

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date of decision - 12 DECEMBER 2018

RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr A C Roberts

Relevant Officer

Director of Children, Families and Communities

Local Members

Ms P Agar, Mr R W Banks, Mr B Clayton, Mr A I Hardman, Mrs L C Hodgson, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr R C Lunn, Mr L C R Mallett, Ms T L Onslow, Dr K A Pollock, Prof J W Raine, Mrs E B Tucker, Ms S A Webb

Recommendation

- 1. The Director of Children, Families and Communities recommends that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families:**
 - (a) notes and considers the findings from the consultation process with children in relation to the revised approach to in-house children's homes; and**
 - (b) approves the proposed outcomes for the in-house children's homes, as outlined in the report below.**

Background

2. On 18 October 2018, Cabinet approved the recommendations set out in the report entitled 'Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes'.
3. That report recommended the development of an Edge of Care Service as a key part of a revised strategic approach to supporting families to stay together. Development of this service will be informed by engagement with young people, families, carers, professionals and the public. The engagement is currently underway, with a range of surveys available for these stakeholder groups to complete. The surveys will be open until 31 December 2018.
4. That report also recommended development of a revised approach to in-house children's homes, which Cabinet approved in principle. This included closure of some in-house children's homes, leaving 6 in operation and a new approach to the use of residential care for the homes remaining open. The decision-making in relation to proposals for specific children's homes was delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, having regard to the outcome of consultation. This report has been informed by consultation with young people currently living in these homes and affected by potential closure. This consultation process took place throughout November 2018. This report outlines the findings

from that consultation, and makes recommendations in relation to specific in-house children's homes.

Outcomes for the in-house children's homes

5. The Council currently has 12 in-house children's homes in Worcestershire.
6. 4 of the homes provide long-term and short breaks for children with disabilities and it was proposed in the Cabinet report that these will continue to be an important component of the sufficiency strategy for these children and their families. Vale Lodge in Evesham, Moule Close in Kidderminster, Providence Road in Bromsgrove, and Greenhill Lodge in Worcester. These 4 homes are remaining open. They were not at risk of closure and therefore not in scope for the consultation process and are not further addressed in any detail in this report.
7. One of the 8 other homes, Downsell Road, Redditch, was an assessment unit providing assessment for children coming into care and interim accommodation where the young person has experienced placement breakdown. The property was due for refurbishment in August 2018. In line with the refurbishment plan, all children living in the home moved out. No children have been placed there subsequently, due to the need to complete the Edge of Care Service design and revised approach to children's homes. As anticipated in the Cabinet report, there is no service need under the revised approach for this Home, and therefore it will not be re-opened.
8. One potential children's home in Tenbury did not open as the development of the Edge of Care service and revised approach to children's homes took priority. As set out in the Cabinet report, the potential home was never registered and there is no service need under the revised approach to establish or open this home.
9. One of the homes, Old Hollow in Malvern, closed on 31 October 2018 as the landlord gave notice to the Council. As anticipated in the Cabinet report, this home was therefore already scheduled to close in the coming months and it was not proposed to replace it as there is no service need to do so under the revised approach.
10. One of the homes, Hill View, Malvern, is a short breaks unit for children at the edge of care and provides accommodation for children on a short term basis where the young person has experienced placement breakdown. The provision of overnight short breaks was suspended in October 2018 in order to prioritise accommodation needs for children experiencing placement breakdown. The proposed decision on the use of Hill View has been incorporated into the recommendations section of this report below.
11. The 4 remaining homes, designed to provide care for children with complex social and emotional difficulties, are currently open. These are:
 - a) Rivendell, Bromsgrove;
 - b) Oak House, Worcester;
 - c) The Riddings, Bricklehampton;
 - d) Orchardene in Pershore.

12. Hill View, Rivendell, Oak House, The Riddings and Orchardene, were all in scope for potential closure. The Cabinet report anticipated that 2 of these 4 homes would be closed, with the final decisions by the Cabinet Member having regard to consultation and the care planning best interests of the children.
13. At the time of writing the October Cabinet report, it was stated that the homes recommended for closure would have an impact on 19 children. However, since publication of that report, 5 children have already moved on either as a part of the closure of Old Hollow, or as part of their care plan. At the time of writing this current report, there are a total of 14 children for whom the proposals in this report will have an impact.

