

# Access Committee for Leeds (ACL)

C/o Mariners Resource Centre, Hunslet Hall Road, Leeds LS11 6TT

Tel/Fax: 0113 228 8110 Minicom: 0113 228 9652

Email: [accessleeds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:accessleeds@yahoo.co.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1076644

## Deputation to Leeds City Council 21/02/07

### The level of Social Services provision in Leeds

### Deputation by Tim McSharry & David Littlewood

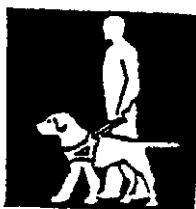
BARRY NAYLOR - NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

There once was a Yorkshire man named J B Priestly, who said, "There was no respect for youth when I was young, and now that I am old there is no respect for age – I missed it coming... and going"

I wonder just what he would say about the lack of care, respect and dignity that many older people and disabled people in Leeds today are forced to endure as a direct result of the running down and dismantling of social services,...services that simply deliver an essential role, simply caring and supporting people, helping to maintain some independence... an unseen... unappreciated job that quite literally has also saved the lives of many people in Leeds, myself included.

This deputation is here today to make a plea on behalf of those older and disabled people in Leeds who are losing essential home based services and access to resources and respite, that is having devastating consequences, not just on their own independence, but also on the lives of family carers.

Page 1 of 3



Working towards Equality. Opportunity, Awareness and Empowerment for Individuals and Groups Regarding All Disability Access Issues."

Registered Charity Number 1076644

There is no room for complacency when the decisions of this council discriminate and victimise a minority of individuals, simply because they have the greatest need as a result of age or disability, and if you are from a black or minority ethnic community this discrimination can be even greater.

There are too many cases to mention that underline the insidious effect of ongoing cuts to social services budgets. These cases do not point to a caring social approach, or a genuine wish to tailor services to meet individual need, no, they seem more about contracting out excellent public services to agencies that have an ethos ultimately motivated by profit not public service.

Too many suspect decisions are being taken without any meaningful involvement of those effected, the Council must move away from an in house officer led model, that is supported by a costly and time wasting legal litigation approach to delivering public services, and instead work to establish meaningful partnerships with the many expert groups across Leeds, something that is not just about meeting your duties as a public body, but also intrinsic to demonstrating a respect for diversity and individual expertise, true involvement that is clearly missing in many policy decisions.

Fortunately, many older and disabled people have a highly developed sense of humour, which is often needed when trying to make sense of this councils social services funding policy, a perfect illustration being the supposedly "Brave" decision to close the Breece in Scarborough, which resulted in holiday respite becoming as rare as hen's teeth for some of our members. Although of course it's no joke when considering those who had booked holidays for this year are still waiting to here from the Council about suitable alternatives.

Yes, the average age of the population is increasing and incidence of disability increase with age, but that should not be the driving force behind policies that hurt and isolate minorities across this city. As this city takes time to celebrate 800 years of its status, surly now is the time to contemplate what success really means, is it just about commercial and financial wealth, or should it really be about how this city recognises social diversity, its vibrant communities and the needs of all its citizens, and how we resource and provide social services that demonstrate exemplar standards of care that respect All life, choice and dignity.

Many older and disabled people across Leeds today are paying a high personal cost, as a result of cuts to services and unjustifiable taxes on age and disability, surly people have the right to grow old without penalty and should not feel victimised because of disability. Leeds Social Services are fundamental to the future health and social cohesion of this city. Without care there is no community, there is no dignity without respect, and there is no equality without inclusion, this council must call a moratorium on its devastating programme of cutting social services before any more harm is done.

Tim McSharry  
Access Committee for Leeds  
Leeds City Council Meeting Deputation  
Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007