

Consultation on overnight respite for children with disabilities

Proposed closure of Merrydale and Sunbeams overnight residential respite homes

Information Pack



Contents

Introduction.....	1
How to have your say.....	2
Section one: Proposals to close Merrydale and Sunbeams.....	5
Section two: Pilot projects.....	7
Section three: About Merrydale and Sunbeams.....	10
Section four: The current range of overnight respite services.....	12
Section five: Other overnight respite services.....	24
Section six: Future overnight respite services.....	25
Section seven: Frequently asked questions.....	27
Conclusion	29

Introduction

The County Council is seeking residents' and stakeholders' views on proposals to close overnight respite services at Merrydale in Winchester and Sunbeams in Aldershot. These are two overnight residential respite children's homes owned and run by Hampshire County Council.

The proposal does not include:

- **Firvale** – the third residential respite children's home jointly owned and run by the County Council and Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; and
- **Short break activities**

Please note that this consultation is separate from the County Council's *Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget* consultation (www.hants.gov.uk/consultations, closing 21 August). As such, responses to this consultation on overnight respite services will not be used to inform any decisions made by the County Council with regard to the Balancing the Budget consultation.

Why your views are important

It is important to the County Council that the views of the children and young people, and their families and carers, who may be affected by the proposals, are carefully considered; as well as feedback from Hampshire residents and other interested stakeholders.

The findings from this consultation will be published and presented to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services. Feedback will help to inform any decision by the County Council on the proposed closure of overnight respite services at Merrydale and Sunbeams later in the year.

How to have your say

a. Open public consultation

You are invited to give your views on the proposals to close Merrydale and Sunbeams. You can do this by using the online Response Form at: www.hants.gov.uk/consultations. The Information Pack and Response Form, along with Easy Read versions of both documents, are available to download and print from the consultation webpage.

If you require a paper copy of the Information Pack or the Response Form, or if you have any queries about the consultation, please contact overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk, or call: **0300 555 1384**.*

You can also email your response directly to Hampshire County Council using the email address: overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk.

This Information Pack and the Response Form are available in other formats such as large print, audio and Braille. To obtain an alternative format please email Hampshire County Council at: overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk, or call: **0300 555 1384**.*

Please return paper Response Forms in the Freepost envelope provided. If you do not have a Freepost envelope, please post your response to: **Freepost HAMPSHIRE**.

The consultation is open from midday on 7 August and closes at 23:59pm on 2 October 2017. Please note that responses received after this date will not be included in the findings report.

*Calls from a landline will be charged at the local rate, although mobile phone charges may vary

b. Consultation drop-in events for parents and carers

Drop-in events have been arranged to help parents and carers to take part in the consultation. Booking is not required to attend these events.

At the drop-in events you will be able to:

- Find out more about the alternative overnight respite services which could be used instead of Merrydale and Sunbeams;
- Talk to Hampshire County Council staff; and
- Pick up a paper copy of the consultation Information Pack and Response Form.

These events are being held alongside, but separate to, the 'Get Together' regional meetings organised by Hampshire Parent Carer Network. Details of the times and locations of the events are set out below:

Location	Date	Time	Venue
Andover	8 September	9:30 – 11:30	Longmeadow Centre Cricketers Way, Andover SP10 5DE
Aldershot	14 September	10:00 – 12:00	Aldershot Centre for Health Hospital Hill, Aldershot GU11 1AY
Romsey	15 September	9:30 – 11:30	Youth in Romsey Southampton Road, Romsey SO51 8AF
Winchester	20 September	9:30 – 11:30	United Church Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8RZ
Basingstoke	28 September	9:30 – 11:30	Maple Ridge Primary School Maple Crescent, Basingstoke RG21 5SX
Alresford	29 September	10:00 – 11:30	The Swan Inn Hotel 11 West Street, New Alresford SO24 9AD

c. Face-to-face meetings with Social Workers for children and young people, and their families who currently use Merrydale and Sunbeams

The County Council will be offering all children and families who currently use Merrydale and Sunbeams, face-to-face meetings with their child's Social Worker or a colleague from the Disabled Children's Team. If your child is a current user of Merrydale or Sunbeams, you will be contacted separately by the Children's Services department to make an appointment. These meetings will take place during the consultation period: 7 August – 2 October.

These meetings are an opportunity for children and families to:

- Talk to the Social Worker about the proposed closure of Merrydale and Sunbeams;
- Discuss what impact the proposed closure may have on them; and
- Discuss what alternative overnight respite services could be available and explore what a suitable alternative care package might look like for them, if the homes close.

If children and young people who use either Merrydale or Sunbeams would like to have the support of an independent advocate to take part in the consultation and ensure their views are heard, or if a child/young person's Social Worker or parents/carers think the child/young person should have an advocate, the Social Worker will be able to arrange this.

