

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	14 January 2022
Title:	Permission to consult on proposals for social care provision for overnight short breaks at Firvale Residential Respite Childrens Unit to remain closed
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this paper is to request permission to consult on the proposal for social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Unit to remain closed. Firvale is a residential respite unit, in Basingstoke, for children who have a disability. The social care service operating from Firvale has been closed since the start of the Covid pandemic in March 2020.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services:
Gives approval to undertake a public consultation on the proposal for the social care provision at Firvale, a residential respite unit for children with disabilities, to remain closed. A further report setting out the findings of the consultation will be brought to the Executive Lead Member in the autumn of 2022.

Executive Summary

3. Social care provision at Firvale has been closed to service users since March 2020 because of restrictions implemented during the Coronavirus pandemic.
4. Hampshire County Council (HCC) work in partnership with Hampshire Hospitals Foundation NHS Trust (HHFT) to operate the respite unit, with HCC using five of the nine beds in Firvale to meet children's social care overnight respite needs and HHFT using the remaining four to meet health needs. HHFT have continued to use the Firvale site during the pandemic to deliver health services and they are exploring the potential future options for the use of the building. The Ofsted registered Firvale respite service has been closed for the duration of the pandemic.

5. To re-open HCC's registered respite service at Firvale (the five social care beds), the County Council would be required to provide three-months' notice to Ofsted. In addition, there would be an imminent requirement to fund a one-off maintenance programme. It is estimated that the County Council would be required to contribute £400,000 to these maintenance works within the building, and its grounds.
6. Works include the widening of doorways and the replacement of fire-safety doors within the building. These changes are needed to accommodate larger powered mobility aids and wheelchairs. Other on-site improvements include new gates and improved drainage of the driveway and parking areas.
7. Since the development of the residential estate which now surrounds Firvale, there have been increasing concerns about the loss of privacy, particularly the fact that some of the bedrooms and all the grounds are now overlooked by other properties. This has brought into question the ongoing suitability of the building to deliver residential respite services.
8. The consultation will seek the views of services users, stakeholders, the public and providers on the development of suitable alternative options for current and future users, which promote the best outcomes for children and young people and their families and reduce dependencies on services.
9. Should it be agreed that a consultation take place and if, following the consultation, the recommendation to not reopen the social care beds at Firvale is agreed by the Executive Member, social workers would work closely with affected families to put in place a package of care that met each individual's assessed needs.
10. There are 12 children who were allocated Overnight Respite (ONR) provision at Firvale, prior to the temporary closure in March 2020. In addition, there is a further cohort of 14 young people who have been awaiting ONR provision at Firvale during the pandemic. These children and families are receiving support to identify alternative care plans to meet their assessed social care needs during the ongoing temporary closure of Firvale.
11. The proposal for the social care beds at Firvale to remain closed is being made because:
 - The future delivery of respite provision will make greater use of the Hampshire Approach, Hampshire's strength-based approach. This approach aims to identify and develop the strengths of families, to address the underlying reasons that overnight respite may be required. For example, some children do not sleep well, and families use overnight respite to allow the rest of the family a good night's sleep. Tackling the sleep issue supports the child to remain at home and reduces the need to use traditional, residential respite provision;
 - Service users have experienced a loss of privacy within bedrooms and grounds because of recent adjoining building developments;

- There are significant costs associated with maintaining and upgrading Firvale. Required identified improvements and upgrades are estimated to cost the County Council £400,000;
 - Analysis confirms that greater value for money per bed per night can be achieved by working more closely with independent providers of respite services. The County Council wants to ensure that funding is directed to the children receiving the service, rather than infrastructure costs; and
 - As a result of under occupancy, for at least the last two years Firvale has not represented good value for money. Pre-pandemic the occupancy levels were in the region of 35%. Releasing some of the funds currently allocated to Firvale provision would enable the County Council to offer service users alternative options, whilst making savings.
12. If approved, the consultation will run for 10-weeks. During the consultation period, social workers will continue to work with the individual children and their families who accessed Firvale, prior to its temporary closure in March 2020.
 13. Engagement with these children and young people will be undertaken alongside their parents and carers who are directly affected by this proposal. It will explore what impact the proposals might have on them, and the range of options that may be available to meet their assessed needs.
 14. The consultation will seek to understand the views of other stakeholders, including the health services in Hampshire, external providers and members of HCC staff.
 15. 11 current HCC staff hold substantive roles at Firvale, all will be included in this consultation exercise. Since the closure of the social care provision at Firvale these colleagues have been on temporary reassignment to fulfil other roles within HCC Children's Services Department. A separate consultation is proposed for HCC staff employed at Firvale, to run in parallel with the public consultation. Contextual information.
 16. This proposed consultation relates only to the overnight respite provision at Firvale residential respite unit, run by the County Council, and registered with Ofsted. The proposal excludes services provided at Firvale by Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, other short break respite activities and services.

