

PETITION REGARDING HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DAY SERVICES

Report of the Director of Health and Community Services

Author: Steven Lee-Foster, Assistant Director, Provider Services
(01992 555748)

Executive Member: Colette Wyatt-Lowe, Adult Care and Health

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To advise County Council of the receipt of a petition relating to a consultation being undertaken regarding proposals to change the council's in-house day services for adults and to set out for Members the background and other relevant information of which officers are aware relating to the subject matter of the petition.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Notice of intention to present a petition containing 1,000 or more signatures has been received pursuant to the County Council's Petition Scheme. The petition states:-

"Hertfordshire County Council Day Services

In May 2016, many Hertfordshire residents with a learning disability and their family carers received letters from the Health and Community Services department at County Hall telling them about major changes to their day services from 31 October 2016 onwards. The letters explained that because of reductions in central government funding, the County Council would have to reduce their day services and that this is likely to include:

- fewer paid staff working in the service*
- fewer activities for people to take part in*
- a reduction in the number of days the service is open*
- fewer day service premises*
- hot lunches no longer cooked on-site*

We the under-signed believe that these reductions in frontline services will lead to a real reduction in the quality of life of the people who rely on them. We wish to make the point that they need these services and are referred to them because their level of disability and their consequent vulnerability means that they are not able to access universal or mainstream services without appropriately trained support. We also believe that these reductions will result in extra pressure on their family

carers with the potential for carer breakdown and extra pressure on the staff working in residential or supported living settings. This is likely to lead to additional problems in others areas of health and social care provision and even greater costs being incurred.

We therefore call upon Hertfordshire County Council to withdraw these proposals.”

- 2.2 The County Council’s Petition Scheme provides that officers will prepare a report for Members setting out the background and other relevant information of which they are aware relating to the subject matter of the petition but will not give a recommendation as to how the petition should be dealt with.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 The petition which is the subject of this report has been received in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme (Annex 22 to the Constitution).
- 3.2 The deadline for receipt of motions from Members in respect of this report under Standing Order 9(3) is noon on Thursday, 14 July 2016.
- 3.3 Paragraph 54 of the Petition Scheme provides that the Petition Organiser will be given three minutes maximum to present the petition and will not otherwise be allowed to speak at the meeting. There will then be a short debate by Council.
- 3.4 Paragraph 57 of the Petition Scheme states:-

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests or not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate. Where the issue is one on which the Council executive are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. If the Council do not decide to deal with the petition in some other way, it will (at the discretion of the Chairman) be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appropriate Cabinet Panel or to officers for consideration and report to the local member and Group Spokesmen.

- 3.5 The subject matter of the petition relates to an executive function and as such Council cannot make a decision on it but may make a recommendation to Cabinet if it so wishes.

4. Background and Other Relevant Information

- 4.1 A consultation is currently being undertaken with adults who use the Council’s in-house day services, their family carers and staff on proposed changes to the way the service is run.

- 4.2 The consultation is in line with Integrated Planning Proposals for 2016/17 which include a 20% reduction in the budget for these services. The number of adults using the Council's in-house day services has fallen steadily over the years and is approximately 40% lower than a decade ago. The budget for the service has risen over that period.
- 4.3 A total of 1,428 people currently use the County Council's in-house day services. The numbers have been falling as more people are supported to live independently, and the growth in direct payments has helped people take up alternative opportunities. Everyone who attends a centre has been assessed to identify their support needs and how they can be helped to meet their goals. This is represented in a defined set of hours that the person attends a centre. Most people do not attend a service every day – average attendance on any day is 748.
- 4.4 A project is being undertaken to align the service's staffing structure to a more efficient use of buildings while ensuring the centres continue to offer a range of activities and support. The overall effect will be to reduce staff numbers and consolidate services into larger day service buildings.
- 4.5 The proposals are clear that no individual will have any days of service taken away - but some service users may receive their service in a different way.
- 4.6 A two-part consultation exercise started on the 16 May 2016 alongside formal consultation with staff affected. A more detailed consultation programme is being undertaken throughout the summer that involves extensive meetings with service users and family carers, and wider stakeholders.
- 4.7 Proposals for changes will come forward to Adult Care and Health Cabinet Panel on 7 September 2016, including feedback from the consultation.

5. The Petition

- 5.1 The petition calls upon the County Council to not proceed with the options being consulted upon.
- 5.2 The options being consulted upon are those that will have the least impact on service users and family carers while maintaining many of the opportunities currently provided. Alternatives such as capping the number days someone can attend a centre would not be feasible as it would have a detrimental impact on the service users and their family carer, as well as leading to increased costs in home care or other areas. While the options being consulted upon will have an impact no-one will lose a place and where a service is affected an alternative will be made available.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The proposals are part of published IPP savings for Health and Community Services as above. If the efficiency savings are not achieved then equivalent savings will have to be found from elsewhere.

Background Information

Consultation on the Council's in-house day services for adults