Section one: Proposals to close Merrydale and Sunbeams

The County Council is proposing to close Merrydale and Sunbeams for the following reasons:

- To respond to feedback from children and young people and their families and carers on the type of overnight respite they would prefer to use – please see below.
- Neither home is a purpose-built care home for children with disabilities. In their current form, the layout is not considered to be user-friendly in terms of accessibility. This presents challenges for the County Council in caring for children with disabilities, particularly in responding to the changing expectations and preferences of children and their families. To undertake further adaptations would require redesign and rebuild, and would come at considerable cost.
- Should the two homes close, the County Council would be able to reduce costs by approximately £450,000 per year, on the upkeep of buildings and facilities. Furthermore, some of the current funding used to provide care services at the two homes could be spent on purchasing alternative care support and respite services, provided by other organisations, to meet assessed care needs and preferences.

National drivers for change

Central government reviews, such as the **'Aiming High for Disabled Children'** (May 2007) and the **Lenahan Review** (January 2017), have concluded that care for children and young people with disabilities should not be 'institutionalised' at an early age – i.e. children and young people with disabilities should not just be placed in a residential care home. These reviews call for a range of alternative services to be offered which enable disabled children and young people to remain in their communities, and for their right to a childhood to be acknowledged and respected.

What children and families tell us they want from overnight respite

Feedback from children and young people with disabilities, their families and carers, as well as providers of overnight respite also suggests that there is an appetite for change. The County Council has been working with these groups to understand further what they need from overnight respite care.

Key findings from this engagement evidence that:

- There is a desire for a wider choice of overnight respite, beyond a stay in a traditional respite home;

- There is a desire to offer children and young people more opportunities to take part in exciting and stimulating activities as a core part of the respite offer;
- There is a need to support older children to develop further life and independent living skills as part of an overnight break;
- There is a need for parents and carers to have access to further help to find solutions for underlying issues, such as sleep deprivation, which could enable families to become more resilient;
- There is a desire to give parents and carers more choice in the length of overnight respite available, particularly when travel time to and from a respite setting is taken into account;
- Some families would like to be able to combine overnight respite with a break for the whole family; and
- There is a need to offer more age-appropriate overnight respite.

Options considered and rejected

The County Council has considered and rejected the following options:

- Invest in the buildings to continue to provide services for the future. This option would not seek to improve wider outcomes for children; would not allow for investment in a wider range of services, which families tell the County Council they want; and would not be in line with the national approach to stop institutionalising care.
- Create a residential home for children with disabilities offering respite as well as permanent care. This option would not be financially sustainable and does not support the principles of developing a new and broader service for overnight respite provision.
- Use the buildings for a different purpose to meet the needs of children with disabilities. This option would not free up funding to offer families a wider range of choice or provide greater capacity to tailor services.
- No change/do nothing. This has been rejected because children and young people and their parents and carers have told the County Council that they would like more choice, control and flexibility. Also, this option would not improve value for money.

Section two: Pilot projects

Working with the **Hampshire Parent Carer Network** (HPCN) and **Parent Voice**, in the summer and autumn of 2016 the County Council trialled alternative ways to deliver respite care. The pilot projects included:

- Disability Challengers Overnight Activity Breaks;
- Minstead Trust 16+ Overnight Independence Breaks;
- The Sebastian Action Trust Whole Family Overnight Break; and
- Kids Intensive Sleep Support Programme.

26 families took part in these pilot projects. The ages of the children ranged from four to 17 years old. The pilot projects were well-received by children and families and demonstrated that there are appropriate alternatives to overnight residential respite available. Feedback showed:

- Positive outcomes and experiences in relation to Overnight Activity Breaks, Overnight Independence Breaks and Whole Family Overnight Breaks;
- The need to ensure a variety of activities is on offer as part of any overnight respite;
- Potential to improve users' development of independent living skills through Overnight Independence Breaks;
- Demand for Whole Family Overnight Breaks was likely to be relatively low and more likely to meet the needs of families with younger children;
- Sleep intervention work needed to be appropriately targeted as an intervention rather than an alternative to overnight respite; and
- That all future services' premises must be accessible to children and young people with a disability, e.g. wheelchair users.

The County Council's engagement work during and after the pilot projects has told us that children and young people and their parents and carers want to have access to a wider range of overnight respite services.

Case study: Improving outcomes

Abigail is 11 years old and has profound and multiple disabilities. Abigail is a wheelchair user and is unable to use words to communicate. Abigail's communication is limited to facial expressions and vocalisations. She is wholly dependent on others to meet her mobility and personal care needs. One of the targets that Abigail is working towards at school is to begin to develop choice-making skills.

Abigail is sociable and her behaviours and vocalisations indicate that she enjoys the company of others. However, she can become anxious in new situations. Abigail has a direct payment package where personal assistants care for her at home and she attends a local playscheme for children with complex needs. Abigail's parents find it difficult to identify suitable activities for Abigail to increase her access to the community. They need to be assured that the provider can meet her complex needs and care for her safely.

