

On 16th October 2015, Denbighshire County Council started a formal consultation about the future of its in-house adult social care services. This means the three council-run residential care homes and day care centres (Awelon in Ruthin; Dolwen in Denbigh; and Cysgod y Gaer in Corwen) and Hafan Deg day care centre in Rhyl. The consultation period runs until 24th January 2016, which is a week later than originally planned in order to give people time to respond following all our public consultation meetings. We have already held six public meetings in Ruthin, Rhyl and Corwen. Our final two public meetings will be held in Denbigh on 14th January 2016, which is later than in the other towns due to the availability of appropriate venues.

During those first six public meetings, people have raised some really important questions and challenges for the council. Some questions have been raised at all six meetings, so we thought it would be useful to publish answers to those questions so that people who have been unable to come to the public meetings can hear our responses.

Does the council want to close Awelon; Dolwen; Cysgod y Gaer; and Hafan Deg?

No, there are a number of potential options under consideration, and the options currently favoured by the council are different for each site. Our preferred options would result in all four sites remaining as care facilities, although they would not necessarily be owned by the council anymore. Also, the types of services provided at the four sites would be different, but would actually provide a better offer for the residents of those towns and surrounding areas.

Has the council already made up its mind what to do?

Although we have preferred options, no decisions about the future of any site have been made. The reason for our public consultation is to gather views about the options currently being considered, but also to explore whether any other options exist.

Is it true that the real reason why there are vacancies in your three care homes is that the council has had a deliberate policy to block or reduce admissions?

No, the council does not have a policy of stopping people from moving into our care homes. The reason we have vacancies is simply that the demand for standard residential care has been reducing for several years. Generally speaking, people do not want to live in residential care homes when they get older. They want to be supported to remain independent within their own homes or within alternative settings, like extra care housing.

Is it true that the council has stopped GPs from referring people to its care homes?

No, GPs have never been able to decide whether someone can move into one of our residential care homes. GPs can only refer people to the council so that we can undertake an assessment of their social care needs. If that assessment shows that a person needs residential care, they are free to move into one of our homes if that home can meet their needs. Different people have different needs, and not every home can meet the needs of each person. For example, some people need to be supported in homes that are registered to deal with complex dementia-related needs. The

registered manager of a care home makes the final decision about whether that home can meet the specific needs of each person.

If you did decide to close any of your care homes, how soon would that happen, and what would happen to the people who currently live there?

If we did decide to close, transfer or develop any of our care homes, nobody will be forced to move to another home if they are unwilling or unable to do so. We have therefore not put any timescales on any of the options we are currently considering. For example, if we decided to close Awelon in Ruthin to enable the site to be re-developed to provide more extra care housing, we would not do so until it was empty.

What is the difference between a residential care home and extra care housing?

The basic difference is that people rent or buy an apartment in extra care housing. Care staff are on-site for 24 hours a day in extra care housing, just as they are in a residential care home. Extra care housing can support people who have the same level of social care needs as in a residential care home. However, research shows that there are many benefits to extra care housing over residential care. Extra care housing tends to be a more enabling environment, and people have better outcomes and are able to live more independent and fulfilling lives. People can also be better off financially in extra care housing because they do not have to sell their own property to pay for care home fees. People may have to sell their property in order to buy an extra care apartment, but they can then retain ownership of a property. A couple can also move into extra care housing together, even if one partner does not have social care needs.

Isn't this just about saving money for the Council?

No, this is not just about saving money. It is true that all councils are under pressure to save money because our budgets have reduced significantly in recent years. We also have an obligation to spend our money in the most efficient way so that we can continue to support everyone with social care needs in Denbighshire. It is also true that our current preferred options would save significant amounts of money. However, we would be proposing these same changes even if we did not need to save money. The demand for these traditional models of service is reducing, and we need to develop services that will meet the demand for more modern services for the future. We believe that the current proposals will mean that social care services for older people in Denbighshire will be better in future as a result of the proposed changes, not worse.

Our public consultation runs until 24th January 2016. All the consultation documents are on our website (<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/consultations/current-consultations.aspx#0>), or you can contact the council on 01824 708090 if you do not have access to the internet. We also have the two final public consultation meetings in Eirianfa Community Centre in Denbigh on 14th January 2016 (2:30pm - 4:00pm and 6:00pm - 7:30pm), and we hope to see as many people as possible at those events.