

# The True Face of Carers

Carers' and MP Event – 11 – 12.30pm, Friday, 10 June 2011

## Responses to questions from carers

### Q: "Where has Ed Davey been with all these consultations going on about the Causeway closing?"

**Ed Davey MP** responded, by saying that he had looked closely at Causeway consultation and wants to see an improvement to services. He said he didn't consider the Causeway as a 'good' building, adding that *"fewer people over the years use its facilities, therefore there was a case for change and that a drop-in centre, or other community based venues, would make a more personal service"*.

He paid tribute to the consultation process, which tried to ensure that people with learning disabilities and their families were involved in the consultation.

However, he acknowledged that *"changes in the service are worrying for people"*, but added *"I am hopeful that reconfiguring the service will be much better for users"*.

### Q: "I'd like to know more about changes being made to day services and about transport to and from HFT Causeway drop in and respite care" and "Why is the Council shutting the Causeway without any alternative put in place or planned?"

**David Smith** confirmed that the Causeway would be closing but he assured everyone that *"alternatives are in place"*.

**Simon Pearce** added, *"the Council will continue to provide a flexible transport service to support the new model"*.

**Zac Goldsmith MP** asked *"are people's issues are not about the Causeway closing, but more about what would be in its place"*. He also said that *"the Council knows what it needs to do"*.

### Q: "How can the Government help people with learning disabilities into work? In particular how can they make the balance between earning money and losing benefits better for the person and how can they help all employers benefit without additional cost to their business in terms of support the person will need?"

**Zac Goldsmith MP** advised the group that *"there is a Social Enterprise Model mandate to employ people with learning disabilities, i.e. in gardening and carpentry work"*.

**Ed Davey MP** agreed that *"employers need to be more aware of the needs of people with learning disabilities"*. Ed is working with Kingston Hospital to raise their awareness of the benefits of employing people with learning disabilities.

Supporting Zac's comment, Ed explained that the Social Enterprise Model would play a big planning role in the future. He added that *"there is a proposal for reform to make it easier for employers, who have uneven working patterns, which would be particularly helpful to people with mental health issues who may have erratic work times..."*

*'Slivers of Time' is an enterprise to support carers with flexible working. They have a website whereby a person can log on and indicate what hours they would like to work. This could also possibly be useful for people with mental health issues"*.

**Zac Goldsmith MP** suggested we get more evidence of how people want to work in Kingston and indicated that Tesco's is a good example of flexible working.

**Q: "In the light of the many people with disabilities (in particular those with learning disabilities), due to modern medicines and treatments, are enjoying a much longer lifespan, into their 40s, 50s and 60s, what does the Coalition Government intend to do regarding the provision of their care? Structured all day Day Care Centres have provided very well for their care, affording the very necessary respite for their elderly parent carers to keep sons/daughters at home. With the demise of Day Care Centres, elderly parents will no longer be able to care for their adult children, and have no alternative but to put them into care homes, much earlier than necessary. Here in RBK elderly, parent carers will, very shortly be experiencing this problem, as the closure of two Day Centres which have proved to be a lifeline for carers & users for over 25 years, are about to be closed. Some of the elderly parent carers, who themselves have age-related health problems, will have to face one of the most difficult decisions of their lives.**

**So, has this Government got alternative plans in answer, to what will be an ever increasing problem Nationwide? if not, then we will be turning the clock back 50yrs to the days of the 2000 bedded institutions to accommodate vulnerable adults - and that is NOT acceptable."**

**Zac Goldsmith MP** began by saying, *"there will be millions of people with dementia in the future and this massive increase could bankrupt the system without carers,"* and that *"there are massive challenges ahead but no current obvious solution."*

**Ed Davy MP** added, *"We don't have a magic wand and we must learn what is happening locally. Home Farm Trust is involved effectively in this solution and Fircroft is doing a fantastic job with people with learning disabilities. There is a lot of good practice going on in the Borough...we also need to work with the voluntary sector more."*

**David Smith** said, *"across Kingston, health and social care model of care is moving away from service provision by the state and moving towards voluntary sector involvement. The aim is to keep people living in their own homes longer with a better quality of life and keeping them out of hospitals."*

**Simon Pearce** added that *"carers will continue to be supported through alternative leisure and educational activities available for the people they care for "*.