Abigail took part in the Overnight Short Breaks pilot in 2016. During this time, she had overnight stays with one provider and attended activities with another. The providers liaised with Abigail's school to understand the assistive technology and communication methods that they were supporting Abigail to use. Abigail was given a choice of activities and surprised her parents by being able to express her choices. She chose and enjoyed activities that her parents thought were beyond her capabilities due to her limited communication and mobility. These activities included climbing and archery.

This experience has given Abigail more freedom and expanded her opportunities to take part in activities. Abigail has shown others a side to her personality that she was unable to express previously. The use of pictures and other means of communication across settings enabled Abigail to have an understanding of what was happening next and this reduced her anxiety. The skills that Abigail is developing across school, home and other settings is enabling her care planning to become more person-centred and informed by Abigail's likes and dislikes.

Case study: Independent life skills

Thomas took part in the 16+ pilot where he had two weekend breaks away and a one week stay during his college holidays. Thomas' Social Worker met with him, his parents and the provider at Thomas' house to explain what the provision would involve. Thomas was very excited about it and asked lots of questions. Thomas gets anxious in new places but he arranged with the worker from the 16+ provision that he would visit it before he went to stay.

While the respite gave Thomas' parents a break in caring, Thomas' experience was focused on supporting and developing his independence skills. Thomas struggled to accept that others could have a different point of view to him and often lost his temper if there was a disagreement. During his time at the pilot Thomas took part in team building activities and community-based activities with his peers to learn and develop his communication and self-management skills. Thomas also had responsibility for his own room which was something he struggled with at home. The aim of these activities was to prepare him to move onto living with peers as a young adult.

Thomas reported that he loved the outdoor games and he thought that having an ensuite bathroom was "incredible". He also took part in cooking activities. All the young people were buddied up and Thomas naturally began to support a young person who was less able than himself. Thomas was very pleased that he could have a week-long break as this made him feel "grown up". Having a peer group centred on supporting young people over 16 meant that activities and skills development could be tailored to meet the young people's interests and needs. Thomas' family felt this was really important and different to previous respite provision where there tended to be a lot of younger children.

Thomas has now turned 18 and he has moved into a care home with other disabled adults, in a local residential area close to his family. He is continuing to build on the skills he has learned and has made friends with the other residents, and he is enjoying college.

Section three: About Merrydale and Sunbeams

Merrydale

Location:	Kings Worthy, Winchester
Number of beds:	13
Number of staff:	24 members of staff
Ofsted:	Latest Ofsted inspection rating: Good Link to the most recent Ofsted report
Website:	www.hants.gov.uk/send-localoffer Link to Local Offer webpage



About the current users:

As at 31 March 2017, there were 28 children and their families/carers using the home. The children and young people using Merrydale have severe learning difficulties and disabilities.

Background:

Merrydale was built in 1974 as a long stay residential children's respite home for children of all needs. Merrydale shares a site with other Council County buildings which provide services for adults. Over the years its purpose has changed and a number of adaptations have been made to the premises to ensure the needs of the children using the home are met.

Cost of providing services at Merrydale:

Merrydale's annual budget for 2017/18 is: £617,000

Potential impact of closing Merrydale

There are 28 children currently using Merrydale. Some children are approaching their eighteenth birthdays and will be looking to move on from Merrydale shortly. The remaining children would need to access alternative forms of provision if the home closed. The potential impacts would be different for each child and family using Merrydale. Those impacts, and alternative care support, including overnight respite options, will be discussed with children and their families as part of the consultation process. If the home closes, each child's transition from Merrydale to a new service would be managed sensitively and at a pace appropriate to the child, recognising the potential impact that change can have on children with disabilities.

Sunbeams

Location:	Aldershot
Number of beds:	Four
Number of staff:	18 members of staff
Ofsted:	Latest Ofsted inspection rating: Good Link to the most recent Ofsted report
Website:	www.hants.gov.uk/send-localoffer Link to Local Offer webpage



About the current users:

As at 31 March 2017, there were 19 children and their families/carers using the home. The children and young people using Sunbeams have severe learning difficulties and disabilities.

Background:

Sunbeams has been open as an overnight respite children's home since 1983. It is situated in a largely residential area of Aldershot and is co-located within premises that house other services for children and young people. The home was not originally a purpose-built home. Over the years a number of adaptations have been made to the premises to ensure the needs of the children and young people using the home are met.

