

Residential Care Centres Consultation

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Birmingham City Council's Residential Care Centres Consultation. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- Patient and Public Involvement and engagement
- What we have heard from Birmingham residents
- Areas we feel the council need to carefully consider and address

Healthwatch Birmingham notes that the consultation has been open for comments for just over 9 weeks and efforts have been made to publicise it to as many people as possible in this time. However, with the consultation ending just before Christmas, we wonder whether this will have impacted on the amount of people able to take the time to respond.

We were pleased to see details of the range of ways that the council have consulted on this topic with the residents affected, families, the wider public, and stakeholders. It is good that these meetings have been offered in person and virtually. We have also heard about small group engagement sessions and drop in sessions happening at the centres outside of these times, and that the consultation team have additionally been on site at the three care centres to support staff and residents. We note that hard copies of the consultation have been available at the care centres, with Easy Read documents available. There has also been a dedicated email address.

We note that detailed documents have been made available for the public on the consultation, the Equality Impact Assessment and that an FAQ document has been updated throughout the consultation period. We note that a Health Impact Assessment has also now been completed, but that unfortunately it has not been possible to make this available during the consultation period. As part of the consultation documents, it would have been good to more clearly demonstrate how residents feedback helped to share the options that have been identified by the review.

Whilst we understand it has been important for the council to present the full range of options that have been proposed for the care centres, we are concerned that asking multiple questions about each individual option may have put people off from responding. We heard feedback from our volunteer team that people wanted to respond but were concerned that they couldn't say enough on each individual option or that it may take too much time. We did note that the questions were all optional but feel the survey design could have been streamlined to encourage a higher response rate. As the council has already stated a preferred option from its own review, it may have been useful to focus more on this option, but we appreciate that the council wanted people to be able to express opinions on all the options



identified. We also note that space was given for people to express further options they may have identified.

Impact of the consultation

Healthwatch Birmingham recognises that the impact of the consultation has been considered by the careful planning of support for residents and their families as detailed on page 43 of the consultation document. However, we feel that access to specific additional mental health support, due to the stress, uncertainty and disruption of the consultation could have been offered at the start of the consultation period.

We are conscious that this will have been a very difficult time for staff working at the care centres with uncertainty about their own futures, as well as dealing with residents and families concerns. We commend them for their professional approach during this time and are pleased that the consultation team have additionally been present as a support.

Whilst we fully appreciate the difficult financial position of the council, which has necessitated reviewing these services and the proposals for their future, we are concerned that this service change is directly affecting some of the most vulnerable people in our city and their friends and families. In addition, the impact this has on the wider health and social care system, especially pathways that have been developed with these services in mind.

Feedback on the centres

People have told us how happy they have been with the care from these centres

"Nice rapport there, nice care home."

"I've been here for 3 months and the care is very good. The staff are very approachable. I feel that the way they have looked after me has been good and I'm happy here."

"My uncle was taken care of lovely, we was always made feel welcome. Thank you to all the staff."

"It's a lovely place, they treated my mom like a queen. They were superb. Even though she was only there for a few weeks they looked after her very well."

"During this time my mother was very well looked after in the following ways:



Professionalism – Always a welcoming and pleasant residential home to visit. In regard to communication, the staff always responded to me in a timely manner and demonstrated that they were proactive in following through on actions agreed. There was a positive attitude and willingness to explore alternative ways in resolving issues.

Personal Care – The values, religion, culture and care needs were reflected in my mother's care plan and taken into consideration. Decisions were always made in her best interests, and her skin integrity was maintained to a high standard. Regular care reviews were undertaken to ensure continuity with all healthcare professionals involved.

Manual Handling – Assessment and reviews were conducted regularly and tailored to my mother's needs to ensure that her dignity was maintained, and to prevent risk of injury and discomfort. This also ensured the key principles of manual handling.

Infection Control – During the pandemic of 2020, my mother was so well looked after, she did not contract the covid-19 virus at any point.

