

IDEAS FOR QUESTIONS TO RAISE AT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

I am very concerned that Social Care is failing disabled and older people, unpaid carers and care workers.

- **Many people are not getting any support at all;** those who do often get erratic and institutionalised care which offers little choice, control or dignity. They are also being hit with rising care charges and threats of court action over charges debt they can't afford.
- **Staff are leaving in droves because of poor wages and conditions.** Many of the care workers from abroad brought here to help ease the crisis are being grossly exploited and penalised; some are living in conditions close to modern slavery.
- **Most of the 10 million family carers receive little or no support** and feel unheard and ignored. 80,000 family carers are children!

In this context I am particularly keen to know

- a. **Whether you consider that Social Care needs radical overhaul and we should be looking to scrap charges and make it free at the point of use** like health care and whether as a starter you will press our LA to follow the example of Hammersmith and Fulham and scrap charging for support at home?
- b. **Whether you will oppose raising care charges and support raising the LA's discretionary minimum income guarantee** to avoid charges eating into people's disability benefits which are specifically there to help cover the extra costs disabled people incur doing what many people take for granted e.g. seeing friends and family?
- c. **Whether you are prepared to urge the Council to follow a 'needs led' rather than a 'resource led' approach to assessments** and be open and transparent about needs the Council can't meet because of a shortage of funds. This can not only open up conversations about more creative ways of meeting need but focuses public attention on the importance of challenging Government underfunding of vital public services?
- d. **Whether you will pursue more democratic decision making and scrutiny processes** at all levels in the Council and provide support needed to enable disabled people, carers, workers and local communities to be involved in genuinely co-designing and producing services and participating in Scrutiny Boards. This means going beyond focus groups, personal stories and consultation exercises to share real power and responsibility?
- e. **Will you ensure that all directly employed staff are paid at least the living wage,** make this a contractual requirement for all providers – and monitor compliance! - as Salford has done – and ensure that all staff are entitled to sick pay, payment for travel time and sleep overs, training and trade union representation. Also take steps to identify and end the exploitation of workers from overseas?

- f. **Will you pursue the provision of much needed practical and financial support to unpaid carers**, value their expertise and treat them as partners in planning?
- g. **Will you take steps to stop profiteering in care and support** and encourage the Council to start looking at non-profit options for taking over services as private companies surrender contracts i.e. bring them in house , commission third sector providers (Islington ahead here) and /or look at innovative co-ops /peer support?

And when people say there is no money for even small measures towards providing decent, dignified care and support for those who desperately need it - which may well be most of us at some stage in life - will you give up trying or will you

- **Insist that our LA gets together with other LAs to collectively push back** against Government regarding totally inadequate and hopelessly short term national funding settlements.
- **Join the many voices arguing that money can be found now if only there is political will and spending on social care and support is an investment not just a cost.** It creates wealth and wellbeing and helps build inclusive societies which benefit us all.

Doubling the annual spend on Social Care to £40bn is not impossible if you think that

- £10bn a year could be raised by introducing a sliding scale of wealth tax from 140,000 rich individuals in the UK
- £25bn could be raised by taxing capital gains at the same rates as earned income and charging national insurance on the same
- £8-10bn could be raised by taxing dividends at the same rate as earned income
- More than £35bn could be raised just by recouping the tax lost in Britain through non-payment, avoidance and fraud in one year