

Derbyshire County Council Cuts Transport Costs Assistance To Vulnerable Young People

24th October 2019

North East Derbyshire Labour Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Chris Peace has been contacted this month by anxious and concerned parents who, without warning, have been landed with a £400 bill from Conservative Derbyshire County Council for transport costs. Their disabled daughter attends a Special School in Derbyshire in order to enable her to receive the support she and her family desperately need. For vulnerable children with special needs, the 'local' school very often isn't the most appropriate, as their needs are very specialised and they often have to travel a considerable distance to attend an appropriate school.

Nicky Morley, the young person's parent said: "Now, I feel like I'm being penalised for putting my child's safety first. Having to pay for transport seems a ludicrous addition to an ever growing expense in caring for a vulnerable, disabled child. The pressure on families from every angle, whether it's medical, educational, social or financial is immense already, and this is just something that special families shouldn't have to be negotiating or fighting about"

Chris Peace said: "Local Authority financial help with transport costs to enable our young people to travel is essential. Conservative Derbyshire County Council has the discretion to pay for the transport and instead has chosen to transfer the costs to the families and carers without sufficient warning due to cuts in young people's advice and guidance workers. This is completely unacceptable. Many Councils are being inadequately funded by central government and have already called for more government money to match growing demand."

Councillor Anne Western, Derbyshire County Council Labour Group Leader, said: "There is a crisis across the country facing families of children with SEND, due to government funding falling far short of the growing need for services. Unfortunately Conservative Derbyshire County Council is taking a hard line approach and is spending many thousands of pounds in legal costs battling with families in tribunals rather than working with them to help meet their needs. As Labour county councillors, we are meeting parents, school staff and the children concerned to better understand the challenges they face. But the fundamental solution to this nightmare is for

the government to provide more money, not just empty promises."

Notes:

Labours Manifesto plan is to deliver a strategy for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) based on inclusivity, and embed SEND more substantially into training for teachers and non-teaching staff, so that staff, children and their parents are properly supported. Labour recognises that special needs services are a lifeline for our young people and that children, particularly in rural areas, have to travel long distances to school and their services adequately funded.