

Consultation on the Provision of Children's Respite Services at Heller House

November 2015

1. Summary:

Ealing Council's Children and Adults services department is consulting on options for the future provision of overnight short breaks (respite services) to disabled young people aged 10 to 18 years in Ealing. The two options being consulted on are:

1. Close Heller House and replace the current service with individual packages of support, including overnight short breaks arranged with existing providers in the West London area. This will provide a good quality and cost effective service.
2. Redevelop Heller House to continue to provide short breaks at Heller House. This would require a short term closure of the service and, in addition to the costs of providing the service, will cost an estimated £3 million of capital investment to carry out the works.

The consultation will be open from 23 November 2015 to 15 January 2016. Current users of the service, other groups, as well as local residents will be consulted using a variety of methods.

2. Introduction:

Ealing's priorities for Children's services are to create a great place for every child and young person to grow up, that they stay safe and be healthy, ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to become successful, independent adults, encourage children in Ealing to love learning and achieve their potential and make a positive contribution.

Heller House:

- a) Provides residential short break services for Children with Disabilities aged between 10 and 18 years in a registered Children's Home.
- b) Occasionally provides short term emergency placements for children and young people whose family or other placements have broken down. This type of placement has been provided twice over the last 12 months (against an average of six times a year over the previous five years).
- c) Provides a venue for PESTS (Parents of Ealing Self-Help Training Scheme), a play and support group for parents of and children with additional needs (aged 0 to 5) and their parents. The scheme is based at Heller House and operates a Toy Library and runs 2 hours play sessions on Tuesday and Friday mornings during school term times.

The primary service is the provision of residential short breaks. This is provided by Ealing Council's Children's Social Services Department and is regulated by

OFSTED. Access to the service and the allocation of nights is based on individual assessments of need carried out by social workers from the Children with Disabilities team based at Carmelita House.

The frequency of overnight stays depends on the assessed needs of each individual young person and their family. Many of the young people accessing the service require high staffing ratios of 1:1 or 2:1 staffing due to the complexity of their needs. There are occasional packages for longer periods, while work is being done with the family to support them in building strategies for managing their children in the long term.

3. Context and Background

These proposals have been developed in the context of the Council's budget setting processes. The Budget Strategy for the period 2015/16 – 2018/19 was considered at the Council's Cabinet meeting in July 2014. For further information the report ("Budget Strategy", item 15) can be accessed via the following link:

<http://ealing.cmis.uk.com/ealing/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/772/Committee/3/Default.aspx>

This report sets out the projected significant reduction in central government financial support to the Council over the next four years and indicates that the Council will need to achieve savings in its net revenue expenditure of £96 million (i.e. 46%) for this period. The "overarching objective" of the budget strategy "is a priority-led budget over the medium term which is balanced and realistic and supported by achievable savings plans."

Clearly, with the level of budget reductions required difficult decisions need to be made to enable the Council to reach a balanced budget and this involves reviewing the way in which the Children's Services budget is spent. Now, more than ever, the Council must ensure that the money it has is spent in the most effective way. This means that the Council has to make some tough choices about what services it can continue to provide that will make the biggest positive contribution to our residents' lives. The scale of the cuts means that the way the Council operates in the future may be drastically different from how it has delivered services to date.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 provides that the Local Authority has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of "children in need" in their area. A child shall be taken to be a "child in need" if he/she is disabled. The duty is to provide an appropriate level and range of services for "children in need". Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on the Local Authority, as part of the range of services they provide for families, to provide breaks from caring to assist parents and others who provide care for disabled children.

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2010 came into effect on 1st April 2011. These regulations provide that in the performance of the duty under the Children Act the Local Authority must have regard to the needs of the carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks were given and the needs of carers who would be able to care for their disabled children more effectively if breaks were given to enable them to undertake training, education or leisure activities, carry out day to day tasks and meet the needs of other children in the family. The Regulations provide that a Local Authority must so far as is reasonably practicable provide a range of day care, overnight care, and services available to assist carers.