Overnight respite services for children with disabilities

17. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 places a duty on local authorities to provide a range of services for children who have a disability and their families which includes, "overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere." The County Council's offer for overnight respite is historically based on residential services, with some support in family homes and some using Specialist Respite Care (Care in the home of foster carers, recently

renamed, 'Home from Home').

18. Firvale is a residential respite unit. Until the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, Firvale provided overnight respite care for children and young people who have a disability. There are nine single children's bedrooms (five are used by HCC social care and four by HHFT), along with dining, sensory and play areas. When fully staffed, the maximum social care respite nights per annum is 1,815. Since 2019 approximately a third of available nights have been allocated.
19. Respite services are provided for eligible children between the ages of 5-18 who live at home with their parents or carers and who have been assessed and are approved for overnight respite.
20. Recent work with the Firvale Registered Manager and Disabled Children's Teams (DCT) has identified that, in addition to the 12 children who previously accessed social care respite services at Firvale, a further 14 children have been assessed as requiring respite, where Firvale had been identified as an appropriate option.
21. Work has been ongoing to identify suitable and meaningful alternatives for each of these children whilst Firvale has been temporarily closed. DCT social workers are actively working with affected children and their families to secure suitable and meaningful longer-term provision and services alongside the Commissioning Team in the Children's Services Department.
22. The DCT Social Work teams have confirmed that since the temporary closure of Firvale, some children have been found alternative provision which meets their needs; others are approaching adulthood and are transitioning to services provided by Adults Health and Care. There remains a small number of children for whom new provision is still to be identified. A summary table is provided below.

Children accessing ONR Firvale up until March 2020	
Alternative provision in place	4
Transition to Adult Health and Care	3
Alternative provision sought	5

Children on a waiting list for ONR provision at Firvale	
Alternative provision identified and/or in place	6
Alternative provision sought	8

23. To re-open HCC's registered respite service at Firvale (the five social care beds), the County Council would be required provide three-months' notice to Ofsted.
24. HCC will also need to invest an estimated additional £400,000 to fund a maintenance programme at Firvale, work includes widening doorways, installing new fire doors and improvement to gates and drainage.

25. The one-off investment cost described above does not alter or mitigate the question of the ongoing suitability of Firvale for social care provision, due to issues around loss of privacy as a result of the surrounding housing developments and Firvale being significantly overlooked.
26. When fully operational, Firvale has 20.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) HCC staff. Due to current vacancies, there are currently 11 members of staff employed to work at the unit. Since the closure of social care provision at Firvale in March 2020, these staff have been redeployed into a range of other roles across HCC's Childrens Services Department.
27. Should the social care provision at Firvale remain closed, appropriate permanent re-deployment opportunities will be sought to minimise compulsory redundancies.

Financial context

28. Since 2008, the County Council has been changing the way it works to respond to continuing pressures on local government funding. In total, this has resulted in savings of over £560 million being removed from the budget in the last 13 years. The County Council predicts it will need to find a further £80 million in the next two years, bringing the cumulative recurring saving to £640 million
29. Each successive transformation programme is becoming more difficult to deliver, as the potential to achieve further permanent cost reductions through early intervention, demand management and prevention approaches is reduced. Given the level of savings already achieved and the shortened timescales for delivery, the Saving Programme to 2023 (SP23) will focus primarily on services that may be reduced or stopped across the council.
30. Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, Hampshire County Council was already under financial pressure following a decade of national funding reductions. Over the upcoming two financial years (2022/23 and 2023/24) the County Council faces a further budget shortfall totalling at least £80 million. However, the demand for local services, particularly social care, is increasing.
31. Local authorities are required to deliver a balanced budget and it is necessary for the authority to decide what services the County Council provides, and how these services are provided, whilst meeting assessed needs and statutory obligations. It is now more challenging to maintain the full range of services that residents have previously accessed at a reduced cost.
32. This proposal seeks to provide an ongoing saving of £450,000 to HCC and avoidance of a one-off cost of £400,000 to fund a programme of maintenance works within the building, and its grounds.

Permission to consult on proposals for social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Unit to remain closed.