Cost of providing services at Sunbeams:

Sunbeams' annual budget for 2017/18 is: £448,000

Potential impact of closing Sunbeams

There are 19 children currently using Sunbeams. These children would need to access alternative forms of provision if the home closed. The potential impacts would be different for each child and family using Sunbeams. Those impacts, and alternative care support, including overnight respite options, will be discussed with children and their families as part of the consultation process. If the home closes, each child's transition from Sunbeams to a new service would be managed sensitively and at a pace appropriate to the child, recognising the potential impact that change can have on children with disabilities.

Section four: The current range of overnight respite services

Overnight residential respite is one in a range of services the County Council provides or purchases on behalf of children and young people with disabilities and their families. Most of these services are provided following an assessment of need by a Children's Social Worker from a Disabled Children's Team. A subsequent care planning process identifies services to meet assessed needs. All such plans are approved by a County Allocation Panel (CAP), which ensures the County Council is distributing its resources as fairly as possible.

In order to receive a service from the Disabled Children's Team, you need to be eligible for the service. For more information about eligibility, go to www.hants.gov.uk/shortbreaks and choose 'specialist services'.

If Merrydale and/or Sunbeams close, children and families would be asked to consider a range of alternative services which could be included in a suitable care package which meets assessed needs. This section of the Information Pack sets out alternative services which are available as part of current contracted overnight respite provision (as at July 2017). Further detail on each service is available on the County Council's Local Offer website:

www.hants.gov.uk/send-localoffer

Please note:

- **Transport arrangements** to a residential setting are discussed and agreed on an individual basis, depending on the respite location. Transport would either be provided by the respite provider, or via County Council commissioned transport, for example by taxi. These arrangements would be agreed and put in place by the service provider and child's Social Worker.

Firvale Residential Overnight Unit

Service provider: Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Location: Basingstoke

Ofsted: Latest Ofsted inspection rating: **Good**
Link to **the most recent Ofsted report**

Website: www.hants.gov.uk/send-localoffer
Link to **Local Offer webpage**

Number of beds: Nine (five social care, four Health)



Description of the site and facilities

Firvale is a purpose built ground floor overnight residential respite unit that provides overnight respite care for children and young people. Owing to the high dependency of some of the children and young people who attend Firvale there is extensive equipment available to support their needs, including wet/shower room, adapted bath, ceiling track hoists, piped oxygen and suction, and specialist beds to meet the safety needs of the children. The building is wheelchair accessible to ensure that children and young people can move freely around the whole building.

There are two secure garden areas which all children and young people are able to access and enjoy. One contains a range of outdoor play equipment, while the other is being developed into a sensory area. There are two courtyard areas that can be reached from each of the two lounge areas.

Firvale has two lounge-dining rooms, as well as a messy play areas and a sensory room. There are nine single children's bedrooms; eight of these are attached to either a shower room or bathroom. The kitchen provides individual meals that meet the dietary requirements for all the children and young people who attend Firvale.

Specialist services offered

The care offered at Firvale is guided by the philosophy that the children's welfare is of paramount importance in all decisions and planning. Children are children first; they should have with opportunities to mix and play with friends, to develop life and social skills and to achieve their full potential within a safe and secure environment.

Firvale aims to work effectively in partnership with families and wider professionals involved with each child to ensure the staff team has a sound knowledge of children's specific social and health care needs, along with their skills, interests and areas for learning and development to ensure consistent care delivery.

Firvale aims to:

- Provide an environment that supports children to be happy, healthy, safe from harm and able to develop, thrive and achieve;
- Value and nurture each child as an individual with talents, strengths and capabilities that can develop over time;
- Foster positive relationships, encouraging strong bonds between children and staff by jointly undertaking activities, sharing daily life, domestic and non-domestic routines and establish boundaries of acceptable behaviour;
- Be attentive to children's needs, supporting emotional, mental and physical health needs, developing a child's self-esteem and encouraging friendships;
- Ensure all staff and managers are engaged in ongoing learning about their role and the children and families they work with;
- Provide a safe, stimulating and comfortable environment for children to receive care; and
- Be flexible and responsive to changing needs and unpredictable family events where possible.

Staff

The staffing team at Firvale comprises experienced staff who have either a nursing qualification or have achieved the QCF Level 3 Diploma for Children and Young People. The senior team has achieved the QCF Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Young People.

Each child who has respite at Firvale is allocated a key worker. The key worker's role is to support children and young people to achieve their individual goals, whilst receiving overnight respite at Firvale. They do this by liaising with the family during the initial introductions and being present when the child has their first visit and overnight stay. The keyworker would be the family's first point of contact in the staff team to talk about anything to do with their child's stays at Firvale. The allocated key worker builds a professional relationship with both the child and the family and would be responsible for maintaining regular contact with the family.

