixes, disrupt continuity, or destabilise providers. These are not abstract concerns: they can lead to safeguarding risks, deterioration in health, loss of skills, and more restrictive support rather than greater independence.

A key concern is timing. Savings are being consulted on now, while the recommissioning framework shaping future services is still in early development and expected to evolve through 2026. I would welcome reassurance from the Committee on how outcomes for people with learning disabilities will be protected when the framework is not yet in place.

People with learning disabilities are a protected group under the Equality Act. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, but it is based on broad intentions rather than detailed proposals. Small changes in commissioning or review practices can have disproportionately large impacts, so careful mitigation is essential as proposals develop.

Co-production is a statutory requirement under the Care Act 2014. At present, there has been limited meaningful involvement of people with learning

disabilities, their families, or Court-appointed deputies. Strengthening engagement would help ensure decisions reflect how services work in practice, supporting continuity and stability for those most affected. We welcome the Council's confirmation in recent correspondence that it would work co-productively on these proposals.

There are positive local examples to build on. The commissioning of respite provision at Newton House has shown the value of co-production, user choice, and continuity of care. I encourage the Council and the Committee to apply these lessons to the recommissioning of supported living services, so future models are shaped by lived experience and deliver the stability, quality, and outcomes that matter most to individuals and families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.