33. Overnight respite is currently provided either in Firvale (the County Council residential respite unit in Basingstoke), is commissioned by the Council from external service providers primarily from the community and voluntary sector, is provided by Home from Home foster carers or, is commissioned by families using their Direct Payments.
34. Firvale provides overnight respite for a cohort of children with very complex needs. The table at paragraph 38 below sets out the overnight costs for Firvale and comparable costs with external service providers.
35. The Children's Services Commissioning team continue to work with social work teams and the external service provider market to identify and develop services that meet the needs of the children and families eligible for services. This work will continue before, during and after the consultation period. This includes an expansion of some existing external service provision as well as the potential to commission new services from external service providers.
36. The proposal to consult on the potential for social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Unit at Firvale to remain closed is based upon:
 - the ongoing discussions between the DCT social work teams and children and their families to establish existing and future requirements for respite provision to meet assessed need;
 - analysis that greater value for money can be achieved by working more closely with external service providers;
 - the need to engage with children and families who have accessed Firvale, to understand their concerns relating to the potential closure of the respite unit;
 - the need to understand the impact that the permanent closure of social care provision at Firvale could have for potential future service users;
 - the need to engage with respite providers, advocacy groups, schools and other stakeholders to build knowledge and understanding of the role that respite provision plays in the lives of
 - the need to seek the views of Hampshire residents about how to meet the assessed respite needs of children and their families with a reduced budget;

Delivering value

37. HCC must meet a range of statutory duties and must do so whilst achieving a balanced budget. The cost per night of delivering respite services at Firvale indicates that external service providers can deliver services at a lower cost than HCC.
38. The table below provides a comparison of average cost per bed per night between Firvale and external residential respite providers. Average unit rates are taken from the financial year April 2019 to March 2020.

Cost of overnight respite (per night, per child)	Care worker to child ratio¹	
	1:2	1:1
2020/21 cost (based on a target of 80% occupancy)	£704.73	£933.03
Average 2020/21 external provider unit rate (based on contracted costs)	£332.63	£694.83

39. The data in the table above provides the cost per night of delivering respite services at Firvale, based on an 80% occupancy figure (which equates to 1,815 nights) and the costs incurred, based on actual use. The most recent occupancy data confirms that Firvale was operating at approximately one third occupancy. The consequence of this under occupancy is that overnight respite at Firvale cost an average of £1,486.87, per night.
40. Several factors have contributed to low occupancy at Firvale, including the complex needs of the children and their support requirements limiting the number of children that can be accommodated at any one time. Some families, for historical reasons, received a pattern of provision which led to an unequal distribution of weekends and holiday respite, reducing the benefits of Firvale to other families, where only weekdays were available.
41. There have been challenges in maintaining the staffing establishment which has had an impact on the number of children that could be cared for at any one time.
42. These factors of low occupancy, high cost per night, recruitment issues and staffing have contributed to the case to consult on whether social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Childrens Unit should remain closed. Since the end of March 2020, there has been no access to HCC respite provision at the home, and social workers have worked with families to explore alternative support options, some of which have been taken up.

Meeting assessed need through alternative provision

43. Children's Services Commissioning Team issued a new tender for providers of overnight respite in August 2021. The contracts with external providers are structured so that any changes in demand may be accommodated without undue commercial risk to the County Council, and because it is an open framework, new providers are able to join through the contracting period.
44. The table below describes the range of provision that could potentially be available families eligible for respite services. The options below are not mutually exclusive; social workers are able to work with families to create packages of care and support which meet the needs of families and their children. The suitability of services to meet the needs of a child can change over

¹ The 1:2 and 1:1 rate compares the average contracted rates per night, per service user for those ratios of care compared to the equivalent in-house rate. This is based on a service user acceding the respite provision for a 24-hour period.

time as the needs of the young person and their family develop. It is understood that not all the services described below are suitable for all children, or for all families.

45. Some of the types of provision described in the table below have been available previously, but services such as Home from Home and Care Support have been reviewed and the offer updated.