Current contracted overnight respite provision

Beechside

Service provider: Portsmouth City Council

Location: Drayton/Cosham area, near Portsmouth

Ofsted: Latest Ofsted inspection rating: **Good**
Link to **the most recent Ofsted report**

Website: www.hants.gov.uk/send-localoffer
Link to **Local Offer webpage**

Number of beds: Six (currently open five nights a week, closed Sunday to Monday)



Description of the site and facilities

All facilities for overnight respite are located on the ground floor. The layout of the ground floor is open plan and there is full wheelchair access to two large separate lounges, a dining area, a wet play area, laundry facilities and a purpose built sensory room. All of the six bedrooms have access to adapted beds and personal storage. Three of the six bedrooms have ceiling hoists.

One bedroom is specifically designed to focus on the needs of children and young people with autism by incorporating:

- Under floor heating, instead of radiators;
- A dimmer lighting system with the switch situated outside the room;
- Black out curtains and an external black out board system;
- High level sockets to enable video monitoring system to be used to reduce the likelihood of being disturbed during night checks;
- Situated by the main living area to enable night staff to maintain better observation at night;
- A removable half door system; and
- A nurse call system with an external door monitoring alarm.

There are three separate toilet areas which offer access to specially adapted equipment, including: a jacuzzi bath, a wet room with shower chairs, a changing table and a ceiling hoist.

Support to children and young people staying at Beechside is managed and planned by the staff team on duty in a number of ways, including through:

- Individual care plans;
- Preparation and management of the physical environment; and
- Individual planned menus that cater for allergies and personal likes and dislikes.

Specialist services offered

Children and young people staying at Beechside are offered a positive, fun and individual experience during their overnight breaks, accessing activities including: an on-site sensory room, trips to local and surrounding community facilities via adapted accessible vehicles and local community transport.

Service provision is constantly reviewed, updated and developed to take account of the changing needs of the children and young people using the service. This is achieved by encouraging children/young people and their family/carer to feedback and contribute ideas as to how the service could be improved and developed.

Allocated keyworkers contact families using Beechside, via telephone, on a minimum of a monthly basis.

Beechside uses the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to offer choices of activity, food etc. Where appropriate, PECS is used to provide a personalised time line to indicate and support transitions to and from different settings and activities. Makaton, an adapted version of sign language that is widely used by people with learning disabilities, is used alongside speech. All children/young people are provided with a home/Beechside book which is used to communicate and pass information to and from Beechside to the child, their family and any other agencies (e.g. school). This information may include what activities the child/young person has accessed, medication needs or how the overnight stay has gone.

Staff

Beechside provides a service to children and young people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Individual assessments are completed by staff at the point of referral by the child/young person's allocated Social Worker. The identified support need is met by adapting the service around the needs of the child/young person.

The staff team undertake appropriate training and receives regular updates, as well as accessing support from specialist schools, Child and Mental Health Services Learning Disability services and the local community nurse team.

Current contracted overnight respite provision



Galena

Service provider: Keys Group (formerly Embrace)

Location: Woolston, Southampton

Ofsted: Latest Ofsted inspection rating: **Good**
Link to **the most recent Ofsted report**

Website: <http://keysgrouppce.co.uk>
Link to **Local Offer webpage**

Number of beds: Three for overnight respite

Description of the site and facilities

Galena is a dual purpose home providing overnight respite and residential care. The overnight respite service can accommodate up to three children and young people. Both the overnight respite and residential care services support children and young people aged from two years who have learning and/or physical disabilities and may display challenging behaviour.

The two distinct services are provided within the same building and each operates in a manner that does not unduly impact on the other.

Galena is a two-storey house. The ground and first floor is the residential home. The ground floor is available for respite and is fully accessible to wheelchair users with widened doorways and corridors. There are two large wet rooms on the ground floor; one of which contains a bath and the other a shower. Galena has an Oxford mobile hoist but requests that families provide their child's own slings, if needed.

The young people using Galena are supported to have fun and participate in a wide range of activities both on and off-site. Within the home, the young people may take part in activities, such as baking, puzzles, and arts and crafts. There is also a sensory room, soft play room and computer games room, as well as a secure and well equipped garden with a swing and trampoline. Off-site, young people are encouraged to take part in a variety of activities from walks to the park or shops, trips to the cinema or theatre, inclusive cycling and swimming sessions, etc. Galena is happy to support a specific child's special interest.

Specialist services offered

Galena welcomes boys and girls who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairment, complex health needs, autism and/or associated challenging behaviours.

Galena has specific experience of supporting children and young people who have: autism, ADHD, Global Development Delay, Prada-Willi Syndrome, Cri-Du-Chat Syndrome, epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

Staff

Support from the staff team is offered on either a 2:1 or 1:1 basis. This includes intensive support 24 hours a day, or targeted support for specific activities. On referral, Galena works with children and young people and their families to identify specific needs, to ensure the child/young person receives the correct level of support and can fully benefit from their stay.

A flexible staffing model enables Galena to shape services to children and young people's specific needs including emergency, short-term and long-term breaks. Galena supports any specific cultural or religious needs, for example providing a specific diet, identifying suitable staff or ensuring time is made available for religious observance.