Edge of Care Service Development

14. The development of the Edge of Care service is combined and coordinated with our service improvement programme, a cultural change of practice and the creation of a dedicated team. As such, there is no set start or end date.
15. Progress to date is outlined below.
16. A pilot began in December 2018 to work with family members as support carers instead of restricting them through Fostering Assessments.
17. We are working through the Children's Safeguarding Board on the "Get Safe" agenda to provide staff with information advice and guidance on managing high risks associated with a range of Exploitation factors including; CSE, Gangs, Trafficking and County Lines.
18. An engagement survey was launched in November 2018 to inform the Edge of Care Team development. The survey will close on 31 December 2018. We will be looking at building a multi-agency team of specialist staff to work with the parents and young people providing direct work in the home and community.
19. Recruitment for the Edge of Care Group Manager will begin in January 2018. A number of posts within the new service structure will be suitable alternative employment for our Residential Support Workers. As such, the timing of the development of the new service will align with the consultation for Residential staff.

Informing the Decision on in-house Children's Homes

20. Tina Russell, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, has completed visits to the homes in scope to review the location, structure and fabric of each building and assess its suitability for the future use and approach to Residential Care. Visits were also made to Cheltenham Road supported board and lodgings placements facility in Evesham.
21. The Assistant Director made an offer to meet all young people currently living in the affected homes in person as part of her visits. As part of the formal consultation process, each child had the opportunity to share their views with Tina. 12 out of 14 children met with Tina. The views they shared have been taken into account in the recommendations in this report.

Consultation and engagement with young people and families

22. The young people affected by the proposals have been kept informed throughout the process. An overview of the actions taken can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Record of Consultation with Young People in in-house children's homes

Date	Consultation Method
10 October 2018	All children were visited by a Team Manager and an Independent Reviewing Officer to discuss the potential development of an Edge of Care Service and the possible plans to close some children's homes as part of this.
29 October 2018	Following the Cabinet decision, all children were written to informing them of the outcome and inviting them to a meeting with people responsible for their Care Plan; their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer and an Advocate, to provide them with an opportunity to ask any questions, have their say on the proposal and feed in any information that they would like to be taken into consideration regarding their individual care plan.
30 October 2018	Email from Tina Russell, Assistant Director inviting the young people to meet with her.
06-13 November 2018	Letters to parents with children currently residing in in-house children's homes.
12-27 November 2018	Formal visit with Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer and an Advocate – findings collated and used to inform recommendations (see Appendix 1) (confidential and not publicly accessible as it contains personal data about the residents)
15-26 November 2018	Assistant Director for Children's Social Care visits to homes – one to one meetings with young people who accepted the offer (12 out of 14)
21 November	Outcome letters from Tina Russell, Assistant Director to all young people following one to one meetings

23. During consultation, a range of views were expressed by young people, including them wishing to remain with carers that they know, or in locations they are familiar with, as well as maintaining education placements.
24. The information gathered from these meetings and visits are set out for the Cabinet Member in Appendix 1 (confidential document as it contains personal data about the residents), and has been fully considered as a part of the recommendations in this report.
25. It has always been a priority to ensure that once the decisions are made on individual homes, the programme of closure is care plan-led. Recognising that these plans will cause uncertainty for the children affected, the recommendation is that the priority action following decision will be to identify and move children on to appropriate placements before closure of the identified homes. This therefore needs co-ordination with corresponding staff consultation. All the young people have been advised that none of the homes will close before end of March 2019 unless the residents have moved on to alternative placements. Current projection is that all of

the children will have found suitable alternatives and if the recommendations in this report are accepted the homes will have closed by 31 March 2019.

Recommendations and Rationale

26. This section summarises the findings from consultation and site visits for each individual home. The views of the young people currently living in each home have been taken into account, as well as the content of their care plan.
27. The impact on the individual young people, should the recommendations be agreed, are outlined in Appendix 2 (confidential document.as it contains information about individuals).