Social Interaction – Perry Trees was a home from home. In honour of the 75th VE day we had the pleasure of attending the celebrations at Perry Trees. It was a well organised, socially distanced commemorative event.

A special thank you to the manager for his creativity and vision and the staff of Perry Tree Care Centre."

They have highlighted the staff as a positive in particular

"The service was fantastic and the staff were great, friendly and helpful. Could not ask for better."

"I would like to thank staff for dancing with my mum when the steel band was in. The photos show her very happy which is lovely to see as a family member"

"My 98 year old mother has been resident for just over 3 years and suffers with vascular dementia. She is extremely well cared for by a kind and considerate staff who always have a smile for Mom and for us. Highly recommended."

"My lovely mom was in this home for over 6 years. During that time she was so well cared for. She was kept clean, the food and drinks are very good, she had a lovely room and bathroom looking out onto the garden. There are plenty of activities including days out that people can engage in. We had a telephone put into her room so we/she could phone one another as well as



regularly visiting her. I loved the fact she was treated as an individual, they cater for your ethnicity and background, likes and dislike. The staff are so hardworking and DESERVE TO BE BETTER PAID THAN THEY ARE!!! They kept the home so safe through COVID at a risk to their own health/lives during a most difficult time. My lovely mom passed away recently at 90 yrs of age. We couldn't have found a better home to care for her and are so glad they had a place for her. THANK YOU SOOOO MUCH TO ALL THE CARE TEAM. YOU ARE A CREDIT TO YOUR PROFESSION."

"I came in last Thursday and have been very well cared for. The staff are very very good. Very helpful and very friendly. They always pass the time of day and have a little joke. The lads are all as friendly as are the girls."

"The staff were great and mom liked them."

"Staff here been friendly, approachable and really caring. Thank you everyone for making his stay as comfortable as possible"

People have also shared with us areas for improvement. Some people have highlighted how they feel more activities need to be done, and more could be done to address social isolation of the residents.

"Mom likes it here and we as a family do too. Mom is well cared for. The only thing I would say is they don't do enough things to get them out of their rooms. They could do more activities with them. It's nice today as it gets mom out to see people and she's enjoyed herself. They need to utilise the community space more."

"It is just a nappy changing service. Some of the staff were ok. The physiotherapy was not existent and the occupational therapist were rubbish. They did not do their job properly. Shame on them. Let's hope they do not experience the type of help they provided for any one of their families."

"Poor care little activities. Clean place shame about delivering quality care. my mother was regularly often left in own urine and faeces. My mother has been admitted into hospital 5 times in 3 months due to neglect. Most residents are left in their rooms don't be fooled by nice surroundings all a front. Complaints ignored by Management. Staff do what they want often sitting around doing as least as possible. If you value your loved believe what I have reported its really bad its like going onto a controlled environment not like a residential home it doesn't feel natural environment."



"She came here and has her own room to herself. They are short staffed. There is a language barrier for mom and also has to wait to go to the toilet as mom is not mobile. She's been here 5 days."

Impact on individuals

Healthwatch Birmingham is concerned about the impact of the preferred option on the people living in these care centres, and their friends and families. Whilst we understand why the services need to change, it will lead to disruption in people's lives. Our feedback shows that the residential care is valued by people and their families, particularly the staff at these centres.

It has been noted in the consultation presentation that these care centres as council run facilities have functioned as a provider of last resort in emergencies. It is mentioned that the care market means this is no longer needed, however we would like to see more detail about how this would work in practice, to safeguard the needs of people in the future.

Healthwatch Birmingham encourage the council to review literature on well managed residential care moves, and to ensure it is applying any learning from transitions in the past.

We are pleased to see that page 40 & 41 of the consultation document outline some of the identified impact and equality considerations for people living in the care centres, and that mitigations have already begun to be identified. We feel that it is important that people will be supported not just through the transition of moving to a new home, but there should be a period of follow up support post transition to ensure people are settled and happy with their care. This should include hearing feedback on services from people and their families and ensuring this feedback is acted on.

