

# Short break and respite services for children with disabilities

## Frequently asked questions

**12 November 2015**

### **Will any new short breaks service meet the council's legal responsibilities?**

The council is aware of the need to meet its legal responsibilities and any proposed short breaks provision will be fully compliant to meet this duty.

### **Who made the decision to stop referrals to 1 Ledbury Road in November 2013?**

This information is available in [FOI response \(10582\) 11 November 2015](#).

### **How many nights respite a week will the foster carers provide?**

The number and pattern of nights will vary depending on a child's assessed need and the availability of the respite carer. However, our respite carers would normally be expected to provide up to 200 nights a year.

### **How will transport work to a new respite provision?**

Any transport arrangements will be considered as part of the short breaks matching process and will depend upon the number and pattern of nights that each child is accessing.

The council is required to provide home to school transport, which has previously been flexible enough to transport between a school and respite provision. In some cases the residential provider, respite carer or family could agree to meet transport requirements for some or all of the allocated respite nights.

**16 October 2015**

### **How much unallocated respite money is the council currently holding?**

There is currently just under £6,000 uncommitted in the council's short breaks budget for 2015/16. The council can also spot purchase respite to meet assessed need in consultation with parents, carers and the children themselves.

### **How much unallocated respite money is the CCG currently holding?**

The CCG doesn't have a budget for respite care, as this is a statutory responsibility of the council. It does provide an allocation for supporting both adult and family carers, which is fully allocated through a joint fund with the council called the Better Care Fund.

### **What percentage of the respite budget will be saved during 2016/17 and what's the projected saving over the next three years?**

The council has recently consulted on its budget priorities for 2016 - 2020, where it is estimated that it will need to save an additional £42million during this year and the next four financial years. Until the overall budget is confirmed by Cabinet, it is not yet possible to say what the impact may be on the short breaks budget. To keep up to date with the budget consultation results, please visit the [priorities and budget consultation 2016 to 2020 webpage](#).

### **Why has the CCG withdrawn its funding, doesn't it have a joint responsibility for health and social care?**

The CCG did not withdraw funding. The council was very clear that although Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT) did not win the tender for providing social care respite, it would work in partnership with the CCG and WVT to continue to use 1 Ledbury Road, while discussions continued with families and alternative service models were developed.

The council holds the legal responsibility to provide respite services; however the CCG continues to fund the service through its contract with WVT, whilst the council works to put alternative provisions in place.

The CCG recognises that some of the children using 1 Ledbury Road have physical and mental health needs and will ensure their needs are met wherever they receive respite care.

### **What's the allocated budget for transport to a new respite provision?**

The council is required to provide home to school transport, which has previously been flexible enough to transport between a school and respite provision. The school transport budget for 2015/16 is £1.3million.

### **How many children have been referred to 1 Ledbury Road for each of the last ten years?**

In previous years, families were able to self refer or be referred by a single professional directly to 1 Ledbury Road. This means there is no centralised data available for a period as large as the last ten years. Based on the experience of the council and WVT, as the main provider of

overnight respite in recent times, it is estimated that there were fewer than five new referrals each year.

## 29 September 2015

### **Is 1 Ledbury Road closing at the end of March 2016?**

The council, WVT and the CCG have all agreed that 1 Ledbury Road will remain open beyond 31 March 2016. This is to prevent a 'cliff edge' in service delivery for families who are currently using the service, whilst we work to put alternative services in place. However, this will be subject to staffing availability, regulatory requirements and financial resources.

### **What's the council's internal service improvement report?**

A number of parents have been made aware of an internal council report entitled 'Improving Outcomes for Young People with Disability in Hereford' which was produced in August 2014.

Please note that this report is not specifically about 1 Ledbury Road, its main focus is on residential care and independent school settings. The aim of the report was to provide social care services with recommendations on how it can improve in this particular area.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information included in the report, along with commercially sensitive details around placement costs, only an [executive summary](#) can be released to the public.

### **Was there a review of short breaks and respite services in 2013?**

A review of the commissioned short break and respite services was completed in 2013, where it was decided to extend or stop a number of contracts.

It was also decided to develop a business case to scope the possibility of introducing a new short breaks respite service within the council's fostering team, which was considered the preferred option over using external independent fostering agencies.

To find out more, please read the [short breaks contract extensions report](#).

