

Item 3 Appendix F a Adults with Disabilities Short Breaks Review 2019

Summary of consultation feedback received Sep – Nov 2019.

Between 2 September 2019 and the 7 November 2019 we undertook a public consultation on proposals to make changes to short breaks services for adults with disabilities in Hertfordshire. These included the proposal to close two short breaks services run by the Council (Hixberry Lane in St Albans and Isabel Court in Hoddesdon), and decommission the service at Tewin Road in Hemel Hempstead. It also included questions relating to the booking process and emergency respite provision in order to help shape improvement plans for these.

The proposals were made following a review of the short-breaks service which indicated that the service is not being fully utilised and there is an opportunity to make efficiency savings by reducing the size of the service. The proposals had the potential to save approximately £900k per year.

A total of 211 responses were received to the consultation. In addition, ten public meetings were held and the comments raised at these meetings have been added to the other responses received.

This document summarises the feedback received from the consultation.

- **Appendix A** contains a more detailed breakdown of consultation responses.
- **Appendix B** contains answers to frequently asked questions from the consultation
- **Appendix C** contains copies of the meeting notes from the public consultation meetings.

When the proposals go for a final decision, all consultation response will be made available to County Councillors (not just a summary) to help inform their decision making.

If you have any problems accessing the additional documents contained in the appendices please contact **respit2019@hertfordshire.gov.uk**

Next steps:

We originally planned to decide on these proposals in December 2019. However, in light of feedback from the consultation and additional impact assessments undertaken we are now running a consultation on the additional option of closing Apton Road (Bishops Stortford) short breaks service instead of closing Isabel Court (Hoddesdon). Further details of the additional consultation, including the reasons and timescale, can be found at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultation.

The feedback gained from the additional consultation will be added to the feedback from the first consultation and all options will be considered by County Councillor before making a final decision on which, if any, short breaks rooms will close.

Summary of feedback on the proposals to date:

Feedback	Response to feedback (at this stage)
<p><u>Theme 1: Challenges to the particular three services proposed to close</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It doesn't leave a 'fair' geographical spread of provision across the County • Why not select ones with the lower occupancy rates/lower numbers of users? • Why not select ones with more limited building facilities (eg Apton Road can't accommodate wheelchair users)? • Why not choose ones that cost the most to run? • Closing Tewin Road & Hixberry Lane puts disproportionate pressure on Tanners Wood as the next nearest to many people living in Dacorum & St Albans area. • Concerns over the quality of facilities at Tannerswood. 	<p>Hold an additional consultation on proposed closure of Apton Road rather than Isabel Court.</p> <p>There has been agreement that if County Councillors agreed to the proposed closures, some of the savings in the first year need to be used to improve the environment at Tannerswood.</p> <p>The rationale for the proposed closures is primarily based on proximity to home addresses. The combination of proposed closures was recommended because it retained enough capacity overall for current (and future predicted) demand, but allowed for efficiency savings (as whole services could close) with the vast majority of people having an alternative service up to a maximum of 15 miles from their home address (most are closer). Whilst other factors around the buildings, cost and usage factored into the final proposal, it was felt that travel from home was the fairest over-arching principle to use.</p>
<p><u>Theme 2: Impacts on carers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears that increased occupancy in remaining centres will lead to less availability of short breaks, and so a decrease in respite for carers. This would put increased pressure and stress on carers if they can't access suitable short breaks easily, and some noted that it may make them consider residential care sooner than they would otherwise have done. 	<p>Social care teams would need to work individually with any families needing to move service to discuss possible options and support the process of finding, and moving to, suitable alternative provision. This would need to be an allocated worker.</p> <p>Paramount to these discussions would be ensuring that carers continue to get the amount of respite they are eligible for. A variety of possible alternatives could be explored, and this could mean</p>

- Concern that the person they care for may not settle well/easily in a new place. As well as concern for their happiness, there is concern that the person they care for may no longer agree to go to short breaks, and respite from their caring responsibilities would decrease.

sourcing alternative provision from local private providers, depending on the individual needs of the family.

Induction and settling in processes would be tailored to the needs of individuals, and supported by social workers. This could include visits, trial sessions etc. The proposal continues to suggest up to six months is allowed for initial transition, which should provide long enough for multiple options to be looked at if needed.

Booking processes would need to be adjusted to manage any 'influx' in new service users in the remaining centres. Alongside closures we are looking at improving booking processes but it is the case that if more people are using remaining centres they may not be able to have first choice of days/dates as often.

The premise of the proposals is to make efficiency savings from currently under-used service model but the longer-term programme (Respite for the Future) aims to increase and improve the overall respite offer in Hertfordshire via a different model.