Hill View

28. Hill View is a short breaks unit that, for a period of time, has been used as a transition placement for children and young people who have experienced a placement breakdown. It has six beds.
29. Hill View is located in Malvern, a good location for young people with links in the south of the county.
30. As anticipated in the Cabinet report, there is no service need under the revised approach to continue Hill View as a short breaks children's home and its closure was proposed. Having consulted with Residential and Outreach managers and having considered potential continued use in children's services, the **recommendation for Hill View is that it is converted to a supported, board and lodgings placement for six young people aged 16 to 18 years.** The size and structure of the property lends itself to use for this purpose, and would enable us to provide a semi-independent supported living experience for up to six young people as we prepare them for the transition to adulthood.
31. Supported board and lodgings placements facilities are currently limited in availability locally and of a poor quality regionally. The recommendation to build our own internal supported board and lodgings placements resource is in line with the current care leavers' development strategy.
32. There would be a small cost associated with adapting the building for an alternative use. It is not possible at this stage to detail exact costs for this work. However, it is anticipated that the funding previously set aside from capital for purchasing children's homes could be repurposed to cover costs.
33. The financial impact of this change is detailed in the Financial Analysis section below. Overall, the conversion of Hill View to a supported board and lodgings placements facility would represent a £0.536m saving compared to the current short breaks provision. In addition, it would reduce spend on external placements for children currently awaiting a Supported Living placement.

Oak House

34. Oak House is a mainstream children's homes for children with complex social and emotional difficulties. It is a three bed house with an annex.

35. The availability of the annex flat for supported board and lodgings placements enables support to be provided to a young person as they transition through to independence.
36. Of the three young people currently based at Oak House, the care plan for continued residential is for one of the three young people. This young person's preference was to remain at Oak house and this preference will be met in the recommendation.
37. **It is recommended that Oak House remains open as an in-house children's home with a revised statement of purpose that recognises and incorporates the revised approach to the use of residential care for our looked after children.** Oak House is centrally located in Worcester, with good links for young people to colleges and schools as well as other services. Central to the county, the location is also more likely to be conducive to maintaining links to schools, friends and family where it is appropriate to do so. There will be capacity to accommodate two young people within this home and one within the annex, once current care plans for those residents currently residing in the home for move on arrangements have been completed (anticipated timescale for completion February 2019).

Orchardene

38. Orchardene is a mainstream children's homes for children with complex social and emotional difficulties. It is a three bed house, located in the village of Wyre Piddle and is a rented property.
39. **It is recommended that Orchardene closes at the end of the existing tenancy contract on 31 March 2019.** The property is in need of significant maintenance and refurbishment to make it fit for purpose. The landlord is not averse to the County Council undertaking refurbishment work. However, as a rented property, there is a risk that there would be a limit to the return on any investment to improve the property, should the landlord serve notice after work had completed. This would release a saving of around £0.324m in 2019/20.

The Riddings

40. The Riddings is a mainstream children's homes for children with complex social and emotional difficulties. It has potential for three or four placements.
41. For a short period, The Riddings has been accommodating one young person with high needs.
42. **It is recommended that The Riddings remains open as an in-house children's home with a revised statement of purpose that recognises and incorporates the revised approach to the use of residential care for our looked after children.** The property has recently been refurbished and is well presented. The location is near to Worcester but slightly set away from main towns and the city giving a degree of distance from some of the high risk areas. We are able to place 2 additional young people from existing internal children's homes at The Riddings as a part of the closure programme.

Rivendell

43. Rivendell is a mainstream children's homes for children with complex social and emotional difficulties. It is a three-bed house.

44. **It is recommended that Rivendell closes.** The property is in need of maintenance and refurbishment to make it fit for purpose. Whilst the home is a large house with a large plot, the structure of the building is not conducive, without significant refurbishment, to creating the internal home environment required to care for and safeguard our most complex children. This would release a saving of around £0.375m in 2019/20.

Conclusion: Assessment of Need and Care Planning for Young People

45. Of the 14 young people currently residing in the affected homes;
- 6 have assessed need and agreed care plans that have identified move on from residential care and these care plans are in progress
 - 6 have assessed need for residential care. 1 of the 6 was accommodated to Hill View for a transition period. As part of what was the existing placement, a potential match to an external placement was identified. However, all 6 can be accommodated within the internal children's homes remaining open. For 4 of the 6 young people this will mean a change of children's home. Matching factors have included education, family links, group residents' needs and risks and specific expressed wishes in the event of their home closure
 - 2 of the young people have assessed needs for supported board and lodgings and can move to internal provision. For one young person this means a change of children's home.
46. Birth parents of the young people residing in homes that were, and also that were not, affected by the proposals were engaged in the process. Each received an individual letter. Those that were affected were invited to share views and wishes. Those that were not affected were offered reassurance and clarification regarding the continuation of the homes their children were residing in. None of the parents contacted have raised any concerns with regards to the proposed closures.

