

DEPUTATION TWO
ACCESS COMMITTEE FOR LEEDS

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 the people in your Deputation.

MR T McSHARRY: Thank you Lord Mayor and elected Members. The members of our deputation are myself, Tim McSharry, David Littlewood, Mary Naylor MBE, Barry Naylor and Linda Watson.

On behalf of the many older and disabled people from communities across Leeds who truly enjoy and value the immense benefits of attending their local day centres, our deputation is here to make an impassioned plea to use, our elected Members, and to ask that you place a moratorium on the planned closure of the six day centres. We would also ask that you facilitate a comprehensive disability impact assessment and review this decision, not simply as it is the best way of meeting the legal duties that are owed by all public bodies, but as a positive way to demonstrate clear and decisive leadership on this critical issue and remove the stress and worry that has been caused to so many people by this decision.

As a registered charity who provide free support and advocacy, we have received many calls from people who are worried about the implications of these closures. It is also clear from the letters in the Yorkshire Evening Post and the many petitions that have been signed, that a great number of Leeds citizens and many City Councillors in this Chamber are concerned about these closures and what they reveal for the future of adult social care in Leeds.

The citizens of Leeds deserve better than this and, whilst there is no room for compromise or complacency, there is a very urgent need for leadership and honesty. High quality, comprehensive social care is central to the social cohesion of this city. The loss of day centres and the undermining of social care policy present a real threat to the social diversity of our communities and the rights, equality and dignity of some of our most vulnerable and disabled citizens.

The integrity, leadership and openness of this Council are not served when disingenuous or ill-informed decisions are made; neither are the citizens of Leeds. The evidence presented in making the case for the six closures seriously failed to give the whole truth. It failed to present evidence from the many people who have tried to access day centres but have encountered a disjointed process that seems more focused on prevention rather than informed and open choice. It failed to highlight the cruel impact the changes to criteria had in excluding many vulnerable older and disabled people. One example is the taking away of social isolation as a key category for access to day services.

It failed to include the effects associated with the removal of the self-referral process and the introduction of a time consuming and difficult process requiring access to a social worker or care manager. It failed also to listen to people who use and value day centres or to appreciate the hidden personal and financial benefits and savings that are found through social interaction, peer support, physical and mental wellbeing and respite for family carers.

As part of this deputation we all positively embrace and support change as part of developing and improving services. However, when it comes to decisions that are founded on budget cuts portrayed as increase in choice and potential signposting to third sector services that have no spare capacity, we are automatically concerned for those vulnerable citizens across Leeds who may simply be missed as a result of closures, falling through the net into social exclusion, deprivation and ill health.

Without honesty there is no integrity; without care there is no community; and without leadership too many of our vulnerable citizens could be missed and condemned to social exclusion, deprivation and ill health.

Please support this deputation and save the day centres. Thank you. *(Applause)*
(standing ovation from Labour Group)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

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

COUNCILLOR: So you should.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We genuinely mean it – we second.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for a vote, please. *(A vote was taken)* This is PASSED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have had to say. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Thank you and good afternoon.
(Applause)