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased that the importance of close friendship groups has been mentioned as a consideration when planning moves. It is also important to consider whether new care homes can respect and promote people's cultural identities, as this has been shared as a strength of the current care centres.

We would like to see wrap around support include access to appropriate health interventions. A further commitment should be made to include continuity of care where possible for people receiving specialist interventions, and to avoid any gaps in services. Our soon to be published study looking at hospital discharge has highlighted that arranging ongoing care and access to services when moving or returning home has often been slow, and that arrangements put in place before a move are more successful.



We understand that people and their families will be concerned whether the care they receive following a move will be like for like. This includes whether staff will be as trained and qualified as those they currently are supported by. Due to the multi disciplinary teams that currently work from the care centres, people will have had access to a range of professionals, and it is important to ensure that new homes are able to maintain this. Many of the people living in the care centres have complex needs, and whilst there is capacity in the care market, it is not clear whether there is enough capacity for those with particularly complex needs to have a choice.

Some people will be concerned about the future costs of their care packages and whether the assessment process as part of planning moves will result in them paying more. They may also have concerns about any additional fee and charging structures at new providers. We would like the council to commit to providing appropriate money advice and guidance for any people and families who feel this could be beneficial.

We are pleased to see that family members will be fully involved in decision making where appropriate. We know that families will have concerns about maintaining visits to new homes, including access and their ability to travel, especially if people are moved a significant distance, or away from public transport routes. For those residents without family support, we would like to know if they will be provided with any additional support in this transition, such as advocacy support if needed.

Wider impact

Healthwatch Birmingham understands that the financial situation has meant the council has had to undergo a review of the care centres and proceed with this consultation focussed the council services, staff and assets. However, we feel that this has led to proposals being considered and decided on in isolation from the rest of the local health and social care system. We understand that stakeholder organisations have been asked to respond to the consultation but feel that a joint system led review of the services may have identified further options and understanding about what could be done in the future.

Whilst we understand the reason for selecting 3c as the preferred option, it is very hard to assess this option without any clear indication if it would actually be possible for the NHS to be a special lessee of these care centres, and therefore what services could be provided by them. We understand the need to consult on the other options available to the council first, and that a decision needs to be made before discussion of rental use of the buildings, but once the decision is made there will still be a period of uncertainty about the building's futures.



If the NHS is not in a position to rent all three care centres and to continue the discharge to assess services from these buildings, this represents a significant disruption to how local services are able to operate, causing longer discharge delays and a significant knock on effect to services at a time when they are already under pressure. Our forthcoming report on hospital discharge in Birmingham highlights the need for greater involvement with people when planning hospital discharges. We are concerned that if this service is withdrawn it will further reduce options for a safe hospital discharge.

The current co-location of discharge to assess beds within the same buildings as the residential care and other services, has facilitated better communication between the multidisciplinary teams involved. Fragmentation of these services could result in additional delays and challenges, all of which impact a person's experience of accessing these services.

The local communities around these centres value their presence as multi use hubs in their communities. The uncertain future of these buildings will be of great concern to them, at a time when other local services are also having to close or be reorganised due to the same financial pressures. We understand that several different community groups regularly use the facilities and that these services could also struggle to find alternative locations if they are not able to use the buildings in the same way. This could also lead to suspension or closure of these groups.

There are currently day centres being run out of two of the care centres. These services are at risk of disruption or ceasing depending on who is renting the buildings. At this time where other day centres are closing in the city, it could represent a significant loss to local services and further hamper people's ability to find a suitable day service.

We look forward to seeing how the views captured in this consultation process are presented at the time of decision making, and continued engagement with people and stakeholders throughout the project as it moves into implementation.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'sw', representing Sarah Walmsley.

Sarah Walmsley

Data and Insight Officer