Theme 3: Impacts on people staying in short breaks

- Concern about impact of change on adults with certain disabilities (many have stayed in same place for a long time and routine is very important).
- Less choice of services might mean less suitable provision.
- Losing ability to stay with friends and in local community they are a part of.
- Loss of very positive relationships with particular staff members
- Some felt it may be positive for centres to be busier and have a wider mix of people using them.

These concerns would need to be taken into account in terms of how individual transition processes were managed for any families needing to move to a new service. The timescales for any closures would need to leave sufficient time for gradual transitions that help people explore multiple options and get used to change gradually (which is proposed to be up to six months currently).

There is likely to be an impact on people being able to have their first choice of short break dates. Social workers would work individually with each family needing to find suitable alternative provision, and

	<p>links to particular communities would be considered as part of these discussions.</p> <p>The premise of the proposals is to make efficiency savings from currently under-used service model but the longer-term programme (Respite for the Future) aims to increase and improve the overall respite offer in Hertfordshire via a different model.</p>
<p><u>Theme 4: Are we confident that the usage figures aren't being impacted by things other than lack of demand?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions raised included limited staff numbers, building facilities, and lack of awareness from carers about allocations of nights or short breaks options? • The usage figures appear surprising to some where there are waiting lists in place and people can sometimes not get all their preferred booking dates. • Would it not be better to re-think the service model to maximise usage of centres (perhaps have these run by external agencies so that people could purchase extra days privately for example), rather than close services? 	<p>It is likely the case that at certain times other factors (for example staff shortages, or building improvement work) has limited maximum capacity at certain centres, but the recommendations are based on analysis of trends over a number of years of the service as a whole – which appear to show decreasing use and increasing take-up of direct payment options in order to access alternative respite options.</p> <p>Off the back of the consultation feedback, the status of the waiting list was investigated. What was found was that the vast majority of people on waiting list did not have a short break commissioned by a social care team. It is clear from the consultation that processes and communications about waiting list needs addressing urgently and this is being picked up by the relevant teams.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to other service models that might help remaining centres be able to be more flexible, but it is still currently felt that the service could still operate effectively from fewer buildings, and given the current financial circumstances for the Council any opportunity to make significant efficiency savings needs to be explored.</p>
<p><u>Theme 5: Travel & Transport</u></p>	<p>There may be a need to travel further to an alternative service. Following consideration of the feedback to date, it has been agreed that transport support would be provided (subject to some eligibility</p>

- Being local makes a big difference to some people's ability to access short breaks (34% of respondents noted 'convenient location' as a main reason why they attend their particular service, and this was highlighted at publicly meetings). Some are concerned about the need to travel further if they rely on public transport, travel around work commitments, or need to access short breaks for emergency support. Also fears that emergency contacts would be further away.
- Some felt 15 miles is an unreasonable distance to travel to access short breaks.
- Fears about no longer being able to access day opportunities/activities during short breaks that were local to short breaks centres.
- Will transport costs for individuals increase?
- Will people still be able to access council transport for a longer journey?
- Will this have cost implications for the Council that counter-act the savings proposed.

assessment), and existing transport arrangements would remain in place where people currently have council organised transport (including to day opportunities that are currently accessed). The analysis to understand the financial impact of this is on-going, and will be dependent on the outcomes of individual moves, but it is very unlikely to outweigh the financial benefits of operating the service from fewer buildings in the long term.

These issues would need to be considered as part of any review and transition activity for families needing to move to a new service. Social workers supporting this process would need to discuss individual requirements, including travel distances, location and transport, and this would partly inform choices of suitable alternative provision. If alternative In-House services are not suitable, there is the option to look at other private or voluntary providers, or other options such as Shared Lives which may suit some service users.

Other:

- Fears that this is the first of further cuts to services for adults with disabilities in Hertfordshire.
- The majority of comments raised concerns about the proposals but several were supportive of the proposals, particularly if the savings could be used to improve the respite offer for carers in the long term.
- Improved, more flexible and ideally online booking processes are needed, especially if there is increased demand for short breaks at the remaining centres.
- The County Council needs to clarify what the possible alternatives are – people are not being given this information by social workers.

Service closures are being proposed in order to achieve financial savings due to the fact that, as a whole, the service is currently underutilised and money is being wasted paying for empty beds. This is not about cutting services for carers and no carer should lose respite they are eligible for as a result of these proposals. In the longer-term Adult Care Services aims to increase and improve the range, availability and quality of respite services on offer for carers.

Work is currently under way to look at how booking processes, including introducing online options, could be introduced.

Work is also underway to improve the information available on possible short breaks option.