### **Has the council contacted all parents and children about what's happening and what they can expect?**

Yes. The council's children with disabilities (CWD) team has contacted all parents of children using 1 Ledbury Road and is meeting with all families. The second round of meetings will be complete by the end of October; although this forms only part of ongoing conversations between the CWD team and families and we encourage families to keep in touch with the team and their

allocated worker.

**Is the 1 Ledbury Road service due to reduce in October? If so, what alternative provisions are in place?**

This information is available in [FOI response \(10345\) 23 September 2015](#).

**Has the council investigated running 1 Ledbury Road itself to reduce operating costs and provide different provisions via direct payments?**

It's not the council's policy to directly run and operate residential settings for children or adults. A 2010/11 Herefordshire Children's Trust review of services for children with disabilities showed that resources allocated to 1 Ledbury Road could be better deployed to more effectively meet the needs of children and their families.

Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT) has previously considered options for delivering alternative services from the site; however the cost of accommodation and nursing staff would remain high and therefore would restrict the development of a fuller range of short breaks opportunities in Herefordshire.

**What's the minimum number of staff needed to run Ledbury Road without affecting respite?**

This information is available in [FOI response \(10345\) 23 September 2015](#).

**Why have there been no referrals to 1 Ledbury Road since November 2013 and does this mean that those children are not receiving respite?**

In 2013, WVT submitted an unsuccessful tender to provide contracted short breaks services at which point the council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) jointly agreed to cease new referrals for short breaks / overnight respite care to 1 Ledbury Road.

The CCG and WVT subsequently agreed an interim contract for existing short breaks services at 1 Ledbury Road for a transitional period until March 2016. This was to ensure continuity for existing families using the service whilst alternatives are put in place.

Since 2013, the council and CCG have been working together to ensure that alternative community and family-based services are available, which offer families choice and flexibility. Any new requests for short breaks from individual families are being met by daytime short breaks or individually commissioned overnight services.

**What's the minimum weekly respite the council needs to provide to carers and what's the penalty if it doesn't?**

This information is available in [FOI response \(10345\) 23 September 2015](#).

**Do you have any short breaks foster carers yet and where are they located?**

The council is investing significant funding in the new family-based respite carer service and so far we've received eight enquiries from potential carers, some of whom are already established and experienced carers.

We already have foster carers who can provide respite for children with disabilities, which will help to support existing carers. All potential foster carers will undergo a thorough assessment process and background check to ensure they fully understand the role and that their skills, abilities, qualifications, experiences, homes and locations can be carefully matched to the needs of a particular child.

It's important to note that this service is not yet operational and will form part of an overall offer of short breaks and respite services for children with disabilities.

**Do parents have to use foster carers if they'd prefer their child to access residential overnight respite?**

As part of the social care assessment and planning process, the council will work with families to understand their individual needs in order to support them to achieve positive outcomes. As far as possible, we aim to reach agreement with families on the most appropriate ways to meet their assessed needs, including offering choice.

If, for example, an assessment recommends a family's needs could be met through the family-based respite carer service, but they would prefer to access residential respite, the family could choose to make use of a personal budget or direct payment in order to purchase residential care up to the same value as the assessed recommendation. Due to the higher cost of residential care, it is likely that the family would access fewer nights of respite care.

**How will closing 1 Ledbury Road meet the needs of children; won't it separate them from friends and peers?**

The council's children with disabilities team is working with families to ensure that their assessed needs is up to date and that the most appropriate services can be put in place to support those needs.

A careful matching process will be undertaken whenever an overnight short break service is needed and opportunities to socialise with existing friends and make new ones, will be part of this process to ensure an overall support package is provided for individual families.

**Is it acceptable to place my young teenaged children in an adult residential unit for overnight respite?**

This is not something which has been suggested. As part of the assessed needs and appropriate service matching process, careful consideration will be given to the mix of children in a particular setting to ensure their needs and support arrangements are compatible and to maximise opportunities for developing social networks.

Where appropriate, the council and the CCG are working with short breaks providers who work with young people aged 18 and over, with a view to being able to offer similar services to young people aged 16 to 17, to help smooth their progression into adulthood. Any such arrangements would also be subject to a careful matching process and regulatory requirements.

**Does the council believe it's conducted itself appropriately over 1 Ledbury Road?**

The council has previously apologised for the way the proposed changes to services were communicated to the families using 1 Ledbury Road. We have also acknowledged that the support provided in recent years by the children with disabilities team requires improvement and have already made significant investment into the team, which will see an increased number of permanently employed social workers. We have also changed the way in which children with disabilities and their families are supported, so they are now assisted directly by the dedicated specialist team rather than spread across a range of social care teams.

