

Scrutiny concludes “homes should stay open”

This overview report informs you of the findings of a recent review into Leicester City Council’s elderly residential services.

The review has been carried out by the **Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Commission**. This commission exists to scrutinise the key decisions that are taken by Cabinet about adult social care services in Leicester. The chair of this commission is Paul Westley.

What was our approach?

1. We examined the recent consultation done about the future of the homes.
2. We researched ideas around how the quality of service to elderly people in residential care could be improved.
3. We looked in detail at key information like admissions rates, staffing costs and demographic information.
4. We also looked into the wider funding issues surrounding adult social care and their impact on this review.

Background to the scrutiny review

Leicester City Council has been consulting since March 2011 on the future of its eight residential homes:

- Abbey House
- Herrick Lodge
- Elisabeth House
- Preston Lodge
- Arbour House
- Cooper House
- Nuffield House
- Thurncourt House

To find out why, turn over...

Who’s in the Commission?



Cllr Paul Westley
Chair of Commission
Beaumont Leys Ward



Cllr Rashmikanth Joshi
Vice-chair of Commission
Belgrave Ward



Cllr Ross Willmott, Chair,
Overview Select committee
Rushey Mead Ward



Cllr Dawn Alfonso
Commission member
New Parks Ward



Cllr Hanif Aqbany
Commission member
Spinney Hills Ward



Cllr Lucy Chaplin
Commission member
Stoneygate Ward



Cllr Virginia Cleaver
Commission member
Eyres Monsell Ward

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The original reasons for changing the way the Council delivers its services for older people in the city, that formed the basis of the whole consultation process, were:

- 1** The need to develop new services e.g. re-ablement and home help, as alternatives to long-term residential care, to help older people to remain independent and in their own homes for longer.
- 2** The increase in older people living in the city combined with the reduction in Council funds.
- 3** The council's homes becoming less popular, with the number of new residents falling each year.
- 4** Many of the homes require large scale improvement and modernisation.

Let's look at our findings for each of these reasons...

1 Although most people want to remain in their homes for as long as possible, many older people get to a stage where they simply aren't able to maintain an adequate quality of life in their own home. In addition some make a decision to move into an elderly person's home to meet people and reduce feelings of isolation. The commission found that, along with improvements to helping people remain independent for as long as possible, Council-run residential care is still a valued and vital service.

Did you know...

- Running costs between Council run and privately run homes are the same apart from staffing costs. The average private sector home wage for a care worker is £6.08 per hour (minimum wage) compared to £8.90 for LCC homes and we heard evidence that private homes don't pay their staff sick pay, holiday pay or a pension.

Did you know...

- There are 2583 permanent residential and nursing care places available in the city.
- 81% of these places are in independent or voluntary sector-run homes and 11% are in Council homes.
- Out of a total of 90 homes in Leicester, 8 are run by the Council.

2 Our population is getting older and with the 'baby boom' generation reaching older age, as well as less Council resources due to the current economic climate, the Council needs to consider whether it can still provide good quality in-house residential care for older people, or whether independently run homes or other alternatives are the way forward. The cost of running a Council home is more expensive than a privately run home – but this is because the Council have higher staff wages and more staff per resident. If home occupancy levels are low, this makes the cost per bed much higher (see point 3).

Consultation Options

The proposed options which the Council consulted residents and relatives on initially were:

- (a) We stop running residential care homes
- (b) We close six of the council's homes and work with residents and their families to find new accommodation, and
- (c) We redevelop the two remaining Council run homes, to provide short stay support to help older people stay in their own homes longer.

As these options were all 'degrees of closure' and the process was not very transparent, the consultation was redone, using these revised options:

- (a) Reinvest in intermediate care through closing some or all the homes
- (b) Selling/ leasing all or some of the homes as going concerns.
- (c) Reduce the number of homes by closing those with (or when) they have low occupancy.

3 This year admissions to Council homes have been disproportionately lower compared to privately run homes. But look at the last 5 years and in general admissions have only slightly decreased for all homes. With the threat of closure of Council homes raised by the recent consultation and review, no wonder recent admissions to Council homes have reduced. Reduced occupancy at Herrick Lodge specifically has been as a result of the temporary suspension of places due to a safeguarding investigation, not due to a lack of popularity.

Consultation Process

We know that many staff, residents and relatives found the consultation process difficult and worrying. Many said it felt like a 'done deal'.

Lots of people said that they wanted to be more involved in the decisions that affected them.

As a result, the second consultation was more transparent and involved more people, although there still weren't any options for people to agree to **keep the homes as they are – open and run by the Council.**

4 We've yet to see evidence for the "large scale improvement/ modernisation needed". The quoted refurbishment figure of £900,000-1.4m per home was not based on condition surveys of the homes but on estimates based on a notional formula. Over the last 15 years upwards of £7 million has been invested in our EPH's and Property officers have stated that the homes are in a 'good' state of repair. There is scope to develop every home, which could be done through a phased refurbishment programme.

Did you know...

- If you compare the official statistics for the predicted number of over 85's with the actual number 25 years later, it shows that the numbers have been under-predicted by around 25%.
- Currently 2.32% of over 65's receive residential care.
- In Leicester around 1239 over 65's may require permanent residential care by 2030.

Some of our recommendations...

General

- Cabinet are asked to keep the Council's Elderly Person's Homes open – and if taking that decision, should do so for at least the next 5 years.
- Cabinet are asked to note the very good levels of care and dedication of our staff.

Improving Future Consultations

- Consultation should include a range of options – such as ways that the homes could be kept open. Options around 'degrees of closing or cutting' should not be the only options available.
- Consultations should be appropriately resourced – to ensure that the personal views of carers/ interviewers don't influence the findings, training should be given to those supporting the consultation of vulnerable people.

Building-related Improvements

- Review the approach to how the homes are maintained to improve standards. If necessary, following the results from the most recent condition survey, a strategic and phased maintenance programme for the homes should be carried out.
- Homes that are best physically suited to alternative uses (not necessarily those with low occupancy rates) should be looked at further with regards to redefining the purpose of the home to meet future demographic demands.
- Review and upgrade the homes' IT systems and broadband width.

Improving Quality of Service

- Improve and monitor permanent staffing levels in the homes.
- Increase intermediate care and re-enablement services where possible.
- That any redevelopments to buildings be in line with a strategy for managing cultural, linguistic and religious care needs of residents.

Increasing Admissions

- Review communications surrounding the marketing and admissions/ referral process of the homes to tackle the perceived negative reputation of Council-run homes compared to privately run homes, and to improve admissions and referrals.
- Consider options around joint-working with the NHS, particularly around improving referrals and admission processes.

A huge **thank you** to all the people who have contributed towards this scrutiny review. Here are the names we know about:

Angela Sutaria, Ann Brookes, Ashraf Osman, Darryl Rouse, Deborah Fahy, Gervase Smith, Cynthia and Paul Bromiley, Joan Roberts, Liz Kendall MP, Mick Bowers, Pat Humphreys, Rinku & Jayshree Chandarana, Rod Pearson, Ruth Lake, Tanya Sheehan, Terry Knight, Tracie Rees.