Current contracted overnight respite provision

KIDS House Respite Unit

Service provider: KIDS

Location: Fareham

Ofsted: Latest Ofsted inspection rating: **Good**
Link to **the most recent Ofsted report**

Website: www.kids.org.uk
Link to **Local Offer webpage**

Number of beds: Four



Description of the site and facilities

There are four bedrooms which are wheelchair accessible, one bedroom is equipped with a ceiling hoist and an en-suite bathroom and two others which include profiling beds. KIDS House also has two separate wet rooms, both with toilets and showers and one with a bath. There is a communal lounge/dining room which has a flat screen TV, DVD player, arts and crafts and a selection of books and board games.

KIDS house has a well equipped kitchen that has restricted access for safety reasons. However, young people can use this kitchen with staff supervision. There is an enclosed accessible garden which will be updated in September 2017 to include more accessible facilities for the children and young people. There are also soft play and sensory rooms in the main building.

KIDS House regularly takes children and young people on outings, including: to parks, woods, the Sea Life Centre, the beach and for meals out. Activities provided for children/young people in KIDS House include: sensory time, story time, cooking, art and crafts, and outside play.

KIDS House has two vehicles to take the young people out, one being fully accessible.

Specialist services offered

KIDS House can accommodate four young people between the ages of six and 19 years (either male or female) at any one time.

KIDS House can accommodate children and young people who have life limiting illnesses, mild and severe learning disabilities, physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment, children on the autism spectrum, Angelman syndrome, Down syndrome, Wolf Hirschhorn syndrome, Paediatric Bipolar Disorder, Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome, Rett syndrome, Microcephaly, Tourette syndrome, CHARGE syndrome, deletion syndrome and epilepsy.

KIDS House provides services for young people who: are in need of a living situation that provides clear boundaries and expectations; may display challenging behaviour; require social and independence skills development; as well as those who may require an emergency placement or have complex health needs.

Staff

Staff aim to provide a safe environment in which the physical, cultural, social, intellectual and emotional development of every young person can be supported according to their need(s).

Staff also aim to provide an enriching experience through the allocated overnight stay, whilst also providing families with a break from caring.

Current contracted overnight respite provision

Oaks and Acorns

Service provider: Rose Road Association

Location: Alder Moor, Southampton

Ofsted: Latest Ofsted inspection rating: **Good**
Link to **the most recent Ofsted report**

Website: www.roseroad.org.uk
Link to **Local Offer webpage**

Number of beds: 15 beds in total: seven rooms in Acorns and six rooms in Oaks
(one room in each of them has two beds)



Description of the site and facilities

Oaks and Acorns provide a positive experience for children/young people through having a good understanding of their needs, likes and dislikes as well as ensuring their religious and cultural needs are met. Children/young people have opportunities to try new experiences, which broadens their choices and develops additional skills. Oaks and Acorns ensure that each person using the service is safe and booked in with a similar group, using the two separate groups of rooms to achieve this. Oaks and Acorns are suitable for children and young people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and complex health needs, with accessible parking on site. The accommodation is in two spacious single-storey units providing separate accommodation for children and adults.

Both units have choices of single or shared bedrooms. All bedrooms have profile beds and overhead hoists, giving full access to users with physical disabilities and complex health needs. All equipment is also suitable for users who are physically able. Rooms are clearly identified with a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) symbol and word so users with communication difficulties can find their way around the building.

All bathrooms, wet rooms and toilets have overhead hoists. There are also adjustable baths. The building is secure with coded doors on all external doors, internal kitchen doors, laundry rooms, cleaning cupboards and store cupboards. These can be unlocked, if appropriate, to encourage service children/young people's independence.

There are safe gardens with play and seating facilities. The centre has a sensory, soft play and kitchen area called 'Space4You' to enable children/young people to explore new skills.

There is a hydrotherapy pool with changing rooms and full facilities which can be used during overnight respite, subject to availability and staffing. There is also a large hall and a courtyard for activities requiring more space during evenings, weekends and the school holidays. The kitchen, sensory and soft play are shared facilities used also by the outreach service.

Specialist services offered

Children/young people have the opportunity to participate in activities including: arts and crafts, music and karaoke, swimming, cooking, and garden play. Oaks and Acorns encourage children/young people to develop their independence skills by supporting them to make drinks, assisting with meal preparation, tidying up, packing and unpacking bags, and with personal care.

Oaks and Acorns also provide opportunities to enjoy community-based activities including: bowling, cinema, theme parks, shopping trips, and boat trips. Children and young people are always offered opportunities to participate in activities and their choices are given, using their preferred method of communication.