The Council also has duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (“CSDPA”) and to looked after children under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989.

The [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) as set out in the Equalities Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. As part of the consultation process the Council will gather information and assess the impact that the proposed changes could have on different protected groups and, where possible, identify methods for mitigating or avoiding any adverse impact on those groups.

Meeting families’ needs for Short Breaks are part of a continuum of services the council provides which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child or young person, and can take place in the child’s own home, the home of an approved carer, in a community setting, or, as in the case of Heller House, a residential setting.

4. Current provision

Heller House is a large Victorian brick building. The building, while attractive externally, is not fit for purpose and requires significant capital expenditure to maintain minimum physical standards. The continued provision of the service from the building in its current state is not a viable option.

Heller House is a registered Children’s Home and is regulated and inspected by OFSTED. The regulator raised concerns about standards in the service during 2013 and 2014 and a full inspection in January 2015 rated the service as Inadequate (the lowest of the four possible ratings).

An interim manager with a proven track record of improving children’s residential respite services was appointed. Subsequent full inspections in March 2015 rated the service as Requiring Improvement and in June rated the service as Adequate, despite delivering on over 70 requirements and recommendations. **This places the service below the standard expected by Ealing Children’s services when commissioning external providers.**

In 2014/15 the service delivered 1,020 nights of care, opening on 5 nights a week in order to maximise the efficient deployment of staff while meeting the demand on the service. There are 4 fully accessible bedrooms on the ground floor which were built on to the original house in the mid 1990's and a further 4 bedrooms on the first floor of the original house.

Heller House is registered to provide overnight short breaks to up to 8 young people with disabilities up to the age of 18 at any one time. In recent years the numbers of children receiving a service at Heller House has declined considerably. In October 2010 there were 42 children accessing the service. This had declined to 16 in August 2014. Heller House currently provides a service to 9 young people who attend for planned overnight stays. In practice overnight occupancy has not risen above 4 in the last two years, due to the challenging needs of the young people accessing the service and the high staffing ratios (2:1 and 1:1) required. 80% of the overnight stays are provided to young people between the ages of 16 and 18.

It is understood that a number of factors account for this reduction including:

- i. An increase in the range of short breaks options available including the expansion of support packages delivered via Direct Payments, including overnight support to children and young people in their own home
- ii. Work by the Intensive Therapeutic Short Breaks project providing intensive short term work supporting families at risk, and
- iii. Specialist health visitors delivering individual and group sessions programmes on sleep management for parents of disabled children.

The needs of the children and young people who require the support of Heller House have changed significantly over the past 10 years. They are now likely to have the most complex and challenging needs in the borough and it has been increasingly difficult to provide a quality and cost effective service against the range of issues presented at Heller House.

In 2014/15 the cost of the service was £1.298M of which £1.112M was staffing. In the same financial year the service provided 1,020 nights of planned and emergency care thus at an average cost of £1,272 per night.

5. Options being considered / Options considered

Option 1 – Close Heller House and replace the service provided with individual packages of support, including overnight short breaks arranged with existing providers in the West London area.

There are a number of good and outstanding providers of overnight short breaks for disabled children in the West London area. Ealing Council has built up considerable experience in spot-purchasing individual packages of care in cases where, for example, Heller House has been unable to meet the needs of a particular young person. The cost per night of this spot-purchased provision varies from £550 to £870 depending on the needs of the young person. Based on a direct comparison of the number of nights of care provided at Heller House during 2014/15 (1020 nights) the costs of providing this service would be between £561,000 and £887,400. In this option overnight short breaks provision which is offered as part of the individual support plan would be commissioned from the most appropriate local provider. Services in Hounslow, Harrow and Brent have all been rated as Good or Outstanding in the last 18 months. All of the services identified are within a one hour drive from Ealing Broadway and transport would be provided to and from the respite service for current users as part of their individual support plan.

Once the most appropriate provider has been identified for a particular young person they would continue to receive a service from that provider in order to promote stability and consistency of care. If there is a change in need or circumstances for the young person this would be reflected in the care plan arranged by their social worker.

