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**Strictly embargoed:** 00.01, Thursday, 22 November 2007

## **New figures reveal true extent of restriction of access for the vulnerable**

- Full picture of tightening eligibility criteria revealed
- Three councils will only help people with critical needs

The true extent of the withdrawal of services for vulnerable people has been revealed today by new figures, secured by the Learning Disability Coalition.

The data, which was provided to Mencap following a request to CSCI, reveals the full picture of which councils are rationing support by only providing social care to those people with very high levels of need for social care. The number of councils who are planning to only support people with substantial or critical needs is to rise from 53% to 62% - with over 12 councils planning to change their criteria this year alone. It is predicted to decline to 73% by the end of the financial year.

The government has set four levels of criteria for vulnerable people needing social services support, including people with learning disability. They are low level, moderate, substantial and critical.

Northumberland, West Berkshire and Wokingham councils will only provide social care services to people with a critical need. This means that social services in those areas may not support people even in situations where “abuse or neglect has occurred, or might occur” or the person “cannot carry out the majority of their personal care or domestic routines and there is no one available to provide the help you need.”

It also shows the huge variation in local levels of eligibility criteria. Only one authority in the West Midlands supports people with moderate needs or below, while in the neighbouring East Midlands most councils support people with moderate needs. The wide range of variation is also reflected within individual regions – all four levels of need are represented in the North East – low in Sunderland, moderate in Darlington and Stockton in Tees, substantial in all other areas and critical only in Northumberland.

Only two authorities are supplying care to people with low level needs – Sunderland and Calderdale. This long-sighted approach with people with a learning disability will remain independent and have a higher quality of care.

Dame Jo Williams, co-chair of the Learning Disability Coalition and chief executive of Mencap, said:

“These figures show the true extent of the crisis in social care. It is unacceptable that in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, local authorities are refusing support to very vulnerable people with a learning disability who have no one else to turn to. Last month the

government gave an increase of less than 1% for social services – and given rises in demand – we will just see more and more cash-strapped councils cutting back.”

Karen Flood, co chair of the Learning Disability Coalition and the National Forum for People with Learning Disabilities, said:

“In spite of good policies from Government, the message is clear, people with a learning disability are low in their list of priorities and there is just not enough funding for basic services for people to live safely. We must make sure that the review of adult social care is based on sound evidence about the real level of demand “

Three people in Harrow, supported by the public law project and a witness statement from Harrow Mencap, are challenging the decision by the London Borough of Harrow to only support people with critical needs. The judicial review is being heard this today.

-Ends-

### **Notes to editors**

- This release has been published by Mencap on behalf of the Learning Disability Coalition
- Spokespeople are available
- The Learning Disability Coalition is made up by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, Association for Real Change, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, Down's Syndrome Association, Mencap, National Forum for People with Learning Disabilities, People First, Sense, Turning Point and United Response
- 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability.
- Learning disability affects someone's intellectual and social development all their life.
- People with learning disabilities face barriers every day of their lives.
- They want the information and services that affect them to be accessible so that they can make their own, informed choices.
- Learning disability is not mental illness. It is not dyslexia.
- People with a learning disability don't get an equal chance in life. That's why we are fighting to get sufficient public funding to meet their rights and needs.
- To find out more, go to [www.learningdisabilitycoalition.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilitycoalition.org.uk)