The council and the CCG, in conjunction with the Herefordshire Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board, are also taking a strategic approach to transforming services for children with disabilities in a holistic way, including the local short breaks offer. We are all working together with families, and with our dedicated workforce, are committed to achieving the joint vision for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs. This is the same for all Herefordshire's children and young people, which is they are healthy, safe and achieve well; go on to lead happy and fulfilled lives with choice and control and are supported by families, communities and organisations within sustainable resources.

To find out more, please read the [delivering the strategic approach for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs for 2015 - 2018 brief](#).

**Is the number of children with disabilities increasing as those with life limiting conditions live longer? If so, won't this increase the demand for respite care, which your proposed foster carers won't be able to provide?**

There is anecdotal evidence from special schools that some children with life limiting conditions are living longer than would have been expected some years ago. However, there is limited data available to suggest that this will mean a significant increase in demand for overnight short breaks.

The number of children with disabilities in Herefordshire encompasses a wide range of levels of need and as an example; there's been a decrease in the number of children with special educational needs, from just over 5,000 in 2011 to around 4,250 in 2015. The council's understanding of the range of needs is developing and we will continue to build on the [2014 Children's Integrated Needs Assessment](#).

The new family-based respite carer service will be able to grow should the need increase in the future. On paper, a full capacity Ledbury Road could provide more nights of care; however this service model is not what most families need. Furthermore, the high cost of the Ledbury Road model would severely restrict the availability of a fuller range of day and night short breaks opportunities in Herefordshire.

## **17 August 2015**

**Can you provide more information on the family-based respite carer service?**

We've received a number of questions regarding this new service. It's important to note that this service is not yet operational and will form part of an overall offer of short breaks and respite services for children with disabilities. The support families receive will be the most appropriate to meet the needs of their children.

The council is investing £190,000 in the family-based respite carer service, which from January 2016 is expected to deliver six respite carer households providing 1,200 nights a year for 16 local families.

This budget will cover the cost of recruitment, training, assessment checks including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and foster carer home checks and payment to foster carers.

Please also refer to the below FAQs from 4 August 2015 for further details.

**How will the family-based respite carer service work?**

The respite carers will be recruited, trained and assessed before they are matched with any child. This will take a minimum of four months, so the service will not be operational until January 2016 at the earliest.

If a family is assessed and considered for this service, they will be carefully matched to a respite carer to ensure the needs of their child or children are fully met. This will include various aspects such as the level of supervision required, the carer's household situation and any necessary building and equipment requirements. We will have a transition plan in place to support each child to move to the new service.

### **Who is providing the family-based respite carer service?**

The council's in house [fostering service](#) will provide the new respite carer service from January 2016. A senior social worker will manage the service, supporting the recruitment process and assessing each carer and their situation for suitability to the role. This will include appropriate DBS checks and risk assessments.

### **What training will be in place for respite carers and will there be families specialising in certain conditions?**

The carers will have a range of skills and training to be able to meet the needs of the child they are caring for and any specialist training may be sourced from other agencies when required.

Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT) will provide the nursing and medical training for the respite carers and whilst some carer families may choose to specialise in certain conditions, others may have broader skills, but all placements will be carefully matched to ensure the needs of the individual child are met.

### **What's the cost of training the respite carers?**

The cost of training will be covered within the council's £190,000 budget for this service. WVT will provide the nursing and medical training for the respite carers, while other relevant training is also available within the council's fostering service.

### **What happens if the respite carer can't cope with my child, how long will it take to get an alternative service put in place?**

We will ensure that children are carefully matched to their short break respite carer with a supportive transition plan in place, which will minimise the likelihood of any breakdown in care. However, it is acknowledged that if this does happen, it will need to be assessed on a case by case basis.



### **Who are these respite carers and will their entire family be trained?**

The council already has 97 foster carers, some of which are trained to care for children and young people with complex behaviour. We are now recruiting additional carers, who will specifically offer short breaks and respite care. Their family and household situation will be considered as part of the assessment process.

### **Is it fair to put children with severe behavioural problems into someone else's family unit?**

A respite carer's family and household situation will be considered as part of the assessment process and they will only be matched with a child who they are able to care for.

### **How will children benefit socially from the respite carer service?**

A relationship will be formed between the child and their short breaks carer and their family and they'll be able to share in activities and family life according to their needs. The short breaks carers are also able to develop supportive relationships with the child's family, which will mean a more normal and mutually supportive relationship.