Details of the services that are able to provide overnight short breaks on a spot-purchased basis to Ealing young people include:

- **Ade Adepitan Centre** in Brent
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/shortbreakcentre>
- **Westbrooke** in Hounslow
<http://fsd.hounslow.gov.uk/kb5/hounslow/fsd/service.page?id= Nm9aPy2nJc>
- **The Firs** in Harrow

All these services are rated as Good or Outstanding by OFSTED and can provide flexible packages of support including 1:1 and 2:1 staffing if required.

Emergency provision would be dealt with by enhanced packages of support in the community (e.g. providing overnight support in the young person's home) or by residential provision purchased through Ealing's Children's commissioning team.

There are already robust arrangements in place for out-of-hours and weekend support from social workers in our Emergency Duty Team.

An alternative site for the PESTS service has been identified at Grove House, 77 North Road Southall UB12JG which will be a newly refurbished space on the same site as the children's centre. The children's centre already offers a range of specialist support services for parents and children, including Early Bird a parenting group for parents who have a child with a communication disorder. Costs of relocation would be included within the proposal.

Option 2 – Redevelop Heller House to continue to provide short breaks at Heller House.

One of the critical issues raised in inspections over the last 3 years is the condition and suitability of the building itself. **The building is not designed for the purpose of providing a service to disabled children** and this impacts on the cost and quality of the service. The building itself is old and in need of considerable repair and refurbishment in order to meet modern standards. Simply to retain and repair the building would cost approximately £1.5M. This option would not provide any significant improvement to the design and layout of the building and for this reason has not been considered further.

To adapt and refurbish the service would cost approximately a further £1.5M, giving a total of £3M capital investment to provide a suitable and safe service at the Heller House site for the future. These costings are based on work carried out by the Borough Architect in 2012/13 and updated in 2014. It is possible that this option would reduce the long-term operating costs of the service but it is not possible at this stage to quantify any potential saving.

This option would entail additional costs and disruption to the young people using Heller House as it would be necessary to close during these works and purchase alternative services for current users of Heller House while refurbishment takes place during which time the service would need to be spot purchased from local providers.

Adaptation and refurbishment of a suitable alternative building in Ealing or a new build on another site have been considered, however the cost would be equivalent or greater and no suitable site is currently available.

6. Consultation

We are consulting on the future provision of overnight short breaks to disabled young people aged 10 to 18 years in Ealing. The two options being consulted on are:

1. Close Heller House and replace the current service with individual packages of support, including overnight short breaks arranged with existing providers in the West London area. This will provide a good quality and cost effective service.
2. Redevelop Heller House to continue to provide short breaks at Heller House. This would require a short term closure of the service and, in addition to the costs of providing the service, will cost an estimated £3 million of capital investment to carry out the works.

A public consultation on the proposal will be carried out from 23/11/2015 to 15/01/2016 during which time the following will take place.

1. Meetings will take place with the families of existing users of the service at Heller House on Monday 23rd November and Tuesday 24th November. There will be subsequent dates arranged in December and January for this group.
2. Consultation with individual young people currently accessing the service will be carried out by the young person's social worker using the young person's preferred communication style.
3. All families who are currently known to the Children with Disabilities team and / or with children at one of Ealing's six special schools will be informed by letter of the proposal and invited to take part in the consultation via Ealing Council's website. The consultation will be in the form of a questionnaire accessible on the Council website at www.ealing.gov.uk/consultations.
4. If you need a paper copy or any other help regarding the consultation, or would like to email your comments to the Council please email: HellerConsultation@ealing.gov.uk
5. If you would like to speak to someone regarding this consultation please telephone 020 8825 7546

7. What happens next

All responses received through the consultation will be documented and analysed and used to inform the decision on whether to temporarily close and redevelop or to permanently close Heller House and move to alternative arrangements for the

provision of respite services. It is anticipated that the final decision will be made at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 16th February 2016. If the decision was made to close Heller House the service there would cease in May 2016.