

# MOVE AND IMPROVE

Residential Short Breaks  
Consultation evaluation  
report April 2019



## Executive summary

The Council's short breaks service is located at Seeley's House in Beaconsfield. The service provides overnight short breaks for people with learning disabilities, usually living in the family home. Currently 1,060 people with a learning disability receive Council services (2018/19). Of these, 73 (7%) used a short breaks service (including Shared Lives).

In total 41 people use the residential short breaks service at Seeleys (December 2018). This represents 56% of all people using short break services.

### Consultation proposal - £3.4 million investment

Our proposal is to build a new purpose built facility to provide a modern and fully integrated health and care residential short breaks service. The aspiration here is very high, to release £3.4 million capital investment and build a new and very much improved residential short breaks service, which will be of significantly higher quality and will be fully integrated across health and social care. This will include the provision of nursing services on site. This will be the first time in Buckinghamshire that we have had the opportunity to take full account of resources from both health and social care, in relation to residential short breaks. It is our aspiration that our modern design will embrace best practice in providing residential short breaks that are modern and built to meet the future needs of our users and carers. We will use as a basis, the previous designs and considerations from the Orchard House development which were developed in partnership with the carers and family members from Seeleys House service users. These plans were developed bringing together stakeholders with expert architects in health and care provision, with modern evidence base at its core. For the proposed new service, this will mean:

- Jointly commissioning the service with Buckinghamshire CCG.
- Temporary closure of Aylesbury Opportunities Centre (AOC) while building takes place.
- Finding alternative placements for AOC day opportunities service users.



## Consultation method

The consultation ran for 8 weeks between 16 January 2019 and 13 March 2019. Engagement focussed on services users, families and carers currently using services at Seeleys House or AOC. The consultation used good practice guidelines including Gunning Principles. Face-to-face meetings were chosen as the best method for engaging the audience. People could also give their views by email, phone or letter.

## Consultation findings

A total of 128 e-mails or phone calls were received from 33 different people. Of these, 97 (75%) came from just 6 people.

Most people who took part in the consultation were carers or service users, attending either AOC or Seeleys respite unit.

There was no disagreement expressed with the future service being an integrated health and social care service.

People that responded to the consultation opposed moving to Aylesbury, but not to moving the service in principle. For example, other sites were proposed as an alternative. Key reasons given for opposing the move were:

- Travel time and distance.
- Alternative proposals need to be considered.
- Happy with the current service.
- Preference to make improvements to the current building
- Loss of experienced staff from Seeleys House

People that responded to the consultation opposed using the AOC site for the service, as well as the need to temporarily close it. The reasons given for this were:

- Negative impact of change on Day Opportunities service users, their families and carers.
- Finding suitable alternative placement.
- Concern over future Day Opportunities capacity.

- Loss of current experienced staff from AOC.

## Conclusion

We believe that the new service we are proposing is a significant improvement on the existing provision.

Views received during this consultation related only to a small proportion of those receiving learning disability services and cannot be seen as necessarily representative of the whole county.

In total 41 people use the residential short breaks service at Seeleys (December 2018). Of these, 14 (34%) live in Aylesbury Vale. The remainder 27 (66%) live in the Wycombe, Chilterns or South Bucks areas.

Those living in the south would prefer the service to stay in the south. Those living in the north saw the move as a benefit.

There is capacity within the existing Council day opportunities estate for people who need a building based service.

If the move is agreed, care and sensitivity is required and families will need time to engage with the process.

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## 1. Purpose of this report

This report is a record of the Residential Short Breaks consultation. Its purpose is to:

- Describe the process used.
- Detail what happened.
- Outline what people said and what this could mean.
- Show any shared ideas.
- Reassure participants their views have been heard
- Help with decision making\*.

*\*It will be attached to the Cabinet report proposing to move and improve residential short breaks.*

## 2. Background

### 2.1 How short breaks can help

Short breaks are for people usually cared for in their own homes. This is by a family member, friend or partner who is not paid to give care. Short breaks are a vital part of making sure people can stay living in their own homes, for as long as possible.

Short breaks benefit both service users and carers. They provide a break from home or caring responsibilities. Time away from home can provide



an opportunity to learn new skills, build a wider support network and make new friends.

A short break means carers have time to rest or focus on other things which improve their own emotional and physical health.

We know that people with very complex needs will always need some type of specialist care. However, short breaks can be so much more than traditional residential or respite care.

Short breaks include day, evening, overnight, weekend or holiday activities. They do not have to be in a residential setting. They can take place in your own home with the help of a personal assistant, the home of an approved carer (e.g. Shared Lives) and in your local community.

Our ['Adult's Short Breaks Strategy 2018-2022'](#) sets out a new approach which broadens the concept of a short break.

## 2.2 Our vision for adult social care and short breaks

***'To make the best use of the resources available to help the people of Buckinghamshire lead fulfilled lives.'***

We want to make sure that people are as independent as possible and can access a wide range of short-breaks. We also want to provide value for money services that meet both current and future need. At the same time we have to plan for growth in demand – as well as the financial challenges we face. This means making sure the money we have for short breaks is spent where it is most needed.