### **How many carers have adapted properties such as wet rooms and hoists?**

As we recruit new short break respite carers, these aspects will be considered depending on the child or children they are matched with.

### **How many carers will be trained to administer medication?**

Wye Valley NHS Trust will provide the nursing and medical training for the short break respite carers and whilst the number of carers is unknown at this stage, they will receive the necessary training to be able to care for the individual child they are matched with.

### **What arrangements will be in place if the respite carer is ill, on holiday or has a family emergency?**

The respite care will be planned and arranged between the carer and the child's family. If unavoidable circumstances arise, then care will need to be re-arranged and the family's social worker can help with looking for alternative care.

## **What evidence is there that the delivery of short break services meets the needs of children and young people?**

Any contract the council has will observe a range of performance monitoring aspects including service user satisfaction rates and service evaluation. Service providers not only collect feedback from families, they also aim to record the voice of the child themselves. The council also collects feedback from families which have been referred to a service provider following an assessment. To find out more, please take a look at our [sample feedback and evaluations](#) for further details.

## **Why are children with disabilities who don't have a social worker not offered a place at 1 Ledbury Road?**

Access to the 1 Ledbury Road service is only by an assessment and referral from a health or social care practitioner. The service is not available via self-referral.

**4 August 2015**

## **Is 1 Ledbury Road closing and if so when?**

Yes, 1 Ledbury Road will eventually close as an overnight respite unit, but this will not be until all families have been provided with a suitable alternative service in line with their assessed needs.

Until it closes, the service at 1 Ledbury Road will continue to be provided by Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT) subject to available staffing and the premises meeting required regulatory standards.

## **Who owns, runs and funds 1 Ledbury Road?**

Wye Valley NHS Trust owns the building and run the service; however, the provision of short break services is the legal responsibility of the council.

For historical reasons, the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provides the majority of the funding, while the council pays for any additional support that children need.

As the council is responsible for making short break arrangements, it is working with the CCG and other potential providers, including WVT, to ensure alternate suitable provision is in place.

## **Who made the decision to close it?**

Whilst 1 Ledbury Road currently remains open, the model of care it provides does not adequately meet the needs of all children with disabilities. Through previous consultations with

families, it has been indicated that many families wish to see alternative short break options, which have not been available in Herefordshire.

The council and CCG have been working together over the past three years to ensure that alternative community and family-based services are available that offer choice and flexibility for families.

### **When was the decision made to close 1 Ledbury Road?**

There has been no formal decision made to close the service, although WVT has signaled its intention to cease providing the service. The organisations all agree that 1 Ledbury Road will remain open, subject to WVT having available staffing and the premises meeting required regulatory standards, until every child and family that currently uses it has been supported to access suitable alternative services.

We have been working to provide alternative services for families and will continue to work closely with them whilst they transfer to new or existing services.

We will review progress in December 2015.

### **What's the reason for closing 1 Ledbury Road, is it to save money?**

The main reason is that the service does not adequately meet the needs of all children and families requiring short breaks or respite services.

Significant funding cuts mean that all services commissioned or provided by the public sector are under pressure and this will not change over the next few years. The council, CCG and WVT are committed to making best use of the available funding, particularly for the most vulnerable children and families, which is why we are collectively developing alternative services.

### **Has the council consulted with all affected families on the closure?**

The council has consulted with families on services for children and young people with disabilities and what they require from a short breaks and respite service.

The council has not consulted directly on the specific question of the closure of 1 Ledbury Road. Wye Valley NHS Trust, Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group remain committed to consulting with affected families on any service changes.

### **What services will be provided for families?**

The [Herefordshire short breaks for children with disabilities programme for 2015/16](#) is available on the council's website.

The council is investing £190,000 a year in a new specialist family-based overnight respite care service, which from January 2016, is expected to deliver six respite carer households providing 1,200 nights per year for 16 local families.

The council is also working with other local providers of alternative services that offer short breaks and overnight respite services. There will be more details available on this provision, once firm plans are in place.

Alternatively, eligible families can choose to take a direct payment and organise their own support package that meets their individual needs. To find out more, visit the [direct payments for social care page](#) on the council's website. You can also talk to your social worker about how you can access direct payments.

