

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes. The following deputation has been referred from Council on 25 October 2012.

Deputation: Home Care Contracts**Spokesperson: Cllr Summers on behalf of Lesley Beckman and Care Workers in general.**

“There is an urgent need to give consideration to the impact of the new home care contracts introduced by the Council. These new contracts were designed to ensure that people receiving home care received more choice and control as the previous system was not suitable for the more flexible services that are required, which is why the council changed the way providers are paid.

Councillor Jarrett has stated that the council is not responsible for the way independent providers pay their staff and has no power to control them, but is keen to work with them to provide a minimum live-able wage of £7.19 per hour. This figure being less than a shop assistant can earn in this city. This shows how little Councillor Jarrett, and all those who support this figure, value both the care workers and those they serve across this city despite statements to the contrary. He also states that he is looking into ways to support the home care industry locally in terms of both recruiting and retaining home care workers, and trying to address the issue of rising fuel costs. Work is being undertaken to look at initiatives that can be implemented to help providers (not staff) with these costs.

The council is charging its clients a maximum of £21.50 per hour to run its in-house services, yet expects that outside agencies will provide the same high level of service for just £14.50 per hour. How does that work? However, nothing done properly is done cheaply and that is a trap the Green council has fallen into when changing the way providers are paid. The council no longer pays enhancements for weekends/anti-social hours and expects lone agency workers to visit service users up to 10pm, yet council workers visit in pairs. It no longer pays fuel allowance nor does it even make provision for it or for wasted time travelling between calls (which increases working hours) or depreciation of vehicles, nor does it pay enhancements to providers to ensure continuity of care. All this apparently gives service users more choice, control and flexibility - how?

You have all seen the effects that the new contracts have had on one small local agency within this city in the 3 months since the contracts have begun, and the costs that those care workers who remain are expected to swallow in order to continue working. 8 workers with between 4 and 7 years' experience have left and more may follow. This agency previously had an excellent staff retention record, and was rated in the care quality commissions report as a well-performing caring agency. The staff who have left have been replaced mainly by students who work in their spare time to fund their studies, and by the time they are experienced they will have left to pursue their dreams and so the cycle will continue.

At the last Adult Care & Health Committee meeting Councillor Jarrett confirmed that across the city, in the 3 months since the contracts began, 153 care workers have been recruited and 60 have left. How long the remaining 93 will stay remains to be seen. However, it was curious to note that the number of home care staff across the city has not, according to Councillor Jarrett, diminished. This then begs the question whether or not it has, in fact, been increased in order to meet the demands of an increasing number of people receiving home care! Much of this information, and more, has been presented at the last 2 Adult Care & Health Committee meetings and is also supported, as you can see, by both Unison and Michelle Mitchell of Age UK.

This deputation requests that the council reconsiders the position it has placed care workers in, and seeks to address the imbalance caused with a report to the next Adult Care & Health Committee meeting.”