Our current short breaks offer is not flexible enough. A lack of consistent alternative short breaks has led to expensive out of area placements. By modernising the short break services and broadening choice, we believe we can make the best use of our resources.

The proposed changes to short breaks are in line with 'Better Lives Strategy 2018-2021' – our new approach to adult social care. The 'Better Lives' approach is about giving the right level of support for people who are:

- Living independently.
- Regaining independence after a crisis.
- Living with support.

We want to provide more personalised care or support. This means greater access to local, voluntary, independent and community services. Although building based services will remain for people with the most complex needs.

### **2.3 Proposal for residential short breaks**

Our proposal is to build a new purpose built building to provide a modern and fully integrated health and care residential short breaks service. The aspiration here is very high, to release capital investment and build a new and very much improved residential short breaks service, which will be of significantly higher quality and will be fully integrated across health and social care. This will include the provision of nursing services on site. This will be the first time in Buckinghamshire that we have had the opportunity to take full account of resources from both health and social care, in relation to residential short breaks. It is our aspiration that our modern design will embrace best practice in providing residential short breaks that are modern and built to meet the future needs of our users and carers. We will use as a basis, the previous Orchard House designs and considerations which were developed in partnership with the carers and family members from Seeleys House service users. These plans were developed bringing together stakeholders with expert architects in health and care provision, with modern evidence base at its core.

The proposal for residential short breaks plans to:

- Change location from Seeleys House\* in Beaconsfield to the AOC site.
- Improve facilities and access with a partial new build. Investing £3.4 million in a new facility.



- Jointly develop a residential short breaks service with health.

The proposal would mean:

- Closing AOC for about 14 months. This is while building work takes place.
- Finding interim placements for current AOC service users. (Depending on assessed need this could be a permanent move).
- A change in day service capacity at AOC when it re-opens.
- Once re-opened, AOC would focus on supporting people with more complex needs.

***\*Seeleys day centre was not part the consultation.***

### 3. Consultation process

Officers followed the Council's consultation guidance. This followed a process and the 'Gunning principles'. The process had four stages:

1. Pre-consultation engagement and research.
2. Planning.
3. Consultation period.
4. Evaluation and reporting.

Each stage was managed by the lead Commissioning Officer. The Consultation & Engagement Lead and a Senior Communications Officer supported the consultation process.

Regular meetings took place to plan activities and monitor progress. The Director for Joint Commissioning liaised with Executive Director for Communities Health & Adult Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

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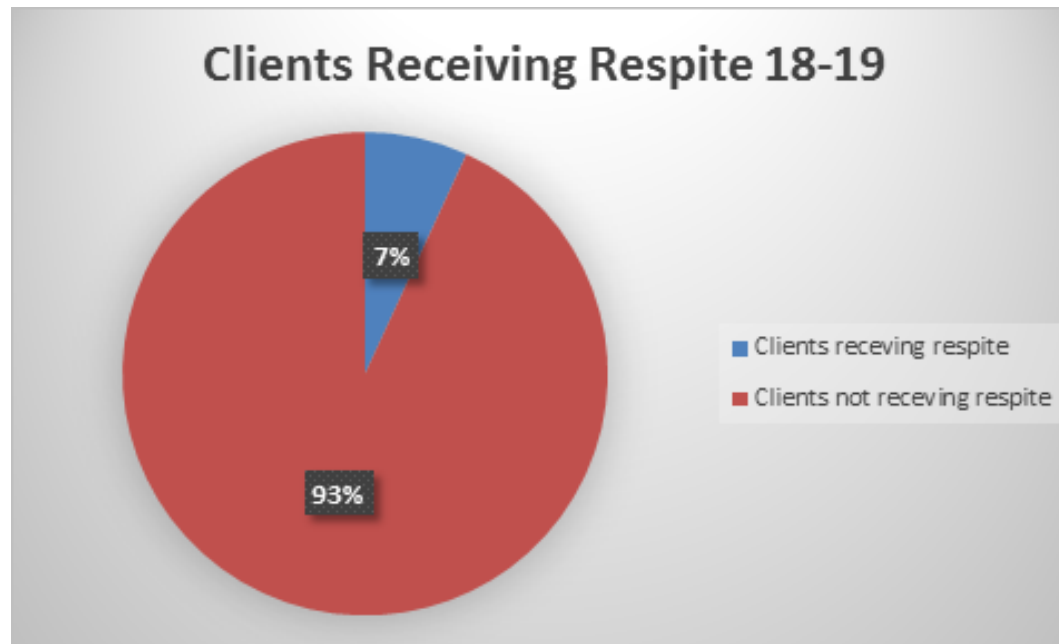
## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Pre- engagement and research

#### Short break service users

There are 1,060 people with a learning disability receiving Council services (2018/19). Of these, 73 receive residential short breaks. This includes all service users who use the service at Seeleys House, as well as those who used other types of residential respite. This means just over 6% of learning disability service user's access short break services (see Chart 1).

