

# The Work of Yvonne Hossack - A UK Lawyer Who Cares

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Yvonne Hossack - A UK Lawyer Who Cares

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— By someone who works with her and has a disabled child who is protected by her.

When Local Authorities want to make cuts they need to make difficult decisions and can be tempted to make them in the path of least resistance.

[Yvonne's work](#) is so unique because she is currently the only multi party legally aided solicitor in this country (UK) working full time on these important care issues. Quite why there are no other solicitors working around the clock on challenging cuts to care is a mystery but could it be that in order to do what Yvonne does you need to: -

Sacrifice your marriage, your health and your home. Be prepared to work through the night to prepare cases for Court because during the day your phone doesn't stop ringing with pleas for help from vulnerable people who have no-one else to turn to.

I first met Yvonne in 2005 when, as the mother of a learning disabled adult child, I was very concerned about our local Council looking to cut £2.6million from the Social Care Budget. Like many people on the Autistic Spectrum my child reacts very badly to change and needs a great deal of care and support.

Until I met Yvonne I had little respect for 'experts' including the legal profession. For years my learning disabled daughter had been bullied at school without help from head teachers, medical experts had failed to diagnose or investigate her disability and when, she was in her mid 20's, we could no longer cope with her difficult behaviour and various 'experts' placed her in inappropriate homes. In all that time we battled to get good care for our daughter and no-one ever told us that we could legally challenge decisions made by Social Care departments.

When Yvonne appeared at my daughters Day Centre which was under threat I saw immediately that this was an expert with a difference. She addressed an audience of learning disabled adults and their parents and spoke to all with respect and simplicity. For the first time I felt as though my daughter had a voice to speak for her.

Last year Yvonne was under the threat of being struck off by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority in a Tribunal hearing that saw much publicity. I knew that Yvonne was working through the night to get her cases finished in case she was struck off. Putting the clients before her own preparations for defending herself in the Tribunal meant she was hardly eating and sleeping so I contacted her to offer to come in for a couple of days without charge just to man the photocopier, empty the bins or keep her fed and watered. After the Tribunal was over and she was free to carry on her wonderful work she asked me to work with her when required and I was delighted to have the opportunity.

Now her work is under threat again and I am terrified of what happens next. If Yvonne loses her contracts for Legal Aid then who will help the elderly, frail, disabled and dying?

Will the Town Halls view Yvonne's demise as a green light to cut services to this group of people without fear of challenges through the courts?

I recently met an elderly lady in a Residential Nursing Home who wanted to stay whilst the suits wanted to sell the land from under her. I asked her why

she didn't want to leave and she said "my only living relative died three years ago and now I have no-one in the entire world except for Mary the nurse who works here". I pointed out that there would be other wonderful nurses in the new Nursing Home. "No", she said, "you don't understand Mary and her husband are my family. Mary's husband calls in to see me when he picks her up at the end of her shift. He only stays for a couple of minutes but he will tell me things about his day or share a joke with me. Mary is so kind to me and is not going to work at the new Nursing Home; in fact I think hardly any of the staff from here are going to the new home. I think it is because they have more exams and the new place only pays the minimum."

It has been said by a psychiatric geriatrician that for the frail elderly moving against their wishes can lead to an increase in mortality. Who will challenge these moves if Yvonne cannot continue with her work? A friend whose dog had died went to a local rescue centre and asked to re-home a dog and during the application mentioned she would be moving house in the next few weeks and she was immediately turned down for adopting an abandoned pooch. The reason was that moving the animal could cause stress. I am told that in America you cannot move old people from care homes against their wishes. Yet here on a bitterly cold day in the middle of a blizzard a 105 year old lady was move from her care home.

[Yvonne Hossack](#) is a one off that cannot be replaced. She has helped those who thought they had no voice to find it. A High Court Judge has said that her work has led to Local Authorities having to make a lot more effort in assessing the risks of moving frail, elderly people. I have watched her tenderly holding the frail hands of the dying as long as they want, without watching the clock. I have witnessed the genuine concern as cuts are made to the elderly by removing or reducing the trusted warden. Listen to her words of comfort to the man who must sit in his own faeces until the agency carer can get to him to clean him up. I have heard my daughter clap her hands and say "Yvonne won't let my Day Centre close." I have heard families beg her to keep their respite centre open, the one thing that helps them to keep on caring for their loved one.

If Yvonne loses her Legal Aid contract from [Legal Services Commission](#) she cannot continue her work with the elderly, frail and disabled since those she represents are not able to work and cannot pay. Last year she was granted some 700 Legal Aid Certificates but helped over 2,000 clients. Yvonne is not a wealthy woman and cannot carry on her work without funds. What is needed now is a miracle or some wealthy people stepping in and using their money to give a voice to those who need it now more than ever.

Follow <http://www.twitter.com/nakedprotest> for a controversial event being organised in protest.

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