

AGENDA ITEM

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Title/Subject: Residential Short Breaks Proposal – Rowans Service
Meeting: Integration Joint Board
Date: 5 April 2019
Submitted By: Head of Social Work Adult Services
Action: For Decision

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Managed by the Social Work Adults Service (SWAS), the Rowans Short Breaks Service (the Rowans) delivers residential short breaks in a bungalow owned by NHS Forth Valley at the Lochview Hospital site. The physical infrastructure of the Rowans bungalow has developed a major structural fault rendering it necessary to relocate the service.
- 1.2. The present report requests approval from the IJB for a proposed solution to the Rowans' accommodation requirements, through a move to the premises previously occupied by Bield's residential care service at Thornton Gardens in Bonnybridge.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Board is asked to:

- 2.1. note the requirement for the residential short breaks service delivered currently at the Rowans to relocate due to the building having developed a structural fault.
- 2.2. approve the proposed relocation of the Service to a Council owned facility which was formerly operated under a leasing arrangement by Bield at Thornton Gardens, Bonnybridge,

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The primary users of the Rowans, carers of younger adults who have learning disabilities, report high satisfaction levels with the service. The cared for people who take up the service, staying at the Rowans usually for periods of up to one week at a frequency determined by assessment, also report high satisfaction levels.
- 3.2. SWAS is committed to offering a choice of short break opportunities in keeping with Self Directed Support principles. Many people in Falkirk are supported with alternative forms of short break. It remains that the Rowans Short Breaks Service is highly valued by all stakeholders for its key contribution to support for carers, forming part of the choice on offer in Falkirk.

- 3.3. At any one time the Rowans offers short breaks to carers for a maximum of three people. The upper limit of three short breaks is determined by space constraints of the present building. Demand is such that the service operates at close to 100% uptake. On occasion the Rowans is unable to accommodate some short break requests. Demand which cannot be met at the Rowans is delivered through commissioning of short breaks from external providers, usually based outwith the Council area.
- 3.4. Some movement in the floor levels of the building has been noticed, followed by structural survey work. The survey has confirmed that there is a significant structural fault, believed to originate in the building's foundations. The fault is assessed as not being amenable to a simple, low cost solution. The problem with floor levels poses a clear challenge in regards safe use of wheelchairs and falls and trip hazards. The fault has been noted in the Care Inspectorate's inspection process. While mitigation measures can be put in place in the short term, a permanent solution to the accommodation needs of the Rowans must now be found.

4. FUTURE ACCOMMODATION PROPOSAL

- 4.1. There would be significant costs associated with a renovation project to correct the structural fault and to continue delivering the service at the present site. The quantifiable costs would include construction work at significant scale. For the duration of such building works substitute provision would require to be costed in through temporary relocation of the service, commissioning of externally provided short breaks or a combination of both. Unquantifiable costs would include disruption to a model of service delivery for a carer and service user group who value consistency and continuity.
- 4.2. The above considerations have prompted consideration as to alternative accommodation options for the existing Rowans service. The appraisal of options has considered whether an alternative building solution could deliver enhanced outcomes for carers and service users, with specifically in mind the earlier noted problem of unmet demand. For the obvious reason of urgency of implementation, appraisal criteria also include early accessibility of any proposed solution. These considerations underpin the proposal that the Rowans re-locates provision of short breaks to a Council owned site at Thornton Gardens in Bonnybridge.
- 4.3. At the Board meeting on 2 February 2018 members considered a report on work undertaken in response to the decision of Bield, a national housing and care provider, to close two care homes in the Falkirk area. Members were informed that one site, Thornton Gardens in Bonnybridge, belonged to Falkirk Council and that consideration would be given to alternative uses of the site and reported as appropriate to a future meeting. In the intervening year no viable alternative use could be identified, the position having changed only in the recent past with the emergence of the present structural problem within the Rowans building.