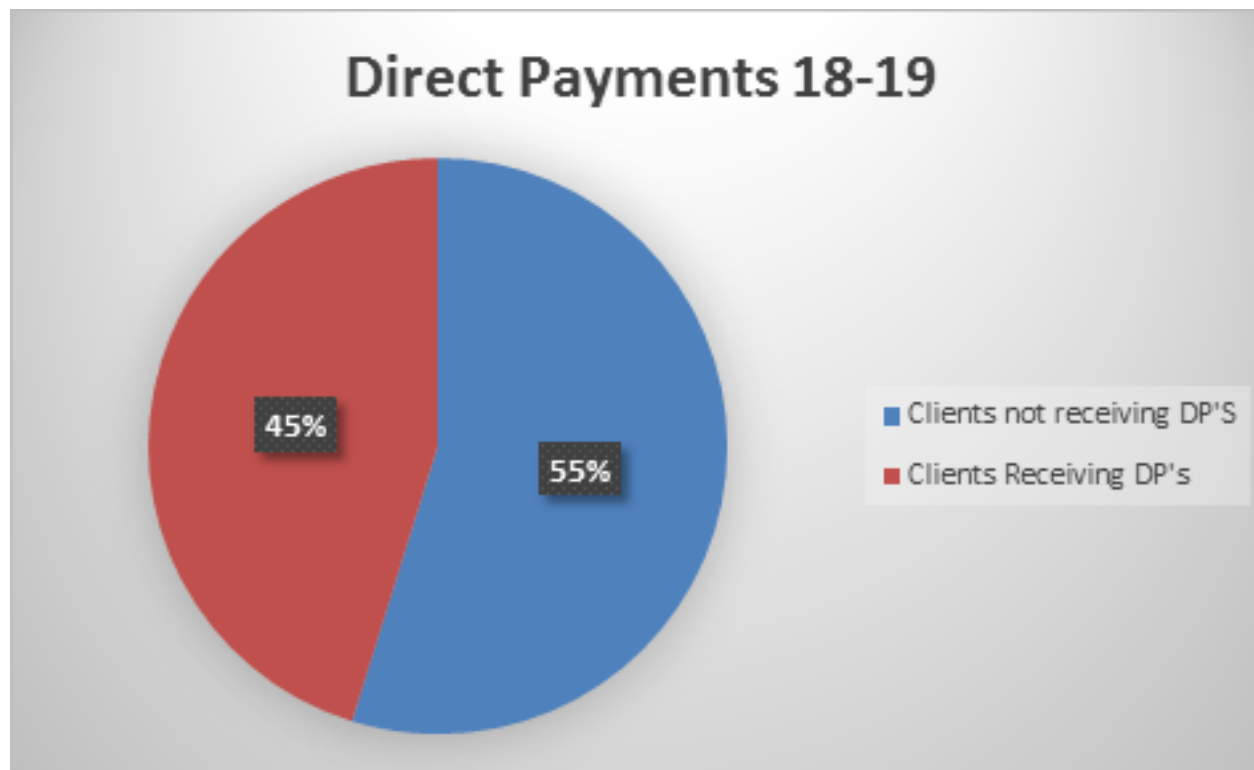
**Chart 1: Residential short break service users as a percentage of learning disability service users**



In total 41 people use the residential short breaks service at Seeleys (December 2018). Of these 14 (34%) live in Aylesbury Vale. The remainder 27 (66%) live in the Wycombe, Chilterns or South Bucks areas.

Of the 1,060 people receiving learning disability services in 18/19, 479 were taking a direct payment. These clients make their own decisions about how they use their direct payment. They could be using these to access alternative short breaks provision, including Shared Lives.

**Chart 2: Percentage of service users with a learning disability in receipt of a direct payment**



The service used to support 11 CHC funded clients who left Seeleys at the end of 2016.

## Opportunities Centres

Numbers of people using day opportunities centres has fallen over the past few years, meaning they are under used and spaces are available to meet the needs of people requiring building based support. For example:

- **AOC\*** - dropped by over 40%. From 106 clients across a week (May 2016) to 63 (February 2019).  
*\*Spectrum and Branching Out also based there*
- **Chesham** – dropped by over 25%. From 58 clients across a week (May 2016) to 43 (February 2019).
- **Buckingham** – dropped by 45%. From 40 clients across a week (May 2016) to 22 (February 2019).

## Orchard House

We looked at relocating the residential short breaks service in 2014/15. This involved a move to the Orchard House site in Wycombe. At the time we worked with carers and family members to develop a 'blue print' for the new build facility.

This design met four key criteria:

- **Capacity** – 12 bed facility
- **Use of space** – separate areas. Meaning people with behaviours that can challenge can use the building at the same time as others.
- **Flexibility** - to meet the needs of people with multiple and complex physical and learning disabilities.
- **Occupancy** – ability to maximise occupancy, reducing the need for high cost, out of county short breaks placements.

The move to Orchard House was later put on hold. However, the Orchard House plans provide a strong 'starting point' which has shaped the AOC proposal.

## **Finding a new site**

In April 2018 a decision was taken by the Cabinet to find a new site for residential short breaks.

The Land Asset Strategy Review (LASR) is a list of all County Council assets. Our Major Projects Team used the LASR to find suitable sites. Architects confirmed that the plan already developed with carers would fit onto the AOC site.

## **Short breaks strategy**

Consultation on the draft Adult's Short Breaks strategy took place in summer 2018. The strategy was agreed and published in October 2018. Following this a draft short breaks policy was developed. This also underwent consultation in Autumn 2018.