Residential service offer	Description of service	External service provider or in-house?	New, updated or existing service?
Overnight Respite	<p>HCC commissions overnight respite from registered providers. There are two providers operating in Hampshire and one in Surrey that are accessed regularly.</p> <p>Discussions are also underway with new providers to determine what overnight respite services; they could provide to families within Hampshire to develop this offer further.</p>	External	Existing and being updated
Home from Home	Home from Home is a form of respite for families. Specialist respite carers are registered foster carers who are linked to a family to provide overnight respite for children. Home from Home respite carers, with the support of their supervising social worker from the Children's Services Fostering Team and the child's social worker, provide breaks which can be for a few hours at a time or can be overnight, depending on the needs of the family.	In-house	Existing but updated offer
Direct Payments	Direct Payments can be used to purchase overnight support.	External	Existing
Non-Residential Support			
Care Support	This is where a support worker comes to the family home or takes the child or young person into the local community, either for shorter periods during the day or having a carer stay in the home overnight, so the child does not need to stay somewhere else (such as a residential setting). This could be with or without the parents in the home.	External	Existing but updated offer
Buddy Scheme	The Buddy Scheme provides individual support to children and young people who have additional needs to access the community. A community buddy is a volunteer or a paid member of staff who may go with a young person to	In-house	Existing

	their chosen activity, giving them time away from home, help the young person to do things they want to do or provide support for leisure activities.		
Short Break Activities	Short breaks enable children and young people with disabilities or additional needs to join in with safe and fun activities. They give parents or carers an opportunity to have a short break from caring. Short Breaks include specialist holiday and weekend play and youth club schemes across Hampshire that can be accessed via a Gateway Card+ ² . The Gateway Card+ is for children and young people who; have a disability and/or additional needs (supporting evidence is required), need support to take part in leisure activities, are between 0 and 17 years old and live in the Hampshire County Council authority area. The card is free and gives access to community activities, play schemes and buddy schemes through the short breaks programme.	External	Existing
Telecare (Technology Enabled Care)	Argenti is Hampshire's assistive technology partner. Working closely with Disabled Children's Team social workers and families, Argenti will recommend and supply a technology-based intervention to support the child's care plan. These interventions can offer support in areas such as night-time routines, epilepsy monitors, flooding and fire detectors. Phone applications which can help reduce a child or young person's anxiety and improve their ability to be more independent can also be provided where appropriate.	In-house	Existing
Personal Budget Allowance	Families with an agreed personal budget can opt to have this paid to them (via a Direct Payment) to enable them to employ a worker directly to support them as per their care plan. This enables families to consider more bespoke solutions to meet need.	External	Existing

² Further details on the Gateway Card+ can be found at: [Gateway Card and Gateway Card + | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/children-and-families/gateway-card-and-gateway-card-plus).

Teaching and Learning support for families

Sleep Support	This service works with families on an intensive support programme to develop better sleep routines to enable all family members to have improved sleep and for parents and carers to have improved mental health and resilience.	Internal	Existing
The Great Behaviour Breakdown (Family Training)	<p>The Great Behaviour Breakdown is a training course for families. The course ensures that parents of children who have a disability have effective support to manage challenging behaviour. This support will enable the child to thrive and build family resilience to reduce escalation and prevent the child from entering the care system.</p> <p>The objective of this training is to support parents earlier to manage challenging behaviour more effectively. This intervention may reduce the likelihood of behaviour escalating, and the need for respite provision.</p>	External	New
Team Teach	<p>Team Teach is award-winning 'positive handling' training which teaches a range of de-escalation and positive handling techniques that can be used by families to promote positive relationships and supports people with challenging behaviour.</p> <p>In common with the training offered through the Great Behaviour Breakdown (above) this course supports parents/carers to create environments for their children which are safe and conducive to building strong relationships. Through this positive transformation for families, there may be a reduced demand for overnight respite care.</p>	External	New

Staffing implications

46. Proposals in the consultation would have a direct impact on staff previously employed to work at Firvale and could mean the deletion of up to 20.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts. 11 staff could be affected (10.35 FTE posts). 10.25 FTE posts are vacant following resignations and voluntary internal transfers to alternative, permanent positions within HCC since the temporary closure of Firvale in March 2020.
47. A separate staff and trade union consultation on the potential staffing changes and its implications would run alongside the public consultation. This is currently planned to take place from January to March 2022. Managers, together with dedicated HR support, will ensure employees are given every opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback throughout the staff consultation process.
48. If permission to consult is approved and the subsequent consultation outcome leads to Firvale not reopening, wherever possible, redeployment opportunities would be sought to move staff to alternative roles within the County Council. It is anticipated that the majority of the existing 11 staff members could be successfully redeployed.
49. Where there is no suitable alternative redeployment opportunity available, staff would be in a potential redundancy situation, and subject to approval, Enhanced Voluntary Redundancy (EVR2) terms would apply. This would minimise the potential for compulsory redundancy.