Staff

Each child/young person is allocated a keyworker who is a senior member of the Acorns team. The keyworker liaises with the family and young person during the referral and introduction process. When the child begins to stay overnight the keyworker acts as the link between the family and Rose Road. Following each stay a contact sheet is sent home which gives details of how the child/young person has been during their stay and what they have done. Sometimes photos of activities they participated in are sent home as well.

Oaks and Acorns follow individual communication plans to ensure optimum communication with the child. Staff regularly use alternative communication methods like Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Makaton, and schedules. Where English is not the first language, interpreters would be used if needed. Staff at Oaks and Acorns believe in regular communication with families, and welcome discussions with families about their child at any time. Oaks and Acorns regularly use feedback to evaluate the service, using this information to develop and improve.

Specialist Respite Care

Formerly known as 'Family Link', Specialist Respite Care is an alternative form of respite for families. Specialist Respite Carers are registered foster carers who are linked to a family to provide overnight respite for children and are supported to develop specific knowledge and skills which mean they can care for children with additional needs. The specialist respite carers are supported by a supervising Children's Social Worker from the Children's Services Fostering Team and work closely with the child's Social Worker.

The County Council currently has 38 active Specialist Respite Carers, with 17 currently available offering a potential for 22 'links'. Specialist foster carers provide breaks which can be for a few hours at a time or can be for one night or more, depending on the needs of the family.

Specialist Respite Carers have a willingness and desire to understand and work with the family in support of the child. They have a range of experience and skills; for example from working in special schools or health services, or their own experience of caring for a family member. People interested in the service generally choose to become Specialist Respite Carers rather than foster carers because of their desire to work closely with families.

Case study: Specialist respite care

Joshua is eight years old. He has received Specialist Respite Care (formerly called Family Link) for the past two years. Joshua has autism and severe learning disabilities. He can walk but struggles with walking longer distances. Joshua can sometimes become anxious and, when he is anxious, he will drop to the floor or withdraw himself and try to hide.

Joshua's specialist respite carers have a 14 year old son of their own who Joshua has developed a close bond with. Joshua loves football and he will often go to watch a football match with his Specialist Respite Carers and their son during his time with them. Joshua also enjoys helping his carers bake cakes and playing in their garden. Joshua is fully included in any activities that the family may be doing during the times he stays with them.

Joshua's parents know that Joshua loves his time with his Specialist Respite Carers and their son. Joshua's parents have a regular break in caring while being reassured that Joshua is being cared for safely and most importantly, having fun.

The carers have got to know Joshua's parents well and they are sometimes able to provide care when a difficult situation arises for the family. Joshua's wider family is unable to give practical support to him so this has really helped to build the family's resilience.

Section five: Other overnight respite services

In the event that a decision is made to close Merrydale and Sunbeams, the County Council is aware of a number of other providers who could potentially provide overnight respite for Hampshire children and young people. Some of the alternative services listed below are available now, and others would require further development.

- Castle Gate – Newbury
www.westberks.gov.uk/localoffer, enter 'Castle Gate' in keyword search
- Naomi House – Winchester
www.naomihouse.org.uk/our-services/naomi-house
- Shooting Star Chase – Guildford
www.shootingstarchase.org.uk
- Tree Tops at the White Lodge Centre – Chertsey, Surrey
www.whitelodgecentre.co.uk/children-young-peoples-services

Other providers may be available. Where families have preferred providers that are not listed here, the County Council would seek to work with them to explore possible opportunities for support.

Section six: Future overnight respite services

Enhanced activities

Based on feedback from children and families, the County Council would look to support an enhanced range of activities which would be available within an overnight stay, as a supplementary offer to the standard overnight respite package. This additional investment would be available to all of the County Council's contracted or in-house overnight respite providers (i.e. those listed in this Information Pack, or providers of future services), and based on the identified needs of the child. The intention is that funding would be accessed by providers and assessed by a grant application process.

Care Support

A family may wish to have a break in their own home, either for shorter periods during the day, or with a carer staying overnight. This means that the child does not need to stay away from home, for example in a residential setting. This could be with or without the parents or guardians present in the home.

If there is a demand for this service, the County Council would work with contracted providers for care support to increase capacity to be able to offer this type of respite more widely.

As with overnight respite in a residential setting, the child's Social Worker would make the necessary arrangements with the provider to put the service in place for the family.

Current contracted providers are:

- Interserve formerly Advantage Healthcare Group Ltd
- Andover and District Mencap
- Appletree Support LTD
- Autism Wessex
- J & K Recruitment Ltd
- KIDS
- Nurse Plus & Carer Plus UK
- Parkside
- Scope AHDC
- Smile Support & Care
- Sportfit Short Break Care Ltd
- Team Medical
- The Rose Road Association
- The Treloar Trust
- Unity in Care Ltd

Other providers may be available. Where families have preferred providers that are not listed here, the County Council would seek to work with them to explore possible opportunities for support.

