

DEPUTATION THREE  
LEEDS LINK

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes and please begin by introducing yourself and also the people of your delegation.

MR A GILES: Thank you, my Lord Mayor and Councillors. My name is Arthur Giles and along with Joy Fisher, who is at my side, we are co-Chairs of Leeds LINKs, which is the Local Involvement Network. On my left is Jim, Kerr, a member of LINKs Steering Group, and Heather Jackson, who is Joy's PA.

Lord Mayor, we want to talk to you today on the Health and Social Care Act. Lord Mayor, as part of LINKs normal involvement with the people of Leeds we regularly hold events around the city where we discuss issues relating to their health and social care. Throughout its progress through Parliament the Act (as it now is) has been on the agenda of all of our meetings. Now that the Act has completed its process through Parliament we thought it would be helpful if you were aware how Leeds LINK and members of the public felt about some of the changes brought about by the Health and Social Care Act..

There are three particular issues that I would like to raise with you. The first of these is centres around change.

Changes are often needed and can be very useful but they can also be very difficult to accept and in this case the speed at which the changes are to be brought in and the complexity of these changes, coupled with very significant savings that have to be made by the National Health Service, make it almost inevitable that there will be destabilisation of the National Health Service. In addition to this, the changing role of GPs will affect the relationship between patients and GPs.

Lord Mayor, if I could talk a little bit with you about complexity of the Act. This issue has been worrying people in Leeds particularly concerning the complexity and the lack of understanding of how they will fit in to the new system. Will they have the same doctor? Will they have access to the local clinics and hospitals? For many people the answer is, of course, yes, but not everyone understands this and none of us can foresee the implications of the Act when it is implemented.

Few of these changes affecting NHS and social care have been evaluated or trialled and yet we are putting ill and vulnerable people through a system that is untried or untested.

In Leeds we will have three commissioning groups which we believe will fragmentise the NHS with a consequent loss of co-ordination. With these smaller commissioning groups, just a few expensive patients could blow a large hole in their budget. With their added load of commissioning, GPs may be forced to use locums more frequently than they would wish with the inevitable consequences that this will have on patients.

The doctor/patient relationship work best when they know each other well.

Another issue that is raised by the people of Leeds, Lord Mayor, is privatisation. Many people that we have talked to have said they are worried about increased privatisation of the National Health Service. It is clear that many services will be opened to privatisation and this

includes National Health Service hospital beds that could be made available to private companies.

Health and social care services will be offered by a wide range of organisations with both private and voluntary sectors vying for business. This may well lead to co-ordination and communications suffering, in particular when patients receive treatment from more than one provider. People are worried about this and also they are worried that they may have to pay, at least in part, for some of their treatment and services.

Lord Mayor, now that the Bill has become an Act it would be easy to assume that little can be done to alleviate some of these concerns. We believe that many people will need support, particularly the ill and vulnerable, to find their way round these changes, and information that will explain and simplify some of the more complex issues.

THE LORD MAYOR: Arthur, you have now come to the final point that you really ought to be making, so could I respectfully ask that you give us your summary?

MR A GILES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. These changes are significant and there is little doubt about the anxieties that some people are already feeling is very real. These are just the headlines, Lord Mayor, and the short time that we have had prevents a more detailed analysis. We would hope, however, that you will have time to consider our concerns. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis, please.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED.

Arthur, thank you and your delegation for attending and for what you have said to us. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Thank you very much and good afternoon. (Applause)