These consultations have informed our approach on the impact of service relocation. Specifically:

- The importance of quality and safety - to both carers and clients.
- The vital role short breaks have in sustaining the caring relationship.
- Choice and flexibility of short breaks to meet individual needs.
- Accessibility in terms of transport, funding and eligibility.

## **Cabinet decision**

The Cabinet report proposing the consultation on the service move was published on 21 December 2018. This was for the Cabinet meeting to be held on 7 January 2019.

We wrote to service users, their carers and family members prior to the report being published. This was to tell them about the report and offer to provide more information. A meeting was held on 20 December.

This was to share the proposal and process with them before it became public. Being close to Christmas, the timing was not convenient for some carers and parents. We arranged a second pre-meeting on 3 January for those unable to attend the first.

On 7 January 2019 Cabinet agreed the consultation could take place.

## 4.2 Planning

In line with Council guidance a Consultation and Engagement Plan for the relocation of residential short breaks was developed. The plan set out:

- What was required from the consultation?
- Who we needed to consult with.
- How we would consult.
- Officer's responsibilities.

The aim of the Residential Short Breaks Consultation was to find out what people thought about the proposal for residential short breaks and understand how they may be affected. We did this by:

- Identifying and making timely, appropriate contact with key stakeholders.
- Providing clear accessible information on the proposed plans.
- Putting suitable mechanism(s) in place for people to give their views and ask questions.

## 4.3 Consultation period

The eight week consultation started on 16 January 2019 and ended on 13 March 2019.

A six week period was originally proposed and agreed by Cabinet. This was based on the number and frequency of events. Following requests for more time, the Cabinet member agreed a two week extension.

During the consultation we asked people:

- What do you think about the proposed plans for residential short breaks?
- What do you want us to consider?
- Have you any suggestions?

Over the consultation period there was regular interaction between the Council, carers and families. This was mainly by email and phone (128 interactions). Details of these were recorded to use in consultation feedback.

Throughout the consultation period we kept people updated with regular communications. These included:

- Reminders for meetings.
- How long left to have your say.
- How to have your say.
- Updated FAQs.

#### **4.4 How we sought views**

We had already run two previous consultations about short breaks. This raised concern about consultation fatigue and shaped how we chose to get views. Questionnaires or focus groups were considered too formal and restricted. Also, as these methods had been used previously, they might be perceived as repetitive. Therefore a different and more flexible approach was sought. It was thought that events would allow more scope for individual views and two-way open discussion. Views were invited through a number of face to face events. But they could also be given by email, phone message, or letter directly to the Adult Social Care team.

#### **4.5 Consultation evaluation and reporting**

On conclusion of the consultation all the comments were reviewed and collated into a report. See Appendix a. for a summary of comments received.

## 5. Communications

The Council wanted to hear from service users, their carers and families, as well as staff and interested members of the public. For this reason the consultation and events were promoted in a number of ways including:

- Direct mail – letters targeting parents and carers distributed by services.
- Dedicated web pages and url – [www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults)
- Press releases – distribution includes members, partners and Parish Councils.
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter (including posting on online communities).
- Information displayed at Seeleys House and Aylesbury Opportunity Centre
- Engagement events
- My Bucks – newsletter