Family breaks

This would be a new arrangement which would provide an opportunity for the whole family to go away together in an accessible setting. There is potential for a wide range of providers to join the approved list for this service. Providers may be activity providers, and families may wish to access a whole family activity break, or they may be accommodation-only settings, for example, where families may prefer just a quiet weekend away somewhere. Families would be able to choose to stay at one or more sites.

Some examples of the types of providers who could be approached to offer family breaks are:

- Sebastian Action Trust: www.sebastiansactiontrust.org
- Avon Tyrrell: www.avontyrrell.org.uk
- YMCA Fairthorne: www.ymca-fg.org/for-families/fairthorne-manor-2/
- Qe2: www.qe2activitycentre.co.uk/holidays.html
- Calshot: www.hants.gov.uk/calshot
- Smile: www.smilesupport.org.uk
- IOW Caravan and Lodge: www.iwight.com/Residents/care-and-Support/Short-Breaks/

Other providers are available. Where families have preferred providers that are not listed here, the County Council would seek to work with them to explore possible opportunities for family breaks.

Independence Breaks for young people aged 16 and over

Contracted overnight respite providers would supply targeted independence breaks for young people aged 16 and over. For planning purposes, it is likely that this service would be provided by the organisations already contracted to deliver overnight respite (see pages 11-21), as well as a member of new providers.

In commissioning this service, the County Council would aim to see a greater focus on young people developing their confidence and skills during their respite stay, meeting specific independence outcomes such as: independent care, improved awareness of personal safety, healthy cooking and eating, managing money, independent travel and finding information about local services for themselves.

Section seven: Frequently asked questions

If the homes close, would children/young people and parents/carers be left without overnight respite services?

No. If the decision is taken to close the two homes, every child and family affected by that decision would be offered an alternative and suitable care package that would meet their assessed needs. It is recognised that children and families would be likely to need additional support to adapt to their new care package, including moving across to new overnight respite services if that is required. Children's Social Workers would continue to provide support through the transition process.

Could a parent/carer choose to access more than one type of overnight or other respite break, or would they have to use the same break all the time?

Parents and carers would be able to access more than one type of break, as is the case at the moment, as long as the overnight respite break meets the child's assessed care needs.

Could a parent/carer try all the different options to see which works best for them and their child/young person?

It may not be practical to do this, and it may be disruptive for the child. Parents, children and young people would be able to explore and understand the options available to them with the help of their Social Worker. They could visit a place or places offering overnight respite before they try an option. If the child attends a provider but this doesn't seem to meet the child's needs, then in conjunction with their Social Worker, they may think about trying an alternative service.

Would children and families already in receipt of overnight respite have to be reassessed to receive an alternative offer?

No. Reassessments are completed annually in line with statutory guidance, or if the needs of a child significantly change. Children and young people, and their parents and carers, would be offered a new care package which meets their current assessed care needs.

What if the child/young person doesn't like one or any of the alternative options, including residential respite with another provider?

Families would be supported to explore alternative options. The proposed alternatives are not definitive – the County Council would like to work with families to identify creative ways that more closely meet the needs of children and young people. For example, the child's Social Worker could support the family to explore various options including: using a carer to stay in their home overnight, or any other service the family identifies that could meet the child's needs. Another example might be considering using a personal budget – funding allocated to children and families after an assessment which should be sufficient to meet their assessed needs. Children and families could take their personal budget as a direct payment.

What would happen to the buildings, if they close?

If the decision is taken to close Merrydale and Sunbeams, the sites would eventually be sold.

What would happen to the staff if the homes close?

There is a separate staff consultation running parallel to the public consultation. Staff, and the relevant Trade Unions, are involved in this.

Would transport provision be included?

Transport arrangements to a residential setting are discussed and agreed on an individual basis, depending on the respite location. Transport would either be provided by the respite provider, or via County Council commissioned transport, for example by taxi. These arrangements would be agreed and put in place by the service provider and child's Social Worker.

Conclusion

Thank you for reading through this Information Pack.

You are invited to give your views on the proposals to close Merrydale and Sunbeams. You can do this by using the online Response Form at: www.hants.gov.uk/consultations.

Paper copies of the Information Pack and Response Form are available upon request by emailing overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk or calling **0300 555 1384***.

Easy Read versions of the Information Pack and Response Form are available online to download and print, or as paper copies upon request.

You can also email your response directly to Hampshire County Council using the email address overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk.

This Information Pack and the Response Form are available in other formats such as large print, audio and Braille. To obtain an alternative format, or if you have any queries about this consultation, please email Hampshire County Council at: overnight.respite@hants.gov.uk, or call: **0300 555 1384***

The findings from this consultation will be published and presented to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services for consideration of a decision on the proposed closure of Merrydale and Sunbeams later in the year.

* Calls from a landline will be charged at a local rate, although mobile phone charges may vary.

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