Other key points raised by the consultation have been:

- The majority of respondents stated that they prefer to book short breaks for a Friday and Saturday night. (Although the usage figures indicate that usage is quite evenly spread across the week). Several respondents noted that they didn't use their full allocation of nights because they couldn't utilise short breaks during the week. In terms of potential impacts, if more people are using the remaining short breaks centres, the amount of weekend short breaks people book may be less as there will be increased demand for this.
- The top three reasons people noted for using the particular centre they currently do were: (a) Convenient location (34%), (b) Liking the service received (21%) and (c) It was the service they were allocated (12%). This highlights the importance of a particular location for people in terms of short breaks services. It also highlights that there is likely to be a group of people who were allocated a service and haven't explored other options, and this may not have been reviewed for some time, and upon review other options may be beneficial.
- **Emergency support:** 29% of respondents had used short breaks services in an emergency. Generally, respondents stated that the booking process for emergency short breaks was easy. However, several commented that they had struggled to access short breaks in emergencies because the short breaks centres are booked up very far in advance and did not have short term availability.
- **Booking process:** The vast majority of respondents rated it 'very easy' to book a short break, and 'very easy' to forward plan around short break usage. Most people also rated their ability to amend a booking and know what availability there was 'very easy', although the results for these categories was more varied. Again, the majority of respondents rated the time taken to book a short breaks as 'very quick'. However, nearly a fifth of those giving comments found the requirement to give dates a year or 6 months in advance difficult. Many noted that this didn't feel flexible enough to offer support for ad-hoc plans/opportunities, that it can be difficult to align with care plans and that it can be hard to know what dates will work best so far in advance.

Appendix A – Detailed breakdown of consultation results (please double-click on the document icon below to open).



Summary of
Consultation results

Appendix B – Public Consultation Meeting Notes (please double-click on the document icon below to open).



11 Sep 2019 -
Bishops Stortford.pd



13 Sep 2019 -
Jarmen Centre.pdf



26 Sep 2019 -
Hemel Hempstead.p



15 Oct 2019 -
Watford.pdf



23 Oct 2019 - St
Cuthberts Church.p



24 Oct 2019 -
Stevenage.pdf



30 Oct 2019 - St
Albans.pdf



1 Nov 2019 - Kings
Langley.pdf

Appendix C:

Short Breaks Review 2019 – Additional Frequently Asked Questions (Nov 2019)

This information is in addition to the summary of consultation comments early in this document.

Clarifying the process if services were to close:

Q – What support would I get if I need to move to a new short breaks centre?

An allocated person from the social care teams would work with you to review your needs and look at suitable alternative options. We would then support you in visiting options, undertaking settle sessions and transitioning to the new service. An individualised approach would be needed for each family. We are aware that some people with particular disabilities may find change very difficult, and this would need to be taken into consideration. At the moment we are proposing six months for any closure to take place to give time to explore options and support with transition. There would also be support for transport implications.

Q – We won't be able to travel to a different location very easily – what would our options be?

If you needed to move service, an allocated social care person would help review your case and look at options with you. These could include:

- Another in-house service
- Shared lives
- A spot with a private/voluntary sector provider

There will also be support to help with transport arrangements, so transport would be put in place or maintained if needed (subject to a small amount of eligibility criteria).

Q – Wont having to pay for additional transport counteract savings?

When we take the final analysis to County Councillors it will include an estimate for the transport cost implications, so that will be taken into account when making a final decision (although exact figures will depend on individual decisions on alternative options). Whilst there is likely to be an additional cost for transportation this is very unlikely to counteract the predicated £900k savings, particularly in the long term.

Q – You have mentioned a few times that people needing to move service could choose to take a direct payment and access different options – is this just a way of trying to force people into having direct payments?

No. It is an option that exists and that works well for some service users and their families, but the driver for these proposals is saving money that is currently being spent on empty beds, rather than moving towards more direct payments. People would not have to take a direct payment if they need to find alternative short breaks support.

Q - You have mentioned maybe using private/voluntary providers as alternatives – who are these? And won't the cost be more to do that?

We have around 50 providers in the private and voluntary sector (in Hertfordshire) that we have purchased short breaks from over the last 18 months – so it is something that we are already doing. They are a range of providers, often residential service providers who also offer short breaks sometimes. Not all of these may be suitable for particular individuals, but it could provide an option for some where another alternative is not suitable. The cost for In-House is not very different to costs from the private/voluntary sector.

Q - I currently access day opportunities linked to my short break centre - what will happen about this if I move to a new short breaks centre?