Financial Analysis

47. Financial analysis of the above options is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Financial Analysis of the Proposed Options

Home/Service	2018/19 Budget	2019/20 Budget	Growth / (Saving)	Recommendation
	£000	£000	£000	
Vale Lodge	593	605	12	Stay open
Bromsgrove Short Breaks	471	480	9	Stay open
Kidderminster Short Breaks	448	457	9	Stay open
Green Hill Lodge	1,175	1,198	23	Stay open
Old Hollow	499	0	(499)	Closed Oct 31 st
Tenbury	291	4	(287)	Didn't open
Hill View	717	180	(536)	Need to change this to repurpose for SL
Downsell Road	641	17	(624)	Closed
Rivendell	472	96	(375)	Close
Oak House	510	521	10	Stay open
The Riddings	503	513	10	Stay open
Orchardene	407	82	(324)	Close as of 31 st March

Edge of Care Service	0	1,450	1,450	New service in place
TOTAL	6,727	5,605	(1,122)	

Next steps

48. This decision report will be published on Thursday 6 December 2018 for public transparency.
49. The decision will be made on 12 December 2018.
50. Following the 5 day potential call-in period, implementation of any decision can begin from 19 December 2018.
51. Following the decisions on individual homes, the following next steps are proposed:
 - a) Progress care plan-led closure of children's homes through to 31 March 2019;
 - b) Plan and implement staff consultation, following Council procedures. The end of the consultation period will be timed to coincide with the end of the children's moves.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

Legal

52. The Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 to make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for securing community homes are available for looked-after children, having regard to the need for ensuring the availability of homes of different descriptions suitable for different purposes and needs of children. Before making any decision with respect to a looked-after child the Council shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child and parents.
53. If the Council is unable to make arrangements to place looked-after children within family, it must make arrangements for what it considers the most appropriate placement available. As far as reasonably practicable this should be within county, near home, not disrupt education/training, and be suitable for any disabilities. The Council has a general duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked-after children within county and which meets their needs.
54. A review is needed before making alternative arrangements for accommodation for a child, involving an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Initially a small team delivered the letter and pack to the children and for the follow-up consultation visit the individual allocated IRO and Social Worker for the child visited the children.
55. Officers have had due regard to the above duties, and also the children's rights to respect for their private and family life and home in coming to the recommendations in this report, which ensure that the needs of the children are met.

Financial

56. The financial impact of the proposal is a total net saving of £1.122m. This is the difference between the 2018/19 budgets and those required for 2019/20, inclusive of the new Edge of Care service. This is not an additional saving for the Directorate – demand growth put into the CFC budget planning for 2019/20 was net of the Edge of Care saving.

Human Resources

57. Full consultation will take place with staff and the recognised trade unions where required as a consequence of the decisions taken. This will be done in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures which have been agreed with the recognised Trade Unions. These staff are valued members of the service and every effort would be made to minimise compulsory redundancies where possible including redeployment opportunities.

Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments

58. Our work in consultation with young people, engagement of independent advocates, Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers has had regard to individual young persons' health and emotional wellbeing and social/economic factors. The impact on children has been identified through consultation, when obtaining their views and the views of those responsible for their care plan. In each individual case, health and emotional well-being has been considered and taken into account in the recommendations.

59. We know we have received challenge from neighbours in vicinity of one children's home recommended to remain open. We will continue to address any concerns raised on a case by case and build networks. Challenge of this type is not unusual in the early stages of opening a new home in an area. Where we have opened other homes in residential areas in the past, effective relationships have been built over time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

60. The Cabinet Member will be well aware of the Council's Public Sector Equalities Duty from previous Cabinet reports. Individual equality and diversity needs of the children involved have been taken into account throughout consultation. Individual needs, and expressed wishes, have been met where possible. The equality and diversity issues for young people are already addressed through their individual care plans and do not impact on this report as their placements will be compliant with the Council's Public Sector Equalities Duty.

Supporting Information (for Decision-maker only)

- Appendix 1 CONFIDENTIAL Outcomes of Consultation with Young People [Exempt from publication as it discloses information about individuals and the public interest is better met by its non-disclosure]
- Appendix 2 CONFIDENTIAL Impact on Young People [Exempt from publication as it discloses information about individuals and the public interest is better met by its non-disclosure]

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

Tina Russell, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care
Tel: (01905) 846354
Email: trussell@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 October 2018