

**Deputation to Leeds City Council
on behalf of all Homecare Service Users
Led by : Carol Brown**

Supported by : Malcolm Naylor

Accompanied by : Diane Hallas

Personal Assistant

Supporting the view that the in house Homecare set-up could be excellent with more attention from the management and that if service users choose Direct Payments, they should be given a reasonable hourly rate with which to employ carers.

28 - 01 - 09

Adult Social Care is about to undergo radical change. I am asking you, as our elected representatives, to make sure that the changes made to Homecare are financially and logistically viable and to the benefit of both service users and staff at the point of delivery.

The chief asset of the in-house Homecare service as it stands is the quality of the assistants who deliver the care. They are punctual, professional and concerned for the welfare of their clients but they are increasingly being asked to cover too wide an area and to administer care to too many clients. Staff leave and retire and are not replaced and the reason given is lack of funding. This does not seem very convincing when one considers that three new senior managers have been appointed on salaries of £90,000 each.

This proliferation of highly paid managers is evident in every department of Leeds City Council. The number of council employees receiving remuneration of between £50,000 - £200,000 has risen in the last four years from 165- 561. We have not seen a corresponding improvement in services.

Moreover, the digipens, which must have cost a substantial amount of money to develop, have been phased out before they have even become operational in all areas in favour of electronic rostering which, presumably, is going to involve yet more expense.

The first point which I would like you to consider is that huge amounts of money are being wasted on unreasonably high salaries for managers whilst a much reduced frontline staff struggles to maintain a high level of care.

My second area of concern is the Direct Payments method of administering Homecare which is a Westminster-led initiative. It may be wonderfully liberating for some but many older people are terrified at the thought of finding their own carers as may be seen from the letters pages of such publications as, 'MS Matters' and, 'The Parkinson'.

Everyone in Leeds who uses Direct Payments is registered with H.M. Revenue and Customs as a small business even when, as in my case, using Direct Payments for only 8hrs a month. We all accepted this as a legal requirement but on further investigation, I have found out that registration is necessary only if one is a limited company. There is no justification for sending nervous pensioners bewildering packs of information containing CD Roms and letters which are headed, to quote the last one I received, 'ADVANCE WARNING TO SEND IN YOUR EMPLOYER ANNUAL RETURN ON LINE FOR 2009/10. When I enquired at the Armley support office why it was necessary to register service users as small businesses, I was told that it made life easier for the accountants. Inexplicably, the payroll is administered by a firm of private accountants at Horsforth. Whatever the reason for their involvement, I do not think that their convenience should be considered at the expense of the peace of mind of elderly service users.

The difficulty of 5,600 service users trying to find two carers each to cover the 7-day week is compounded by the fact that Leeds is offering only £6.42 an hour. The Association for Real Change has worked out that the system cannot work on less than £11.00 an hour and most authorities are offering £9.50 - £22.00 an hour. Also has anyone calculated that there will need to be at least 84 advisors to help people through the administrative nightmare at the end of each month? In Oldham, where the scheme has gone further, one service user needed so much support that she was costing the council £49.00 a week more than if she had been using the in house service.

The long-term plan is for Direct Payments to become Self Directed Support, covering daytime activities as well as care. If this happens, one can only predict that many severely disabled people will become very isolated as they will be unable, or unwilling to organise transport and group activities for themselves.

In conclusion, I am asking that the potentially excellent in house system should be given more support and resources; that the upper layers of management should be reduced ; that the remaining managers should make themselves more aware of what is happening on the ground and that those who opt voluntarily for Direct Payments should be given a realistic hourly rate.