- 4.4. Initial appraisal of the Thornton Gardens building confirms that it would be feasible to deliver the Rowans service at the site. The present recommendation to the Board is based upon a re-location of the existing service, including transfer of the totality of the existing service revenue budget. A modest increase in funding requirement is anticipated, associated with the requirement for a building maintenance and repair budget increase.
- 4.5. A relocation of the Rowans to Thornton Gardens would result in the service being no longer restricted to offering a maximum of 3 short breaks at any one time. The facility is significantly more spacious than the existing building. Bield offered 13 residential care placements at the site.
- 4.6. Within the existing revenue budget, and subject to a future discussion with Care Inspectorate partners whose guidelines we follow regards staffing ratios, it is anticipated to be possible to support an increase in provision from 3 to 4 placements immediately upon completing the re-location. The flexibility to deliver increased level of short breaks supports the case for relocation of the service.
- 4.7. The IJB's Carers Strategy is supported by a revenue funding stream which is intended to support increased provision of short breaks. This funding stream could potentially support the proposed re-location in regards resourcing the maintenance and repair budget (para 4.4 above). This would be subject to a governance process set out in the Partnership Funding report included in the IJB agenda.
- 4.8. Capacity at Thornton Gardens exceeds the space required to meet the Rowans short breaks service present and projected demand (including that currently unmet). Under-utilisation of the building asset is recognised as a suboptimal medium and long term outcome. Further work is envisaged to develop a business case exploring best use of the excess space. Extended uses of the space might include crisis intervention and short term assessment services, not necessarily limited to any one service user group. The design of future extended use proposals will follow co-production principles, protecting and enhancing the quality of the existing short breaks service.
- 4.9. Thornton Gardens is the subject of a complex leasing arrangement between the Council and Bield. During the past year there has been discussion with relevant stakeholders around a solution allowing termination of the lease. The Scottish Government provided financial support for the original build costs of the facility and retains an interest in the matter. They have therefore been included in the discussion as an interested third party. The Council's Legal Services have guided these discussions.
- 4.10. The three parties have reached agreement in principle on an approach which would facilitate the transfer of the building to Council use, risk having been appropriately managed in regards to legal liabilities. These discussions are reported to the Board for information and assurance only.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The request for approval of relocation of the Rowans is to enable an early solution to the immediate need arising from the structural problem with the current building at Lochview Hospital site. Relocation to the Thornton Gardens site would additionally afford the opportunity for an expansion and diversification of service provision, thereby increasing responsiveness. The proposal therefore offers a solution to the existing problem of some demand going unmet through the service being over subscribed, and aligns with the Carers Strategy objectives.

Resource Implications

The relocation is based upon transfer of the Rowans' existing revenue budget, there remaining a requirement for a modest adjustment of revenue funding to have in place a maintenance and repair budget for the facility.

It is anticipated that the relocation will allow existing resource to be leveraged so as to increase directly provided short break provision, with an anticipated decrease in externally commissioned provision. The IJB has the Carers' Strategy funding stream which is subject to a formal governance process. Work will be undertaken to determine if an application to the Carers Strategy funding stream or the wider Partnership Funding pot is required. Such a resource could offer some scope to fund expansion of provision, this to be subject to further resource planning and decision making.

Impact on IJB Outcomes and Priorities

The popularity of the service with carers and people who are cared for is evidenced in there being current unmet demand. The proposal offers an opportunity for delivery of IJB outcomes of carers feeling better supported.

Legal & Risk Implications

As noted in the report, para 4.6, there has been a complex leasing arrangement in place between the Council and Bield in regards the Thornton Garden's facility with the Scottish Government also retaining an interest as an original funder for the facility. There is in place an outline agreed approach between the Council, Bield and Scottish Government which is founded upon detailed Council Legal advice and involvement, facilitating the transfer of the facility to use by the Health and Social Care Partnership with all risk appropriately managed.

Consultation

As earlier noted the existing Rowans service is highly valued by carers and cared for people and there is a need to offer reassurance that change involves maintenance of the existing benefit, with potential for enhancement of the service offer. The proposal also involves a change of workplace location for staff. The service has convened meetings with the above stakeholders to ensure information sharing and assurance where necessary.

Equalities Assessment

There is no requirement to complete equalities assessment for this proposal which is concerned with operational service delivery considerations.

Approved for Submission by: Patricia Cassidy, Chief Officer

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Date: 27 March 2019

List of Background Papers: The papers that may be referred to within the report or previous papers on the same or related subjects.