### **Will the family-based respite carers be specially trained to look after children with disabilities?**

Yes. There will be a rigorous selection and assessment process to secure specialist carers, who will be trained to provide appropriate nursing and medical interventions as any parent would. Equipment and building adaptations will also be undertaken where required. We will specifically match an individual child's needs to the carer, as this is a vitally important element to ensure continuing support in line with the family's needs.

### **What happens if the proposed replacement service isn't suitable for my child?**

Every child and family is unique and the short breaks and respite service offer is not intended to be a 'one size fits all' solution to short breaks provision in Herefordshire. There are already a number of services in place that families value and we will continue to work with them to ensure the services we have developed and continue to develop meet the individual needs of each child and their families within the resources available.

### **Will I still be able to access local respite care in a residential facility setting?**

We remain committed to providing home based respite but recognise that for families with particularly complex needs, it may take longer to secure alternative services and we have agreed that residential respite will remain available.

### **How many children are currently using 1 Ledbury Road?**

There are currently 28 children accessing services at 1 Ledbury Road. However, a number of these have already been identified as having their needs met by alternative existing services and will be supported while they transfer to new services over the next few months. There are also a number of children who will be transferring to adult services due to their age.

### **When was the last child referred to 1 Ledbury Road?**

The last child was referred to 1 Ledbury Road in November 2013.

### **What engagement has there been with parents and families?**

There has not been a specific consultation on the closure of 1 Ledbury Road.

There has been a range of engagement activity with parents, from public consultation exercises to focused meetings with individual families.

A public consultation was held in 2010 with children and families, including those using 1 Ledbury Road. This consultation formed the basis of a [review of services for children and young people with disabilities](#).

There were a number of recommendations made in the review, which are being addressed through the [children with disabilities transformation programme](#).

During 2012/13, a large joint commissioning exercise was undertaken by the council and the Primary Care Trust (subsequently replaced by Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group). Herefordshire Parent Carer Voice, a parent / carer group which is supported by Herefordshire Carers Support (HCS), was heavily involved in this work and we know that a significant proportion of parents using 1 Ledbury Road were registered with HCS at that time.

The engagement work included:

- 1) An engagement exercise with parents and carers, which involved a number of workshops, meetings and individual interviews which asked parents what they wanted from a short break and respite service. This included letters sent to all parents with children using 1 Ledbury Road in the summer of 2012, asking for their views. There were also 12 individual interviews with families using 1 Ledbury Road, again asking for their views on reshaping services and providing more choice in a short breaks service. The views and feedback from families told us which services parents wanted to have in place for their children and was incorporated into the [Herefordshire commissioning prospectus](#), which was an invitation to service providers to tender for services.

- 2) A focus group of parents from HCS was involved in considering the responses to this tendering exercise and a parent representative also sat on the tender evaluation panel.
- 3) In December 2013, meetings were held with parents to explain the new services being put in place. The parents of children using 1 Ledbury Road were invited to these sessions and we know that a number did attend.

The joint commissioning exercise resulted in a number of new and expanded services, but not an award of a contract for overnight respite services. To ensure that children who need this service were still supported, the CCG took the decision to continue funding 1 Ledbury Road, whilst the next phase of commissioning was undertaken.

Throughout the end of 2014 and into 2015, there has been more focused engagement, specifically with parents of children who use 1 Ledbury Road.

This involved:

- 1) Individually assessing the needs of children and their families and considering with them what services could meet their needs. This information led to the council developing and agreeing a business case for a specialist family-based overnight respite service and working with other providers to develop alternative services.
- 2) All parents receiving a letter in January 2015, which explained that the next phase of the short breaks commissioning work was starting and would continue over the next 18 months.
- 3) All parents receiving a letter in April 2015 from the council and WVT asking for views on proposed changes to the sessions run at 1 Ledbury Road.

As new services are implemented alongside our existing short break service, the council's social care teams will work with families to agree which alternative service / services would best suit their individually assessed needs. We are aware that there are some families who do not use 1 Ledbury Road, but also require day opportunities and overnight respite services to meet their children's needs.

### **Who can I talk to for further information?**

If you want to talk to someone about the proposed changes, you can contact your social worker who will be able to talk to you about your specific needs and concerns. Alternatively, you can also talk to Deborah Owen, head of service for children with disabilities and practice development on 01432 261598 or Gurinder Rayat, team manager for children with disabilities on 01432 383739.

Alternatively, if you have any questions relating to the current 1 Ledbury Road service and premises, please contact Vanessa Lewis, WVT service unit manager on 01432 355444.