

KEY CONSULTATION THEMES

A summary of the key themes that emerged from the consultation, including officer responses, is provided below.

Impact on residents and families

The distress to residents and relatives caused by moving home, or by supporting their elderly relative to move home, has been cited as a main reason not to decommission. Respondents raised concerns about the location of alternative homes and whether families would be able to visit new locations. Families and residents raised concerns about the impact on friendship groups that had formed and the strong relationships with staff that had developed over years.

The Council acknowledges that asking residents to move home, whether this is on a temporary or permanent basis, is likely to cause disruption and distress for residents and their families and this concern is evidenced by the number of responses to the consultation on this theme. The Council has experience of successfully relocating residents and it is satisfied that through careful, detailed, person-centred planning, suitable alternatives can be found for current residents with as little disruption and distress as possible. Ensuring that families and friends can continue to visit will be an important part of this planning process. The Council is satisfied that for the majority of residents, the distress and any negative impact of the move can be sufficiently mitigated and will be relatively short lived.

A dedicated team of Social Care Practitioners will be allocated specifically to work alongside care home residents and their relatives should Cabinet decide to decommission a care home. These Practitioners will carry out full care assessments for all residents and these will generate an up-to-date person-centred care and support plan for each resident. The care and support plans will help to ensure that residents, their families and the social work staff, are fully informed of their care needs when residents come to make decisions on future accommodation, should the home be decommissioned. This will enable a full understanding of people's preferences for their future care, enabling beds to be reserved in the alternative accommodation.

Arrangements will be made to ensure that residents are fully supported to move to alternative accommodation. Staff from the home would assist residents in their moves if required to do so by relatives or residents and would be encouraged to visit after each move to ensure that the residents are settling in, and their needs are fully understood.

Impact on staffing

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is proud of the level of care its staff provides and their skills and capabilities are valued. Whilst there continues to be investment in the workforce, the Council acknowledges more needs to be done to improve the stability and confidence of this workforce alongside improving recruitment and retention. These challenges are not unique to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Following the public consultation and only when the Council is in a position to make decisions which will affect staff, there will be a separate staff consultation exercise during which the Council's Management of Change procedure will be followed. The Council's Human Resources Department will work closely with the Service and Trade Unions in order to support staff through the changes at the appropriate time.

Staff would have the opportunity and be encouraged, where possible, to be redeployed and relocated with residents to a retained Council residential care home. In such cases, staff from the residential care home would also assist residents in their moves if required to do so by relatives or residents and would be encouraged to visit after each move to ensure that the residents are settling in, and their needs are fully understood.

Council's Strategy in terms of future need and the perceived need for less care homes now and in the future and the assumptions made

The way in which individual care needs are met and delivered has changed considerably since the Council's Care Homes were opened. The Council is aware that it needs to plan for the future and is looking at different ways to provide care and choices for its vulnerable adults and older people population.

The need for "standard" residential care provided at the Council's 9 residential care homes will continue to decline, alongside increases in community based support accommodation and more specialist dementia care accommodation. The Council is required to respond accordingly to this change in needs. Replacing our existing old care homes with new standard residential care homes is not what is required, and the Council's priority must be to ensure that with partners we create sufficient specialist dementia care provision and more opportunity for people to be cared for independently in the community by increasing options like extra care housing. This is about making sure we invest our resources in the right way so that people get the right level of care for their needs.

The Council wants to provide a range of services so that needs can be catered for on an individual basis. The Council acknowledges that some people will still need support in residential care homes. As per the Cabinet report, there are currently 34 registered care and nursing homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf, offering 1308 beds, with 184 vacancies. With these beds, and current and proposed additional extra care housing, the Council believes there will be sufficient accommodation care services for older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Quality of care now and in future / concern regarding independent care home market

A number of respondents raised concerns relating to the quality and cost of local independent homes when compared to the Council's in-house provision. A few respondents were concerned that the independent sector was profit oriented and therefore felt that standard of care may sometimes be lower. Rhondda Cynon Taf is served by a number of excellent independent sector providers that are subject to the same regulations and inspection requirements as the Council's in-house services. Any cost implications, including the requirement to pay top ups, would be considered when looking at the suitable alternatives available locally for each individual, although it is worth noting that there is sufficient capacity in the Council's Residential Care Homes to meet current and future need.

Strong resistance to decommissioning: Garth Olwg from residents, families and staff.

It is clearly positive that the residents of Garth Olwg residential care home are well settled and content with their accommodation and good quality care. The Council are acutely conscious of the depth of feeling aroused among care home residents, families, local communities, and staff. The overwhelming message from people and their families can be simply summarised as wanting all Council in-house care homes to remain open and it is a testament to the skills and commitment of the staff at these homes that this is the case, and the residents are happy there.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of respondents to the consultation are not in favour of the home closing and the reasons offered in the consultation response have some validity in themselves, it is also worth recognising that respondents are directly impacted by the proposals and the Council must also consider the wider context of the current and future needs and expectations of all people, including those with learning disability in all our communities.

Officers consider that the recommendation put forward in this report are appropriate when taking into consideration all relevant factors and themes arising from the consultation process and EIA.

It is worth noting, there are two extra care schemes, two Council Care Homes, plus independent sector care homes within a 5-mile radius of the current Garth Olwg residential care home that can meet the needs of residents, should Cabinet agree to proceed with the recommended preferred option.