

DEPUTATION ONE
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. The members of our deputation are David Littlewood, Margaret Belton, Judith Smith, Peter Rushton and myself, Tim McSharry.

The title of our deputation is - Please help us to save Woodlands MS Respite Care Centre, York.

It is often said that nothing is certain other than death and taxes, but when we consider the demographic changes facing society, there is one other increasing certainty that, as a result of ill health, injury, age, disability or family caring commitments, the provision of quality respite services will become a growing issue for everyone in society with the potential to impact on the lives of each of us here today.

For many individuals living with ill health and disability and their family carers, respite offers not just an opportunity for a short break to recharge batteries, it can also provide a critical life-line to maintaining independence and family relationships, which may face great challenges and personal demands as a result of 24/7 caring commitments and, of course, this is no different for anyone in Leeds who is living with or caring for someone with MS.

MS or Multiple Sclerosis affects about 1 in 1000 people in the UK. MS is an illness that affects three times as many women than men. It can also affect anyone at any age, although it is more often diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40.

Woodlands MS Respite Care Centre in York is unique in our Region and offers specialist support, therapies and care from highly trained and dedicated staff, supported by exemplar on-site facilities that many people living with MS in Leeds have used and benefited from for many years. People like Judith Smith, who has been going for ten years and who said, "It's a real home from home. The care you receive really does make you feel a whole lot better, it gives a chance for a break for people back home and they don't need to worry about how you are being looked after because they know you are amongst friends and there is nowhere you can go to be better looked after"

Peter Rushton said, "Woodlands is the perfect respite resource, it would be a terrible loss to many people in Leeds if it closes. It is a fantastic environment, with highly trained and understanding staff which can make a real difference when you are living with MS. It has made a big difference to both me and my wife and it's important that family members get a proper break".

Margaret Belton has been using Woodlands for three years and says that, "If it closes the family doesn't get a break, it's an integral part of our lives. Woodlands specialist MS help makes a massive difference, the staff can't do enough for you. If we lost it there would be nothing on the same standard to replace it".

Nationally it has been estimated that carers save the UK economy £87b a year and there can be no doubt that the availability of such specialist respite facilities benefits many people and families across Leeds. The loss of Woodlands may also have implications for Leeds Adult Social Care and how their commissioning officers could find an acceptable or suitable alternative MS service within the Region.

The potential closure of Woodlands next year also raises additional concerns, especially given the Government cuts to public services and Local Authority funding. Many disabled people are concerned how these cuts will directly impact on the provision of essential services, like respite. The Government has indicated a hope that large charities will somehow respond to the needs of people who require core services, but clearly on this evidence there are still many questions to answer.

Disability, ill health, injury and caring commitments can become a part of anyone's life. Respite can offer a much needed break that enable families to continue to provide support and care. On behalf of our members living with MS, their family and carers, we would humbly ask for any assistance that Leeds City Council could offer to help save the exemplar resources available at Woodlands and help to maintain the dignity, wellbeing and family support of the many Leeds people living with MS.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I move that the deputations matter be referred to the Executive Board.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote, please? *(A vote was taken)* Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon to you, ladies and gentlemen.

MR T McSHARRY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*