Engagement and process for consultation

50. The consultation will seek views on the proposal for social care provision at Firvale residential respite unit to remain closed. A 10-week consultation is proposed, starting in January 2022. It is proposed that during this time, views will be sought, including those of current service users, their parents or carers, advocates, potential future users (i.e., other families open to Disabled Children's Teams) staff, trade unions, providers, and other stakeholders, including health services, specifically Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
51. The consultation will gather views through online and paper questionnaires and will be published on the County Council's website an Easy-Read version of the consultation document will also be made available.
52. To aid awareness and facilitate consultation with children and their families, letters about the consultation will be sent and one-to-one meetings with a familiar social worker will be offered to each of the 12 children who were previously allocated provision at Firvale, as well as the 14 children on the waiting list.
53. Social workers will work with children and their families to help them to consider the impact that the proposals may have on them and will explain the alternative options which may be available to meet assessed needs should the outcome result in the closure of Firvale.

54. Through their ongoing interaction (face to face meetings, email, telephone calls etc), social workers will offer support to ensure the inclusion of children, young people and their families in the consultation process and will support the contribution and collection of non-written responses in their meetings.
55. Children and their families, members of the public and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to attend consultation events. A range of face-to-face in-person and on-line sessions will be offered to ensure that these events are accessible to as many people as possible. In-person events will be offered in locations which are accessible to those with additional needs. All public events will be advertised on the County Council's consultation webpage, in press releases and using the County Council's social media channels.
56. External service providers offering overnight respite and other stakeholders will be contacted HCC to ensure that there is awareness of the consultation, the proposals it contains and how to contribute to the consultation process.
57. Discussions have already commenced with HHFT about the implications for health services, and the potential options, for the future use of the building and these will continue through the proposed consultation period.
58. If it is agreed to undertake a public consultation on the proposal for social care provision at Firvale to remain closed, findings will be published in a report to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, for a decision on the proposal. It is anticipated that this report will be completed in autumn 2022. Outcomes from the consultation will also be used to update the Equality Impact Assessment, presented to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services.

Equality Impact Assessment

59. Should the Elected Member agree that a consultation should take place on the proposals for social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Childrens Unit to remain closed a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed as part of any subsequent recommendation to the Executive Member.

Finance

60. If, permission to consult is approved and the subsequent consultation outcome following public consultation, the decision is taken for Firvale to remain closed, it is estimated that a recurring annual saving of £450,000 could be achieved, while still meeting assessed care needs. This estimate considers the saving that would be made if social care provision at Firvale remains closed and takes into account the additional costs associated with purchasing increased capacity and/or other services to meet assessed respite need, the costs associated with transitional arrangements and alternative packages of care for children who have previously accessed respite services at Firvale.
61. In addition, the County Council would avoid one-off investment costs of an estimated £400,000 which are required to undertake a range of essential

maintenance works within the building, and its grounds.

62. If, following the conclusion of the staff consultation exercise it is not possible to identify suitable redeployment opportunities for members of Firvale staff one-off costs of up to £126,784 (£125,284 redundancy, plus £1,500 pension strain) may be incurred.

Legal implications

63. Local authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 section 149 to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
64. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 place a duty on local authorities to provide a range of services for disabled children and their families which includes “overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere.” These overnight breaks can be provided to children under Section 17 or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Recommendation(s)

65. That the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services:

Gives permission to consult on proposals for social care provision at Firvale Residential Respite Childrens Unit to remain closed. A further report setting out the findings of the consultation will be brought to the Executive Lead Member in the autumn of 2022.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

66. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council’s climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

Climate Change Adaptation

67. The carbon mitigation tool decision tree indicates that this proposal is not suitable for assessment. Therefore, the tool is not suitable for this Climate Change Impact Assessment and has not been used.
68. A full assessment of climate change vulnerability was not completed as the initial vulnerability assessment showed that the project is at minimal risk from the

climate vulnerabilities.

Carbon Mitigation

69. At this stage it is not possible to determine the need for Carbon Mitigation. As the project progresses and should it be agreed that a consultation takes place the climate change impact assessment will be revisited.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	No

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> Savings Programme to 2023 - Revenue Savings Proposals	17 September 2021
Cabinet:	
<u>Title</u> Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Savings Programme to 2023 Savings Proposals	12 October 2021

Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Children Act	1989
Local Government Act	1999
Equality Act	2010
Respite: Statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using respite	2010
The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations	2011
Children and Families Act	2014
Best Value Statutory Guidance (revised and updated)	2015

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None