## 6. Findings

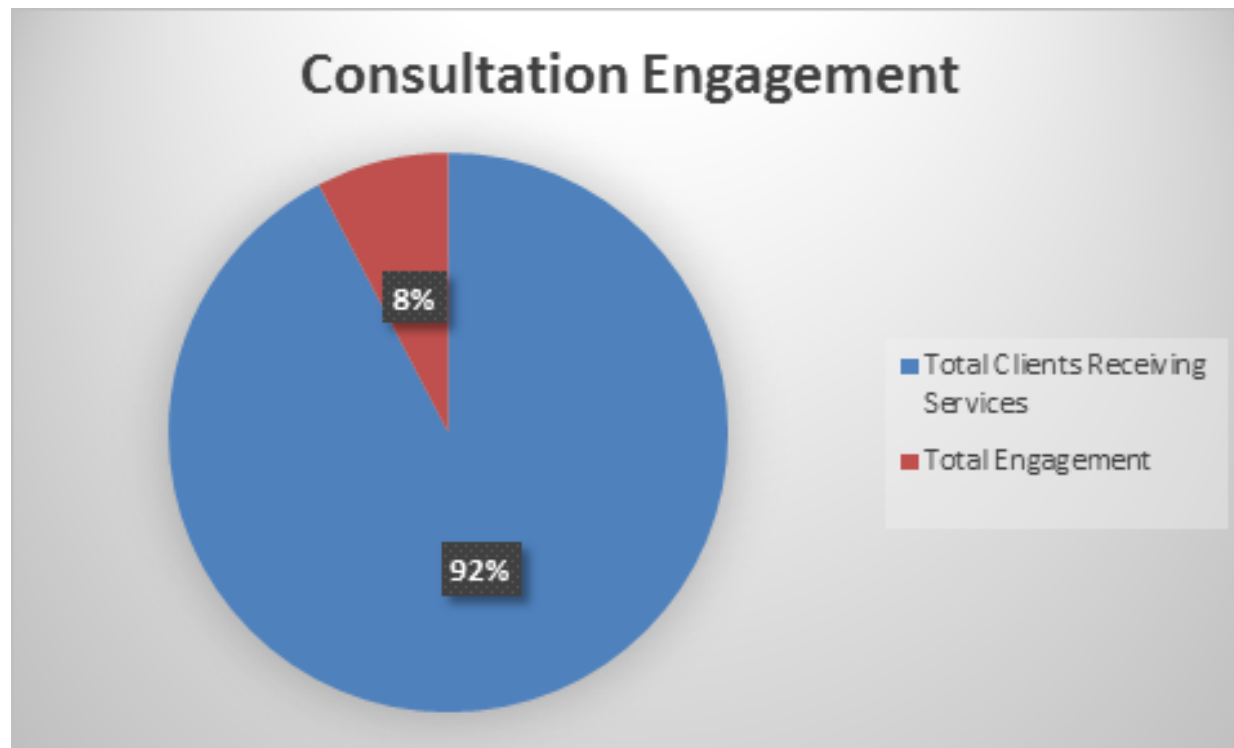
### 6.1 Response rate

The number of people taking part in the consultation was small compared to the number of people receiving learning disability services (1,060).

A maximum of 88 people took part in the consultation. This is made up of 55 event attendees and 33 people giving views by email, letter or phone. People did not leave their contact details at every event, so it is not possible to quantify duplicate attendees. Chart 3 below shows this is 8% of people receiving learning disability services (1,060).\*



**Chart 3: Number of respondents as a percentage of people receiving learning disability services.**



*\*Assuming only one respondent per service user.*

## 6.2 Consultation contacts

6.3 A number (88 maximum) of carers and family members made a great effort to attend engagement events or write detailed emails. These set out the impact of a move on their loved ones and themselves.

In total, 950 formal and informal responses were received, using six different methods. This indicates that the response methods put in place worked (see Diagram below), especially compared to the number of questionnaire responses received for the Short Break Strategy and Policy consultations (117 and 88 respectively).

## 6.4 Engagement events

Initially four events were planned, two each at Seeleys House and Aylesbury Opportunity Centre. A mix of morning, afternoon and evening sessions were offered.

A further morning session was added following a request from a carer, in the context of the two week extension.

Each of the engagement sessions was attended by commissioning and operational staff. At the start of each meeting a commissioner outlined the proposal before opening discussion up to the floor.







These events allowed stakeholders to ask questions about the proposed changes. They also gave officers the opportunity to hear what impact relocation of the service would have on carers and family members.

Some stakeholders chose to attend more than one event, some attended several, totalling 55 contacts overall.

The first event saw a low number of attendance. As the consultation period progressed attendance increased. The last event was the

**Diagram 1**

### Residential Short Breaks consultation contacts

Type of engagement	No: of contacts
 Face to face events	55
 Member of Parliament enquiries	4
 Letters - County Councillors	6
 Letter - Stakeholder	13
 Emails to Commissioner mailbox	128
 Petition signatories	743
	<b>Total contacts</b>
	<b>950</b>

best attended with 24 attendees. Nearly all attendees declared themselves to be family members or carers. There was also representation from supported living providers.

People who attended the engagement events and did not feel able to speak were encouraged to submit their views by email. Indeed everyone who attended the events was also encouraged to share their personal views by other methods available.

Appendix b. Notes from engagement events

## 6.5 Petitions

The Council received an e-petition on 18 March 2018. It was entitled '*Save Seeleys respite unit Beaconsfield*' and held 743 signatures.

The petition asked the Council to '*Keep Seeleys respite unit open in Beaconsfield, or build a new smaller unit in the car park*'.

The Council hosted e-Petition facility requires signers to '*live, work or study in Bucks*'. The e-Petition received during the consultation was hosted on a third party site.

## 6.6 Email

A total of 128 emails or phone calls were received from 33 different people. Of these, 97 (75%) came from 6 people.

During the course of the consultation a range of questions were asked. Most of these were relevant to the consultation and the wider public. They were posted as 'FAQs' or frequently asked questions on the consultation

web pages at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults) . When possible these were updated weekly. The questions asked were themed into eight categories as follows:

- The move to Aylesbury Opportunity Centre (AOC)
- AOC
- Seeleys House
- Location, travel and transport
- Assessment and transition
- The new service
- Capacity and alternative placements
- Consultation and process

See Appendix c. for FAQs posted on the County Council website

## 6.7 Member of Parliament enquiries

Four people wrote to their Members of Parliament about the proposal. This resulted in enquiries from MPs to which the County Council responded.

The letters raised a number of points with similar themes, which had been raised through other routes and answered in the FAQs. For example service users being left without an alternative service (FAQ 2).

“As a council tax payer I consider Buckinghamshire C C has acted very poorly in recent years - failing to support families with learning disabled members through continued erosion of provision.”



## 7. Summary of consultation themes

### 7.1 Overview

Of the people that responded there was a high degree of emotion expressed, and:

- Many said it was important to have a short breaks service located in South Buckinghamshire.
- They described the current service as an integral part of managing their caring responsibilities.
- Some carers felt angry and frustrated by the Council's proposal.
- They perceived a lack of care and consideration of the impact on their loved ones and themselves.
- Concern about the affect the proposal would have on service users was frequently expressed.
- Carers were keen that the Council was aware of the level of disruption the proposals would have on their loved ones and themselves.

