

Dear Editor

Proposed Cuts to Social Care

The Council has released its proposed cuts amounting to £70m over the next three years the week before Christmas. Yet cuts in established services are to be supplanted by new untested approaches, with no independent evidence that they will improve the outcomes of these people.

To focus on Learning Disability (LD), the closure of three day centres and one residential home, the reduction of care packages by £10m, of social workers by 25%, and funding for daytime activities for people living in residential homes and supported housing can only undermine the little quality of life they enjoy and place more pressure on already over-worked parents and carers, leading to increasing numbers of LD adult becoming the council's responsibility at considerable additional expense.

In place of existing provisions staffed in some cases by skilled professionals, the Council is proposing to 'enhance wellbeing' by reducing reliance on institutional care, focusing on 'reablement', helping people to remain at home for longer, 'transforming' the 'reprovision' of day care – and in particular 'Shared Lives' – as self-funding social enterprises, reducing the use of 'buildings based' day care, shifting more residential care to community care, promoting independence, self help and the use of family and community support, and cutting funding to the voluntary sector in the hope it will become more self-sufficient.

These new proposals are based on a series of unfounded and untested assumptions that they work: eg. that there are a variety of 'new models' of care provision and community support; that with the ending of 'building based' services, the transformation of social care will unfold; that new social enterprises will unleash social care for 'customers' living at home at no cost to the Council; that parents (under no legal obligation to care for their adult children) will give more care; and that after 50 years of community care there are still untapped community-based activities waiting to fill gaps caused by the cuts.

Yet none of these proposals has any substance to it. No independent empirical research is cited to support the contentions and claims underlying these proposals. The challenge to councillors deciding on these proposals is to provide independent evidence that they work. The responsibility rests on the Council to provide the independent evidence that the proposed 'transformations' work. Not to do so is irresponsible.

If implemented, these proposals will further endanger the lives of vulnerable people with LD. The social care sector in England is characterised by low standard care provided by private services employing staff who are unlicensed, unregistered and poorly trained and who work for low wages on zero contracts. The last three years of council cuts have seen scandal after scandal in the social care sector, starting with Winterbourne View in 2011 and currently the closure of several residential homes in England. In Haringey we have seen the public rebuke of one private residential provider (Hoffman Foundation) by the CQC. A series of reports

from the Local Government Information Unit testify to how dire the provision of social care has become.

Given past scandals, Haringey Council would be ill-prepare for further scandals which carry grave implications for services users and parents and for senior officers and councillors. I trust the Cabinet will remove the threat of service cuts to social care users.

Yours

Martin Hewitt