

HARINGEY COUNCIL CARE CUTS: THE LATEST

Trimming the cuts

On 3 February the Council published the Cabinet's agenda and papers for its meeting on 10 February 2015. These documents provide the first sight of the Council's response to the overwhelming public rejection of its proposals to cut social care services by £30m over the three years 2015-16 to 2017-18 - part of a total cuts package of £74m.

In response to the challenge from service users, parents and carers in the face of the most savage social care cuts in living memory, Haringey Council has now finalised its Mid Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). On the surface the Council has made a few concessions:

- £5.7m cuts in care package reductions have been removed;
- An additional £20,000 has been found for advocacy services.

Social Care now faces a cut of £24.5m rather than the originally proposed £30m. This has been made possible in part by drawing on Council reserves to the tune of £4.3m (para 3.5, MTFS 2015-18, Appendix 3). The Council also plans to draw on Better Care Fund (BCF) money worth £16.4m in 2015-16 from the local NHS. There is also an additional one-off implementation budget of £788,000. The BCF is not new money but diverted resources to achieve better coordination between the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Haringey adult social services as required by the Care Act. In effect the Council is using the BCF to subsidise its savage care cuts.

Social care users who, because of complex health needs, are funded by the CCG will need to watch out for the impact of this diverted money on their own NHS funded care packages. The Council's aim to achieve more 'equitable' allocation of funds means sharing the misery of council cuts among the most vulnerable.

Whilst the scale of social care cuts in Haringey remains far larger than in other London boroughs, the Council's £5.7m concession on the proposed care package reduction shows that it has taken the arguments of SASH and other campaign groups seriously.

Firstly, the Council is now conceding that its favourite solution to the closures of residential homes and day centres, namely reablement, is not appropriate for adults with learning disabilities or dementia. Reablement should now only apply to a minority of elderly and physically disabled users who show a potential for rapid improvement.

Yet one of the core programmes in the care cuts, Care Package Reductions, was conceived as applying to all care groups. One of the three key objectives of the reductions was "to review the appropriateness of packages through a reablement approach", suggesting that all users receiving care packages would be assessed for reablement. To see if care package reductions would work officers conducted a 'desk top review' of a "5% sample of people who use

services”. Social Services haven't yet released their findings and service users must remain alert to back door, and possibly illegal, package cuts.

Secondly, SASH and other users hit home with the point that the Council could not get away with “reviewing domiciliary and direct payment packages and reviewing and reassessing needs” without breaking the law and inviting legal challenges and accompanying bad publicity. The Council has been forced to face up to its legal duties under, for example, the 2014 Care Act, to provide provisions according to need that would be assessed on improved outcomes.

What remains to fight for?

Sadly, the Council remains committed to forcing through its asset-stripping closures of its remaining residential home for learning disability, Linden, and all but one of its four remaining day centres, including Roundways its only centre for autistic adults. Further closures of provisions for the elderly include the Council’s only nursing home and three day centres. These new closures follow in the wake of the closure of six residential homes and six day centres since 2011. With the new cuts there will be virtually no more local public provision in Haringey.