

JOE SCOFIELD

I felt obliged to say something tonight, as I volunteer for CAB as a receptionist. So I engage with the kinds of people who come in for help.

I see two main problems with the Council's proposal to cut advisory services.

Firstly, the Council hasn't *demonstrated* that the many thousands of hours of face-to-face work and admin that the CAB performs for vulnerable people, can be replicated by other agencies.

I see the long hours of work the CAB Advisors devote to clients, and I *know* it's mainly with vulnerable people and that it's *all* indispensable.

To point out that *other* agencies perform face-to-face work, isn't the same as saying that these agencies can carry *the same workload* or put in all those thousands of hours of work as the CAB does. If other agencies *can* do it, they must have an awful lot of spare time on their hands now.

Secondly, I believe some clients will slip through the net. We've already seen a comment in the local paper from Stone King solicitors, predicting a shortfall in legal help.

My branch of CAB would close under the cuts. And I'm not confident that all the vulnerable people I see will automatically find help elsewhere. Because there are people who are illiterate or have learning difficulties, or arrive in a state of emotional breakdown, who aren't so easy to signpost elsewhere. It's no good assuming for example, that *illiterate* people will find websites and helplines.

Some clients are *accustomed* to getting help from the CAB and will work with specific Advisors whom they know by name. It's easy for bureaucrats at the Guildhall to assume these clients will just come over to *Council desks* at One Stop, but it's not so certain in reality.