

Letter to Cllr Claire Kober, Leader of Haringey Council

Dear Claire,

RE: Cuts to Social Care

I am writing about the cuts to social care which have been included in the Council's budget proposals.

I have been contacted by dozens of carers in the local area who have raised significant concerns about the £30 million the Council intends to cut from the social care budget up to 2018.

With Labour, the Conservatives, and the Lib Dems agreeing that budgets for local authorities need to be reduced to assist in overall deficit reduction, it is clear that some services will need to change.

It is entirely unclear, however, why Haringey Council has chosen to use reductions in social care to fund almost half of their overall savings. Changes in other departments and fields would be more manageable, have less impact, and benefit the Borough in the long term. Haringey Council's plans will impact on the most vulnerable, and I am therefore urging you and the Cabinet to start the budget process again from scratch.

As you will know, the changes include but are not limited to:

- £10 million reduction in care packages.
- £5.2 million reduction in residential care for the learning disabled, including the closure of the remaining residential home.
- £4 million reduction in care funding for the elderly, again including the closure of the remaining residential home.
- £2.5 million reduction for day care for the learning disabled.
- £1.7 million reduction for mental health patients.
- £1 million reduction for social workers (25% of social workers to be made redundant).

These proposals will lead to significant pressure on carers, and in the long term will cost significantly more for the Council. Many carers will simply be unable to take up the additional work, and the removal of respite in the form of day care, residential care, and other support will make their situation untenable.

At a recent meeting of carers the following concerns were raised, and these echo the issues raised repeatedly by those emailing, phoning, and writing to my office.

1) The impact on carers

- Carers rely on the care packages, day care, residential care, and related services to assist in the care they provide and to offer them some respite.
- With these significant reductions in services a huge number of carers will have to take on additional responsibilities. Many already do as much as they can, and simply do not have the capacity to do any more.
- A number of carers are elderly, caring for adults, and are extremely concerned by the implications in the long term. Others are of working age, and may have to pay from their own funds to cover the difference. In both cases the proposals provide an extra burden of not knowing whether they can provide the extra care or finance.

2) The impact on patients

- For those needing round the clock care the impact is clear. They will not be provided for by their local authority.
- Many will lose their main social contact if they attend the day centres and other similar services.
- Those whose care is retained will see a significant reduction in the quality and quantity of care from the Council. Social workers, dedicated to their jobs, are unlikely to be able to continue their work to the same standards.
- People with dementia, autism, and other conditions will have their routines significantly disrupted, and may find themselves without the same level of support they have received in the past. Such disruption is not conducive to their wellbeing.

3) The consultation period

- Residents were made aware of the proposals on 16h December, and were advised there would be a four week consultation.
- Reading this document over Christmas caused a great deal of worry during a period when carers should have been able to spend time with family and friends. Secondly, with the national and bank holidays over this time, the consultation period equates to around 10 days. It was held – in a rather underhand fashion – at a time when it is clear that many peoples’ attention is diverted by the Christmas and New Year period – limiting the number of people that would respond. It should therefore be extended.

4) The language used

- Residents note that the Council uses the terms ‘transformative care’ and ‘re-ablement’ on a number of occasions in the document. These terms have no meaning in ordinary language.
- To the best of my constituents’ knowledge, ‘transformative care’ means the closure of care homes. ‘Re-ablement’, by contrast, means giving people more responsibility to live independently – whether they want it or not. Whilst in principle this is valid, this has no bearing whatsoever for those with dementia, autism or a range of other conditions.
- It appears that no independent research has been undertaken, and the Council is using a ‘one size fits all’ approach to cover people with a very wide range of conditions and needs.

The above does not cover the entire range of concerns, but provides a snapshot. As you should be aware, carers and families feel very strongly about this issue.

It is estimated that carers save around £119 billion for the UK every year through the care they provide, and therefore a significant amount for Haringey Borough. To take away these services on such a scale will impact significantly on their ability to continue in their roles, and as such will in the long term cost Haringey Council far more than the savings made.

My constituents and I are therefore calling for a complete re-think of the budget, with proper engagement from all interested groups. Local people feel that the decision has already been made by the Cabinet on this, and the consultation is merely a formality. This needs to be proven wrong – changes such as this cannot be steam rolled through, and Haringey Council owes it to local residents to pause, re-think, and engage with all interested groups.

Thank you for your kind attention in this regard and I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Lynne Featherstone MP

Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Hornsey and Wood Green