**Q: "What support and re-assurance can you offer to carers that with all the cuts and changes locally that there will not be even more pressure put on carers?"**

**Ed Davey MP** responded, *"The move toward Individual Budgets is to empower people to make money go further. However, the process needs to be well managed but it is the right thing to do. People should be able to make their own choices. There will be worries through the transition, but will end result will empower people."*

**Zac Goldsmith MP** totally agreed with Ed's comments, but acknowledged *"this could throw up all kinds of challenges such as putting more pressure on carers to manage the personal budget."*

**David Smith** added that *"we need to keep people living in their own homes"* and promoted the use of Tunstall community alarm systems along with other technology *"to reduce risk and support people to continue living in their own homes."*

**Q: "Government provides 15 hours of free Early Years Education for all 3 and 4 years old, to give all children equal opportunities. If Local Authority has no legal obligation to provide equipment, assistance and transport that pre-school disabled children need to access education, those children are excluded from the vital services available to healthy children. How can we avoid this discriminatory practice?"**

**Ed Davey MP** agreed and suggested the *"need to put pressure on local authorities and hold Local Authorities accountable."*

**Graham Snelling** added that *"the Special Educational Needs Green Paper consultation is about changing the face of provision. Transport is provided locally for specialist schools but is problematic for main stream schools. Learning and Children Services are awaiting Government's response to the consultation."*

**Q: "Why is there a lack of access to respite care for parent carers in Kingston? Carers are not getting enough hours respite because the criteria has changed."**

**Zac Goldsmith MP** said he would find out why the criteria has changed.

**Ed Davey MP** responded by saying local councils and government will have to make changes, some changes will mean some services will be taken away. Need to find a more effective way of delivering services.

**Graham** stated that "the criteria hasn't changed, but we have had to make savings having lost 4/5 family support workers." Graham invited carers to speak to him and was happy to speak to individuals. KCN has been a tremendous support but concerns regarding funding to KCN.

**Simon Pearce** indicated that there were no plans to cut funding to KCN and added that *"there is a need for more support for working carers"*.

**Ed Davey MP** *"paying for childcare is expensive and a priority of parents of disabled children when taking tough decision. A parent has the right to take unpaid leave for children up to 5 years old, it is proposed to increase this to 18 years which would make a tremendous difference to parents. There is a need to give carers more rights in the workplace and employers need to know they need to change"*.

**Zac Goldsmith MP** ended by saying he would like to see a discussion take place about priorities.

**The meeting had over-run by 20 minutes and so David Smith asked if there were any other questions or comments.**

**Comment: "My daughter has substantial substance abuse problems. I took her to GP who told her she wouldn't get much help in this borough. I tried to access information, but was told I can't speak to anyone because of 'confidentiality'. External agencies were more helpful – statutory services could learn from their sort of approach and practice."**

**Q: "Personal Budgets are wonderful, but I have issues over inaccurate billing from agencies and have worries about Personal Budgets being abused. Are there any safeguarding in place?"**

**Simon Pearce** responded by informing the group that there is a safeguarding policy in Kingston and anyone can raise an alert if they have a concern or feedback to the relevant Care Co-ordinator (Social Worker).

**Q: "My mother has dementia and has care from external agency. I also have concerns about when they come and go and think there should be some way of monitoring attendance times. Perhaps agency workers should ring through as they arrive and leave or maybe they could be tagged."**

**Ed Davey MP** said that Simon Pearce and his colleagues need to monitor this locally. Contracted companies could be penalised if found to be billing incorrect. Ed presumed agencies are regulated and that it is essential that people let the council know if they are be billed incorrect.

**Simon Pearce** added that he would encourage anyone being billed incorrectly, or their families, to contact the local authority.

**Q: What do schools do to help young carers? Young carers do not see themselves as carers. What do we do for young carers?**

**Zac Goldsmith MP** believes that we are not doing enough for young carers.

**Kate Dudley** (KCN) indicated that they were doing a lot of work with young carers of whom *"there are approximately 180 in the borough and giving them lots of time to be children"*.

**Ed Davey MP** added that *"there are real issues identifying young carers. Early involvement is important and if not supported, there is a danger of long-term damage"*.

**Q: Provision of transport for dementia suffers who are not able to help themselves – only minibus system would help.**

**Zac Goldsmith** said that *"transport issues have been a problem for many years"*, adding that there are *"numerous organisations who have access to vehicles and so there is a need to do a review of the many transport systems in borough for people"*.

**Ed Davey** added that *"funding should continue to help older people who can't use community transport"*.

**Simon Pearce** confirmed that the local authority is already looking into transport issues and is working towards a more flexible use of our transport resources.

Before leaving, everyone was thanked for coming and everyone agreed that the event had been useful and should be repeated. Carers were encouraged to have their say by using the Carers Forum, being launched at the end of the month, to raise the issues that are important to them to help shape services and support for carers in Kingston.

### **Carers Forum in Kingston**

12.30 – 2.30pm, Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June

Noble Centre, 109a Blagdon Road, New Malden KT3 4BD

The True Face of Carers 2011, meeting between carers and MPs, ended at 1.55pm.