Several themes emerged. These are outlined in more detail below.

### 7.2 Theme: alternative proposals

Some people felt that Seeleys House was adequate and a service should remain where it was. Alternative locations were suggested by consultees. These included Burnham and Chesham Day Opportunities Centres, the former Orchard House site and land near Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Indicating that, a move in principle, was acceptable.

Some people (17) proposed alternative locations for the short breaks service. The most popular (8) was to build two smaller respite units, located north and south of the county. Some people acknowledged that this proposal would not be as affordable as one unit, with Council property colleagues confirming it would broadly double the revenue and capital costs.

However, there was a view by some that Learning Disability services have reduced over the years. They felt that the Council should prioritise investment in residential short break services.

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Other suggestions are outlined in Diagram 2 below.

## Diagram 2: Alternative proposals

	No: in support
Modernise Seeleys	1
Two units (north and south)	8
Use of the Bierton Hill site	2
Burnham Day Opportunities Centre	3
Build in the Seeleys car park	1
South of county location	1
Mid-county location	1



## 7.3 Theme: wellbeing

Client wellbeing was discussed at all the events. Many of the emails received talked about how the proposal would affect the service users and their families.

They talked about the effect of the caring role on a family and the need to support families to keep on caring. There was a feeling that the Council is reducing support to them.

Concerns varied from person to person but included:

- **Mental and emotional health** – with the change and disruption potentially triggering anxiety, depression or behaviours that challenge. Making it very important that individual needs and impacts are fully understood and mitigations put in place.
- **Alternative provision** - People were concerned about what provision they could use whilst AOC was closed. They thought there was a lack of suitable day opportunities for those people with complex needs. There was anxiety that there would be no space in other Day Opportunity Centres. Carers wanted assurance that the AOC service will not close until suitable alternative provision has been found for all those who currently use the service.
- **Friendship groups** - several people said keeping friendship groups was important. They felt this should be a key factor in any care and support plans related to the proposal.
- **Safety** - was raised by many people. Some felt that the Council had not considered how the move would affect vulnerable people. Comments included considering safety of vulnerable people for whom a service move could be very disturbing and have a knock on effect for all family members. The unfairness of causing disruption to users of a day centre to benefit short breaks service users was highlighted, feeling the County Council was not taking into account the needs of all vulnerable clients.

“Families are affected by learning disability through no fault of their own and such impacts have devastating consequences for other family members.”



## 7.4 Council processes and timing

### Pre-consultation

Some people felt that the timing of the pre-consultation meeting was not well planned. They felt the process was needlessly hurried. Invitation letters to carers were posted on 12 December. However, some people did not receive them until the day before the meeting. This created problems for some people in attending.

The meeting was aligned with the Cabinet process. This meant arranging it before the Cabinet report was published on 21 December. The purpose of the letter was to let people know our intention to consult in the New Year if Cabinet agreed.

### Letter subject line

Some people felt the letter was misleading, in particular for those at AOC. This was because the letter subject line said '***new plan for residential short breaks***'.

Some people did not read the letter initially as they did not think it was relevant to them. The letters were personally addressed and referred to AOC service users and staff. Once this was known to the Council, a second letter was sent to AOC carers and parents to clarify.

### Consultation period

There was a lot of discussion about the need for a realistic time frame. People felt this was an important issue which should not be rushed. As such the consultation period was extended.

"It is the duty of civilised society to ensure that the maximum possible support is given to such families so that siblings do not become carers and marriages break up."





## Reviews

There was discussion about the timing of reviews. Carers and parents were reassured that reviews will be done in a timely fashion and that a safe transition was a priority. Timelines would be flexed if needed.

## Communications

Some people felt that the Council had not always been transparent in its communications. This included giving informal meetings a formal status.

Some people said they were satisfied with the response to their questions. Others found the process unhelpful and felt they had to ask more than once to get a response. This was likely due to the number and type of question asked. These often required detailed responses from multiple sources. All questions were answered and posted on [www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/shortbreaksforadults)

## 7.5 Location of a new service

There was a lot of discussion about the proposed location. Some people believed that key driver for the service re-location was to release the capital value of the Seeleys House site.

### Support for the move

Some people were happy with the proposed move to AOC. This was because it would make residential short breaks far more accessible for them. Some families saw the proposed AOC location as a big benefit. Feeling it would reduce the travel time for their loved ones who use AOC and currently travel to Beaconsfield for short breaks.

There was recognition that there are people in the north of the county who do not use residential short breaks at present because the journey is too far.

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## People living in the south of the county

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Carers and families living in the south of the county felt Aylesbury was too far away for them to use the service. They are happy with the Beaconsfield location and do not want the service to move.

There was unease that travelling long distances would expose service users to significant discomfort. Parents voiced concern about possibly sitting on wet pads for long periods of time. As well as feeling uncomfortably warm in vehicles with no air-conditioning.

The cost of transport was raised on a number of occasions. It was acknowledged that extra costs would be borne by service users who did not have an eligible need for transport.

