

Equality Impact Assessment



Hampshire
County Council

Proposal to close two overnight residential respite homes for children with disabilities (Service users)

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Department: Children's Services

Date of assessment: 05/01/2018

Description of current service/policy

Overnight residential respite is designed to give parents or full time carers an opportunity to have a break from caring whilst their child with disabilities is cared for in a residential children's home. Hampshire County Council currently operates three in-house children's homes that provide overnight residential respite and purchases services from other independent providers.

The provision of overnight respite is agreed following a social work assessment of need, and the allocations of overnight stays for each child determined by the County Allocation Panel (CAP).

Geographical impact: All Hampshire

Description of proposed change

It is proposed to close two of Hampshire County Council's children's homes where overnight respite is offered: Merrydale in Kings Worthy, Winchester; and Sunbeams in Aldershot, directly impacting on 35 children and their families who, as of the 1 November 2017, use the homes. The proposal to close the homes would mean a potential reduction in staffing equivalent to 31.45 FTE (42 headcount) of which 23.31 FTE are permanent employees and 8.14 FTE are temporary employees

Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

Service users

The County Council carried out an eight-week open consultation from 7 August 2017 to 2 October 2017 to seek residents' and stakeholders' views on the proposals to close overnight respite homes at Merrydale in Winchester and Sunbeams in Aldershot. Details available at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/sunbeamsandmerrydale>

To aid children and young people with disabilities, and their families, who are directly impacted by the proposals, one-to-one meetings were arranged for them with their social worker. In addition, a series of six drop-in consultation events were organised for parents and other interested people to attend.

Statutory considerations	Impact	Mitigation
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<p>Age: High</p>	<p>The homes currently serve children and young people from the age of 9 to 17 with the majority of children being between the ages of 13 and 17 years.</p> <p>As of 1st November 2017, there were 16 children and young people using Sunbeams: one aged between 9 and 11, six aged between 12 and 14, and nine aged between 15 and 17.</p> <p>As of 1st November 2017, there were 19 children using Merrydale: one aged between 9 and 11, seven aged between 12 and 14, and 11 aged between 15 and 17.</p> <p>The proposed closures could impact children aged between 9 and 17 who currently use the homes for overnight respite. Due to their age, the impacted children and young people may find a move to another overnight residential respite setting or alternative form of provision difficult; they may have difficulty in acknowledging and understanding the change in provision, they may find it difficult to manage the endings and goodbyes, and they may have difficulty settling into new and unfamiliar care surroundings.</p>	<p>If the decision is made to close Merrydale and Sunbeams, Social Workers will support children to have a managed transition to a new service, agreed with their family, which is appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding. Opportunities will be put in place to enable 'goodbyes' to be managed. Children will be supported to build trusting relationships with new staff and supported to settle into a new environment. There would be opportunities for the child to be visited by staff from their new provision at home, to make visits to the provision and for staff from Merrydale and Sunbeams as well as parents to share information about the children they care for with the new provider. Children and young people that currently access Merrydale and Sunbeams would continue to have opportunities to mix with an appropriate age group.</p>
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<p>Disability: High</p>	<p>The children who stay at Sunbeams and Merrydale have a range of mobility, learning, physical and sensory disabilities. The majority of users are recorded as having one or more types of disability. Conditions include: severe learning disability, profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex health care needs; often in combination with other disabilities such as ADHD; Autism; Cerebral Palsy; and Down's Syndrome.</p> <p>Due to their disability, the impacted children and young people may find a move to another overnight residential respite setting or alternative form of provision difficult; they may have difficulty in acknowledging and understanding the change in provision, they may find it difficult to manage the endings and goodbyes, and they may have difficulty settling into new and unfamiliar care surroundings</p>	<p>If the decision is made to close Merrydale and Sunbeams, Social Workers will support children to have a managed transition to a new service, agreed with their family, which is appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding. Opportunities will be put in place to enable 'goodbyes' to be managed. Children will be supported to build trusting relationships with new staff and supported to settle into a new environment. There would be opportunities for the child to be visited by staff from their new provision at home, to make visits to the provision and for staff from Merrydale and Sunbeams as well as parents to share information about the children they care for with the new provider.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation: Neutral</p>		
<p>Race: Low</p>	<p>Users of both Sunbeams and Merrydale identified as predominantly 'White British' (Sunbeams: 13 out of 16; and Merrydale: 19 out of 19).</p>	
<p>Religion and belief: Neutral</p>		

Gender reassignment: Neutral		
Gender: Medium	Sunbeams and Merrydale support both male and female service users. There are more males using both homes for residential respite. As at 1 November 2017, at Sunbeams, there are currently 11 males and five females, and at Merrydale, there are currently 15 males and four females.	Services providing overnight residential respite would remain open and inclusive.
Marriage and civil partnership: Neutral		
Pregnancy and maternity: Neutral		
Other policy considerations	Impact	Mitigation

<p>Poverty: Medium</p>	<p>A study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Being disabled in Britain: a journey less equal', published on 3 April 2017, found that:</p> <p>Across Great Britain, 59% of families with children, that were in income poverty and that contained a disabled person, lived in material deprivation in 2014/15, compared with an average material deprivation rate of 20%.</p> <p>Across the UK, 18.4% of disabled people aged 16-64 were considered to be in food poverty compared with 7.5% of non-disabled people.</p> <p>Families in the UK with a disabled member were more likely to live in relative poverty than non-disabled families.</p> <p>(See report at: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/being-disabled-britain-journey-less-equal)</p> <p>Children and families may need to travel further to access overnight respite with a different provider, potentially increasing travel costs incurred by families. As a result, families on low incomes or experiencing financial hardship may experience an increase sense of financial pressure.</p>	<p>In terms of current demand, based on the 1:1 discussions with families and their social workers, there is sufficient capacity in the market to accommodate the current preferred choice of families for a suitable alternative provision, should the closures take place.</p> <p>When planning for alternative provision, transport to or from overnight respite will be considered with families. The County Council is committed to ensuring that families remain able to access provision that will meet their child's needs.</p> <p>The County Council would continue to actively work with independent providers to develop the market place for overnight residential respite and a range of other services, to ensure that there is sufficient capacity going forward.</p>
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<p>Rurality: Medium</p>	<p>Using the district council area as an indicator of the service user's home location:</p> <p>Sunbeams: As of 1 November 2017, the 16 current users live in the Hart (2), Rushmoor (8) and East Hampshire (6) district council areas of the county.</p> <p>Merrydale: As of 1 November 2017, the 19 service users live in more geographically diverse locations: Eastleigh (7), Fareham (1), Test Valley (3), and Winchester (8) district council areas of the county.</p> <p>The geographical location of the setting would be different, and additional travel time could be required. Both users of Merrydale and Sunbeams have mentioned the negative impacts of needing to travel further to access alternative provision if the homes close. Respondents were concerned about losing valuable respite time due to the additional journey length and were unclear as to whether existing supported travel provision would remain in place.</p>	<p>In terms of current demand, based on the 1:1 discussions with families and their social workers, there is sufficient capacity in the market to accommodate the current preferred choice of families for a suitable alternative provision, should the closures take place.</p> <p>When planning for alternative provision, transport to or from overnight respite will be considered with families. The County Council is committed to ensuring that families remain able to access provision that will meet their child's needs.</p>
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Any other information