

Appendix ACounty Council – 6 December 2016Leader of the Council's Statement

Madam Chairman, I used to be one of the millions of workers making the daily commute by train to and from the capital. Every evening when I arrived back at Caterham station, as everybody got into cars, onto bicycles, or hit the pavements, the Sheriff would be there to meet me. No, Madam Chairman, he wasn't there to arrest me. This kind and gentle man would offer to join me on my walk home rain or shine, day or night.

We never knew that much about each other - I didn't even know his real name or much about where he came from - but on our way up the hill, towards my home, we would talk about anything and everything that had happened that day. When I reached my front door we would say our goodbyes and he would carry on his way – back to St Lawrence's Hospital in Caterham.

Madam Chairman, my friend didn't live in this institution because he had a long-term illness, nor did he need to be there to receive medical care. He lived there simply because he had a Learning Disability. It was a place where he should never have been. It wasn't right for him. And it wasn't right for our communities. Surrey had a great many of these institutions – they were full of people with Learning Disabilities like the Sheriff. But today, those place are gone - and rightly so.

St Lawrence's Hospital in Caterham has closed down, like many other institutions in Surrey, and people with Learning Disabilities are now supported by our social care services and living in our communities. It's a change that means instead of being treated as patients, they are seen as individuals; like all of us. Because we know that people with Learning Disabilities will always be better-off

- when they are supported in their own community,
- when they are kept close to loved ones,
- and when they are empowered with their families to make decisions about their own care.

Today, our council supports over 3,500 Surrey residents with a Learning Disability. Take James for example. James attended Young Epilepsy until 2014. When he left college, James's parents wanted him to be able to live independently. And at the same time as this young man was finishing college, Surrey was working to develop a new supported living service for younger people. James was able to join this service when he left Young Epilepsy and in those two years, he has developed his independent skills – like cooking and cleaning. He has forged links in his new community; joining a gym, attending a rambling club and enjoying going out with his friends. It is a huge success. For James and his family.

Then there is Tom. Tom lives at home with his mother and sister. Whilst attending college, Tom was on a work experience placement at Surrey University. They were so impressed with his work that they offered him a paid job. So Surrey worked with the college to develop a role that would fit around Tom's course. Now he's doing really well - both on the course and at work. Another great success.

That's why we do all we can to support residents with Learning Disabilities – helping them do the ordinary things which most of us take for granted; helping them to be part of their local community and ensuring their voice is listened to. Surely, this is some of the most important work this council does.

However, the number of residents with Learning Disabilities we support is rising fast. In 2011, 860 adults with severe Learning Disabilities were transferred into our care from the National Health Service. Because of their complex needs they required personal support in the community. Yet this was by far the biggest transfer of Learning Disability cases in the entire country - 8 times larger than the average.

Madam Chairman, it was because of this large increase in numbers, that the government gave Surrey 64 million pounds to support these residents annually.

Now - here comes the sting in the tail.

Three years later this funding – worth sixty nine million pounds at this point - was simply rolled in with our overall government grant. The very same grant which has been slashed again and again by central government. It means the money we got to look after some of our most vulnerable residents with Learning Disabilities is - in effect - simply disappearing. That's tens of millions of pounds wiped clean off our books. Tens of millions of pounds we have no real way of replacing. And tens of millions of pounds we urgently need now to support some of the most vulnerable residents in our communities.

Madam Chairman, no other local authority faces a situation on this scale. No other area has such a large demand. Numbers at these levels exist only here, in Surrey. Our county is actually home to the largest population of people with Learning Disabilities not just in the UK, but across Europe. In fact, the number of people this council supports is expected to rise to over 3,750 by April 2017. That's an increase of 36% in just five years. It means we will need to provide more care packages than ever before...

- for increasingly complex cases...
- and for a rising number of young people leaving Children's services – who will need our social care services for many years to come.

We have reached the point where demand is so high that Learning Disabilities is actually the largest area of Adult Social Care spend for this council. Even higher than our spend on older residents. We have worked hard to keep costs down - as we have across all council services. Despite numbers increasing by 36% we have reduced the average cost of supporting residents with Learning Disabilities by 12% over the past five years. Yet unrelenting demand and sky-rocketing costs - over which we have no control - means that this financial year we expect to spend over 168 million pounds on our Learning Disability services.

Madam Chairman, that's more than ever before.

With rising demand set to continue, it is fast becoming more and more difficult to find the funding for these services as Government cuts bite. We are trapped in an unsustainable system. A system which makes no allowances for the demographic demand in Surrey. A system which is stretching our finances to breaking point. The government must recognise the situation in Surrey before it's too late. They must recognise the financial impact of such a high level of Learning Disability demand. After all, by their own admission, government said that Surrey County Council needed 75 million pounds to support the Learning Disabilities clients we took from NHS in 2011. But as I have said that funding is disappearing in smokescreens.

Government must make sure we receive correct funding to take care of residents with Learning Disabilities in Surrey.

Madam Chairman, looking after Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities is our responsibility – a responsibility we treasure and we work hard to make a difference to their

lives – but Government also has a responsibility to make sure that our most vulnerable residents are supported through fair funding.

Our Social Care Services have the power to change these residents' lives for the better.

There are hundreds more stories like those of James and Tom where our support has made a huge difference. Hundred more stories which inspire us. Hundreds more stories which drive us to get it right for our residents.

Madam Chairman, at the moment I'm reading Joey Deacon's story. It reminds me just how important it is that we listen to residents with Learning Disabilities– because everyone has their own story to tell. I'm really proud of the hard-working staff in our social care services and I'm even more humbled by the fortitude and character demonstrated by residents with Learning Disabilities and their families. A fortitude and character that is evidenced by Joey Deacon's story.

Madam Chairman, they are a credit to our communities throughout Surrey.

As a Council:-

- We must never stop listening.
- We must never stop caring.
- And we must never stop fighting for funding to ensure people with Learning Disabilities live and grow as part of our communities in Surrey.

Madam Chairman, I have never been afraid to tell the truth to those in power. If government policies are letting Surrey residents down it is my job – if fact, the job of all of us – to speak up for Surrey. Our MPs and central government need to be told when the people of Surrey are being treated unfairly. I will fight tooth and nail to get the right deal – a fair deal - for Surrey.

So I call on Surrey's MPs and Government to understand the reality – that Surrey has the highest volume of residents with Learning Disabilities in the country. I call on them to listen to the facts – facts which make it clear that we can't cope with rising demand while our budgets are slashed year after year. I call on them to do what's right for Surrey and fund Learning Disabilities fairly. And I call on our 11 Surrey MPs to join me in this campaign to ensure that those with Learning Disabilities get the support they deserve.

+For every resident. For every Sheriff. For every James. For every Tom. For every Joey.

I call on the Government to act now before it is too late.

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