## Traffic and access

The traffic congestion across the county was raised as an issue, including the impact of infrastructure development e.g. HS2. These were thought not to be specific to Aylesbury, rather an issue wherever the service was located.

Attendees at events had done some local research. They felt that the access into Aylesbury town centre from AOC is not good. For example how feasible it would be to push a person in wheelchair over the incline on the railway bridge.

Others however felt that the distance and the footpaths were reasonable.

## 7.6 Minor confusion about the proposal

Commissioners received feedback about the title of the pre-consultation letter sent to parents and carers of service users at Seeleys House Short Breaks service and the AOC Day Opportunity Centre. They felt that the letter was misleading from the title “Consultation on the relocation of the Short Breaks service”. Whilst it was clear to those using Seeleys House, it did not make explicit in the title that it would have a serious impact on users of the AOC Day Opportunities

Service. Once commissioners were aware, a further letter was sent to make clear to all AOC service users and carers that the proposal would have a direct impact on them.

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## 7.7 Fairness of the proposal

A common theme was that the proposals were unfair on service users of AOC. These concerns related to a belief that Cabinet had not been made aware of important facts such as temporary closure of the AOC and reduction in day centre capacity. This had been set out in the Cabinet paper.

There was also concern that vulnerable AOC users were being disadvantaged to benefit short breaks service users.

Whilst users of the day service would be required to move if the proposal is agreed, eight short breaks service users also attend AOC.

People wanted assurance that families and carers will be fully involved in processes to transition service users.

## 7.8 Transport

People voiced concerns about the impact of the changes on transport. These were around:

- The time a service user may spend in their wheelchair, in a vehicle, as they travel to the service.
- People who were incontinent being in wet pads for prolonged periods.
- Suitability of the vehicles, and whether they had air conditioning.
- The impact on travel times of major infrastructure projects happening in Buckinghamshire.
- Additional costs of transport for some people\*.

\*Currently transport costs are negligible for people who live close to Seeleys House. Costs will increase if the service moves to Aylesbury. Some people were worried about where the additional cost of transport will fall.

Some people were supportive of the proposal as they would be travelling less.

## **7.9 Reviews**

Some people were very concerned about the timing of reviews, feeling that all clients should be reviewed and their needs fully understood before Cabinet could take a decision on potential service closure.

### **7.10 Loss of experienced staff**

People were concerned about the losing experienced staff when AOC temporarily closed for the re-build. They felt it was critical that staff who know clients are retained and can support each individual's needs.

### **7.11 Seeleys Day Centre**

Seeleys Short Breaks and Seeleys Day Centre are two very different and separately managed services. However, they share the same site and building. This created a degree of misunderstanding during the consultation. People felt that moving the short breaks service to Aylesbury would affect whether the day service stayed open. This led to a view that the council was hiding cuts and service changes.

There is little crossover between the two services, with a small number of people (6) using both.

### **7.12 Long term impact on AOC capacity**

This was a key discussion point. Much of the concern centred on capacity after the rebuild. This will not be known until later in the design phase. However, AOC is currently operating under capacity. Additionally, there is significant capacity with the Council's day opportunities estate. This means that anyone with a specific need for a building based service would be able to access a service.

## 7.13 Carer roles

There was a view that moving the service might result in a break down in some of the caring relationships. Some felt if the move went ahead they may not be able to continue being a carer. They believed long term residential care would be the only option. This would of course be subject to an assessment of need as well as the service user's wishes.

It was generally believed by carers that short breaks and supporting them in their caring roles, is more cost effective than other options such as residential care. This caused speculation about the additional costs that might be incurred without carer support. It was agreed that some financial modelling was needed to understand this fully.

“Buckinghamshire is one of the most affluent parts of the UK yet it seems learning disabled families here fare very poorly compared with counties such as Leicestershire with which I am familiar.”



## 8. Consultation findings

These findings are based on feedback from engagement events, telephone calls, email and letter. They represent the views of the 33 people who took part in the consultation. They cannot be considered representative of all service users with a learning disability. The consultation findings are:

- **Response rates**

- Overall response rates were low. With 33 people responding to the consultation. This represents just 3% of people with a learning disability currently receiving Council services.\*

*\*Services users were represented by one carer or family member.*

- Response rates were low in volume but high in intensity. Some people responded multiple times. Using multiple methods. Meaning the intensity of a small number of views was amplified.

- Responses were mostly from carers and family members of service users. (Seeleys House Short Breaks service and AOC)
- 128 emails and telephone calls were received, generating over 100 FAQ listings
- **Interest from the wider public**
  - 743 people signed an e-petition against the move
  - MPs letters received (4)
  - Media interest, 9 media enquiries received, 5 press release statements issued
- **Support for the move to Aylesbury is divided**
  - People living in the south of the county would prefer the service to remain located in the south.
  - Others prefer the AOC site as it would make residential short breaks more accessible to them.
  - Even amongst those that do not want to move to Aylesbury there was no significant opposition to a move in principle e.g. other sites were suggested.
- **No opposition to joint commissioning with health**
  - There was no significant opposition to commissioning a service jointly with health.
  - The main concern was about ensuring there was capacity for both health and social care clients.
- **Concerns about the potential impact of the move on carers and service users**
  - Additional time and cost of travel for people living in the south of the county.
  - Effect of longer journey times on some service users
  - Effect of change on some very vulnerable service users
  - Some carers maybe unable to continue their caring roles
  - Availability of alternative day opportunities provision

- **If the move is agreed there some key things to consider**
  - Suitable transport and routes to maximise comfort and minimise travel time.
  - Timing of reviews and careful transitions.
  - Care and support plans to consider individual needs and friendship groups.
  - Involve service users, carers and families in service design.
  - Ensure suitable space for people with behaviours that challenge.
  - Additional costs of travel.

