

## **Derby City Council: Consultation on Care Home Closure Proposals**

### **Report on consultation with staff of Warwick House**

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## Findings: feedback from staff

As part of the consultation at Warwick House, the Agencia team held a meeting with 17 staff including the home manager. It was explained that staff should speak freely, but that HR and other job-related issues could not be covered in this session. The meeting followed the same format as those held with residents and their relatives and the main points arising are summarised below:

### Understanding of the consultation process and DCC proposals

- All staff understood the consultation process and the proposals.
- The staff attitude was to continue to operate as 'business as usual' and they were still taking bookings.

### Proposed Closure of Warwick House

- Staff did not understand why Warwick had been selected when it had always received good inspection ratings – *"why would they get rid of something so good when there is an increasing demand for our service?"*
- The view was expressed that the proposals gave insufficient consideration to the high numbers of regularly rotating beds *"Perth House only have 3 short term beds. Where will they put the extra 16 people from Warwick?"*
- Staff disagreed that there was an over-supply of beds and had recently had to create 2 new intermediate care beds due to high demand *"we've been led to believe that there is an over-supply of beds – you try getting one!"*
- Staff disagreed that closing Warwick House would save money. Instead they believed that closing Warwick House would cost the council more, as there would be an increase in hospital admissions.
- Various concerns about the appropriateness of Extra Care Housing were raised. These included:
  - Inappropriate for people with high levels of care needs
  - Residents do not wish to have en-suite bathrooms and flat screen televisions
  - What happens when ECH breaks down? Individuals come to Warwick House for rehabilitation.
- Frustration was expressed that DCC had all the policies, but these were not evident in practice e.g. safeguarding, choice.
- Staff said that private homes did not provide 2-3 weeks respite as it was not profitable. They were concerned that without Warwick House, there would be a gap in provision.
- The lack of factual information on previous studies and surveys which supported the consultation document e.g. bed numbers, extra care housing was of serious concern to staff. In particular, they indicated that the short term care figures were not reflective of the true picture.
- Staff were angry that nothing had been explained to residents and relatives. They reported that relatives had taken it upon themselves to contact other (private) homes, and had been told they would have to pay an extra £150 in top up fees.

- A few staff were sceptical that the money saved from closing homes would be reinvested into building new homes. This view had arisen as a result of other homes being closed under the same premise, but nothing had happened.

### Impact of proposals on care of individual residents

- Staff were concerned about the fact that there was very little dementia care available in care homes in the area.
- All staff expressed concern about the effect that the consultation was having on residents – *“all these meetings and visitors are taking their toll; statistics show they won’t survive.”*
- Staff stated that Warwick House had an advantage in its geographical location since it was on a bus route and therefore easily accessible. This was important, given that the relatives and friends of many residents were also elderly.
- A couple of staff mentioned that the eligibility criteria for accessing services were not clear to service users and carers *“people are bamboozled.”* Moreover, it was suggested that social workers had been told not to promote the services of Warwick House in an effort to reduce apparent demand *“social services are not promoting the services. They’re not saying you can’t have it, but they’re not saying you can.”* *“People don’t know what’s available; they’re not being told.”*

### Impact of proposals on staff

- The majority of staff present indicated that they were frightened to speak openly to Agencia, saying that they were frightened about their jobs and futures.
- Staff reported they were not told of proposals directly, and found out from reading it in the paper. This had been upsetting for staff, but also difficult with regard to answering questions and supporting residents and relatives through the news *“I was not prepared and it still hurts to this day.”*
- Staff reported that they did much more than they were paid to do e.g. many had worked unpaid hours.
- A senior staff member had been pre-warned of proposals on the morning of her going on holiday but told to speak to no-one *“I was put in a terrible position; it was the worst week of my life.”*
- Since the launch of the consultation process, staff said that no DCC manager had been to discuss it with them and there had been no HR involvement in any way from DCC.
- They also reported that no trade union had contacted staff.
- Staff had heard that their conditions of service might change with lower pay / less leave / sick time. Although this was unofficial information, it caused further anxiety and disruption.
- Staff expressed concerns that there was a lack of formal information on how the proposals would be implemented, if the closure went ahead, which made it difficult to support residents and their families: *“we get our information from the Derby Telegraph.”*

### Any other comments or suggestions

- Staff said that relatives and residents were putting together a petition, which already had 6,500 signatures.

- The labour party were doing their best to lobby the council.
- Staff were keen to stress that they tried to be very professional and caring in the way that they conducted themselves. However, they did not feel that DCC managers had treated them in a caring or professional manner in their handling of the proposals.