Everyone will have individual circumstances that will need to be considered as part of the review and transition process. Some may wish to stay at current day opportunities and others may wish to change these arrangements too.

Q – What will happen to the buildings for any centres that close?

This is still being worked out – it depends on the final decision as we have different ownership and usage arrangements for different buildings. The savings proposals are not based on re-using the buildings in any particular way. It is possible that a support living service will be delivered from Tewin Road instead (we own this building). In-House services are considering what the best use of the remaining estate could be across all their services which could impact how the buildings are used.

Q – Why have we never been given a choice if there are other services?

Some families have been told there is a choice, some haven't. Going forward we need to make sure there is a consistent approach and everyone has the same information and the same options

Q – Will future bookings be 'honoured' if I need to move to a new service?

You should continue to book as normal during this consultation period and until any final decision is made. As part of managing the transition process we will need to manage transfer of bookings and how best to be fair to current and new service users of a particular centre, and this would need to be looked at on a case by case basis. Part of the proposal to allow six months between a decision and any closures is to allow for a more gradual transition of service users to alternative provision.

Q – What will happen to the staff?

HCC staff will be offered redeployment within our services - current analysis suggests there should be enough job vacancies to avoid compulsory redundancies. If Tewin Road were to close, it would be for Care Tech to manage the process with their staff, although we would look for redeployment opportunities for any care staff seeking new employment as these are a very valued staff group and as a Council we have a number of possible vacancies at any one time for people with these skills.

Clarifying other factors that might be affecting usage figures:

Q – Some people who are on the 0-25 waiting list are being told there is no respite and Carers in Herts are coming across people who are being told there is none?

We are looking at the waiting list situation – at the moment it appears lots of people on the list have not had an assessment so may not be eligible. We are also looking into the approach from the 0-25 Service. We are clear that the short breaks offer needs to expand in terms of choice and flexibility but the trends suggest this needs to be different from the current in-house model and so we are proposing to make efficiency savings here and use the money in a different way.

Q – If places were 100% occupied all the time there would be no options for emergency short breaks?

There is true. The expectation is not for 100% occupancy all the time – but we would like to see our In-House services have at least 85% occupancy for most of the time under the block contract arrangements, with the remaining occupancy being available for emergency support. We are looking at our emergency offer more fully as part of this review too, and exploring options to improve this.

Clarifying why other choices weren't proposed, and the process for making a decision:

Q – Why not close services that are the most expensive to run?

On its own this is not necessarily the best factor to base a decision on – some of the current running costs that look cheapest at the moment would need to increase significantly to keep the services running, and because of the different size and nature of the services they aren't necessarily comparable. Also, it was felt that the primary basis the proposals should be made on was the proximity to alternatives.

Q – Why not close services that have more limited facilities, like Apton Road?

We are now undertaking a public consultation on this option.

Q – The occupancy rates are high at Hixberry Lane and Isobel Court – why propose these to close?

The criteria used was to ensure that we could maintain an alternative within 15 miles for everyone in the County currently using the service. We looked at the people who will be affected and the distance they would have to travel.

Q – Occupation rates at St Michael's are low – is that going to close?

No, St Michael's has just been refurbished and is one of our most modern, accessible services. The aim is for it to be our most occupied. The low occupancy rate was due to works being completed and the service not being fully staffed. It is a central location and redeployment of staff may help with the staffing levels

Q - We are worried that only outcomes of a data exercise is being used to make a decision, what about the impact on people?

A desktop exercise completed by a person (not a computer programme) was used to analyse what the recommended proposals should be, along with some other factors, but the purpose of the public consultation is to understand from people the potential impacts of the proposals are beyond this analysis. County Councillors will be given the consultation results, along with data results, in order to make a final decision.

Q – Why are you not offering people more nights if beds are empty?

Allowance are is based on people's assessed needs, rather than bed availability.

Q – How will a final decision be made?

A report will be taken to our County Councillors for them to make a final decision. The report will include outcomes of data analysis and the consultation. The Cabinet meeting (where the final decision is made) is public, so you can attend if you wish. The papers for this meeting are published publicly in advance (on the Council website).

Q – Why can't you close rooms in larger units, rather than the whole unit?

This would not make efficiency saving as there will still be the overhead and management costs.

Q – What is the £900k savings figure made up on in terms of costs?

The biggest cost is staffing and overheads, this is where savings will be achieved, as well as not spending on beds that are not being used.

Q – Is there an option where service users could somehow cover the cost of empty beds to keep all the services open?

No. This wouldn't be fair to all, and isn't a long-term sustainable option. Given the trends we are seeing, it would be better use of money to make the efficiency savings and use this money to expand the overall respite over giving greater choice and flexibility to service users.