## 9. Conclusion

A small number of people (33) generated a large amount of views and information. Making multiple use of response methods.

These people were mostly carers or family members of Seeleys short breaks or AOC services users. The number of individuals responding was low compared to the number of people with a learning disability receiving Council services (1,090). To put this into context respondents represent\*:

- 33% of the combined AOC and Seeleys short breaks service user population (104).
- 3% of people with a learning disability receiving a Council service.

*\*Assuming only one respondent per service user.*

The consultation highlighted some points which required further clarification. Officers have responded to these providing clarifications through direct conversations and regularly updating FAQs.

The consultation also elicited some valuable information about how the proposal might impact on service users and carers, some unintended consequences and areas of potential risk which may require mitigations. These have been noted and, if the proposal is agreed, these will be taken into account when planning the move for clients.

Few people are opposed to a move in general. Whether you support or oppose the move to AOC appears to depend on whether you live south or north of the county. Location seems to have shaped who currently uses the service, with some people saying the current location means they may not be able to access it.

Concerns focus around the impact of travelling longer distances. As well as the wider impact of change on service users, including finding suitable alternative placements. Consultation feedback provided a strong narrative about increased anxiety and the frequency of behaviours that challenge.

We are aware of the risks and will do everything we can to ensure transitions are well prepared and discussed with families and carers. We want all transitions to be safe and well managed.

Feedback received during the consultation indicated that communications were not always as clear as intended. This too has been noted and will be taken into account if the move goes ahead. Ensuring services users, their carers and families are kept fully informed.

In conclusion people feel very strongly attached to the current service at Seeleys House. They want the people who will take this decision to appreciate the significant impact it will have on service users, their carers and families.

## **10. Addendum**

A further period of Engagement with the Service Users, families and carers at Aylesbury Opportunity Centre was undertaken to ensure that their views and thoughts had been heard and would influence the decision making process.

It was agreed that an additional engagement period of 6 weeks, from 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019 – 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019, would be undertaken. On 5<sup>th</sup> July a letter was sent out to AOC service users, family members and carers explaining that further engagement would be taking place. The letter provided the option to supply written feedback. The letter also explained that county council officers would be making telephone calls to gather feedback from those that wished to provide it. This took place on week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019.



The officers successfully engaged with 59 of the 71 names that were provided. Contact was made with the administrator at AOC throughout the week to clarify these numbers.

When the engagement period concluded on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019, all responses to written and telephone feedback were reviewed and analysed. Analysis of responses was undertaken by the Council's Integrated Commissioning Team.

Feedback captured the feelings, views and thoughts of all the respondents and has enabled the Council to capture the recurring themes in this report.

Three questions were asked during the engagement:

- How do you think a temporary closure of AOC will affect you, the person you care for, or your family member?
- What actions could the county council take to help reduce any impact on you, the person you care for or your family member?
- Have you had any information or thoughts about alternative placements which you might be interested in?

All feedback that was obtained was recorded anonymously. The key themes that came out of these 3 questions were –

- Concern that suitable alternative provision would not be found.
- If an alternative placement was found that the impact would not be too great.
- People expressed that they wanted a local alternative placement to be found that was not miles from Aylesbury.
- A large proportion of people were concerned about the possible lack of social interaction and how this would have a negative impact on the service user's mental health.
- There was concern that the service user does not adapt well to change.
- There was concern about the additional stress that the move would be put on elderly family members, or family member suffering ill health, if they did not have the day service as respite.

- A large number of people said that they are not aware of alternative placement possibilities that may be available to their loved ones.

If the proposal to relocate the short breaks service is agreed and the temporary closure of AOC goes ahead all service users will have a social work led review. All clients with an eligible need will be found a suitable alternative therefore mitigating the concern of social isolation. Where possible siblings and friendship groups will be relocated together however this may not be possible in each case as there are many variables to consider.

A safe transition period is vital for many service users as they do not adapt well to change or to unfamiliar faces. Every client will have a transition plan developed. They will have a phased transition which could include taster days, regular sessions with staff they are familiar with and introduction to the new service gradually over a period of time. There may also be the option for familiar staff to relocate with the service users if this is deemed appropriate for the client and the staff member.

A large number of the people we engaged with said they had not been given any information about alternative provision in the council therefore causing further anxiety as many felt suitable local alternatives are not available and their loved ones would have a considerable journey to access day provision. A document will be produced that social workers can refer to and hand out during reviews which will outline alternative provision in the local area and what the provision can offer.

Some people have welcomed the proposed relocation stating that it would be beneficial for them to have a short breaks service in their locality. Others stated that the residential home will provide the day time activities for the service user.