



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Kim Wright
Chief Executive
Brent Council
Brent Civic Centre
Engineers Way
Wembley
HA9 0FJ

Our Ref: WL / ZA40965

18 January 2022

Dear Kim,

I have been contacted by several constituents concerned by the proposal put forward to Brent Council to close the New Millennium Day Centre.

I appreciate that the cuts to local councils of over £180 million in the last thirteen years have severely restricted the provision of even essential services. However, I am conscious of the critical importance of the New Millennium Day Centre for many vulnerable constituents.

One constituent informs me that it is a lifeline for his brother, who, now aged 62, has attended since he was 16 years old. During the Pandemic, when he was unable to attend as frequently, his brother would walk aimlessly around the house unable to focus, having not had contact with the medical and mental health professionals at the centre.

It is worth noting that constituents no longer have access to the Stonebridge Day Centre or Strathcona Day Centre because of recent closures.

Alternative sites

In consultation with constituents, Brent Council stated that, *“users of the New Millennium Centre whose needs can only be met at a day centre could also be offered alternative support at the John Billam Resource Centre or another day centre in Brent.”*

There is a considerable distance between the two centres.

Please advise what provision the Council will make to ensure that constituents *whose needs can only be met at a day centre* can in fact attend John Billam.

Cost-benefit

In the attached Budget Options document, it is proposed that the Council will instead offer –

“A more dynamic day support service... that will operate a hub and spoke model and promote sessional use of day opportunities and move away from building-based day services.”

And to enable interdependence -

“Building based and/or more community-based offers...and Direct Payments.”

I am afraid that I am not clear what the alternative represents.

Will the ‘hub and spoke model’ offer smaller satellite facilities around the borough for communal day care sessions?

Does 'community-based services' include communal day care sessions?
Do day care services simply mean single carer household visitations?

I am concerned that simply offering increased single carer household visitations, which Direct Payments typically enable, as an alternative will not replicate the social benefits of communal care sessions.

I am also concerned that carer household visitations do not foster conditions conducive to developing independent living skills, in direct contrast to a day centre. While household carer visitations can of course be hugely beneficial, I expect that they are less effective at developing independent living skills, simply because they do not encourage people to leave their home or engage with other disabled people in a new environment.

Please could you confirm in more detail what is included in the 'more dynamic provision' – is it simply the provision of Direct Payments on a larger scale?

I am told that the proposal would save Brent Council £500,000 – please advise whether this cost analysis takes into account the increase in Direct Payments which would ensue following the closure of the centre.

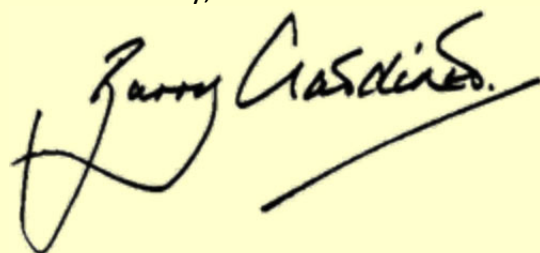
Finally, one incontrovertible benefit of a day centre over community-based services is reliability. The day centre and its opening times are widely known to constituents, ensuring that people will always be clear on when and where they can access the service. It also allows people with physical disabilities to hone their route and transport.

Whereas the new proposal of a day care service with a schedule and location that changes with demand does not afford the same consistency. This is a particularly important point for people with learning difficulties, who are more likely to struggle with computer literacy and an inconsistent schedule.

How will Brent Council guarantee that hard-to-reach users will be continuously aware of the schedule of day care service?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Gardiner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barry Gardiner
Member of Parliament for Brent North