



Leicester  
City Council

Cabinet

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2007

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**Barnes Heath House**

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**Report of the Corporate Director, Children & Young People's Services**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet on the progress of work relating to services for disabled children and young people at Barnes Heath House and to make recommendations in relation to the future developments at this establishment.

**2. Rationale for Change**

- 2.1 Barnes Heath House is one of five city council residential homes for young people. It has traditionally provided short breaks (respite care) for disabled children/young people and their families. It is registered with OFSTED to provide nine residential placements.
- 2.2 Leicester City Council is one of a few local authorities to provide such innovative internal provision for disabled children. Barnes Heath House receives frequent letters of support and commendations from families because of the level of skill and flexibility of service provided by the committed and experienced staff team.
- 2.3 Over the last four years, Barnes Heath House has expanded and modernised its short-breaks residential provision, to include a range of innovative and flexible services, including:
- Day care
  - After school and support services in family homes
  - Summer holiday activity schemes
  - Enhanced parenting assessments (with the Disabled Children's Team), and
  - Support and shared care arrangements with foster carers.
- 2.4 The development of Disabled Children's Services is moving to a model of "outreach and inclusion" provision. This is based on staff providing support to disabled children and young people within community-based settings rather than in institutional environments. The rationale is that best practice indicates that offering services to children and families in their own homes or community based settings results in better outcomes for children. The development of outreach and inclusion provision will result in a wider range of

services tailored towards disabled children's needs and recognises that residential provision does not meet the needs of all children

- 2.5. This development of 'outreach and inclusion' provision for disabled children involves transferring resources from Mayfield Family Centre to Barnes Heath House as part of previously agreed plans to reconfigure and develop outreach services.2.6 Barnes Heath House as a building requires upgrading and modifications to accommodate its expanding remit and to improve its facilities for the benefit of service users and staff who provide support to disabled children/young people and their families.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 This development is intended to improve and extend the physical infrastructure of Barnes Heath House so that it can provide a wider spectrum of services for disabled children and their families. This will include:
- 3.1.1 An extension, which would incorporate an outreach and day-care base, a meeting room/facility for staff, partner agencies and voluntary groups. This extension will require a small kitchen facility and fully accessible toilet and changing facilities, which will meet the current and future personal care requirements of disabled children/young people and their families.
- 3.1.2 Modifications are required to the current work areas to allow for improved co-location and co-working of Departmental staff and services eg Barnes Heath staff, Social Inclusion Service, Special Needs Teaching Service, Disabled Children's Team and foster carers. This development would provide greater opportunities for improved communication and joint working, thereby enhancing support and interventions to disabled children and their families.
- 3.1.3 Improvements to external play areas.
- 3.1.4 Improvement to on-site car parking facilities to comply with planning regulations and accommodate greater usage of on-site facilities.

### **4. Impact on Service Users**

- 4.1 The improvements to Barnes Heath House will enable the Department to provide more flexible support services to disabled children/young people and their families, which focus on helping them remain together, thereby avoiding the need to place children in full-time care or short overnight stays in residential care because of a lack of other suitable services.
- 4.2 Barnes Heath House receives a consistent number of disabled children and young people who require overnight short-breaks. The proposed developments will improve the residential accommodation for young people who use Savannah Unit. This unit looks after young people with learning disabilities and challenging behaviours.

The developments include converting two bedrooms into a spacious lounge and kitchenette and converting the existing lounge into a bedroom with en-suite bathroom facilities. This would make better use of the space in this area and provide increased privacy for young people who make use of this part of the building. This is particularly important for young people with specific conditions, such as autism, who require consistent routines and low levels of disturbance away from other parts of the building, which will become busier as the outreach and day support services expand. These alterations would not result in a reduction of overnight stays provided to young people, as the maximum number of young people who use Savannah unit is four at any one time. The rest of the Home provides five other bedrooms for young people with complex health needs. Therefore the overall number of registered residential placements offered by Barnes Heath House would remain at nine.

- 4.3 Modifications to the building would improve disabled children and their families' access to existing services on the site, including the light sensory room, ball pool, indoor play area, and the spa bath.
- 4.4 The spa bath suite will require modification so that it has private changing facilities and an en-suite toilet. These facilities are particularly useful to support service users with conditions like autism and ADHD, as they help reduce anxieties and behavioural problems. For service users with significant physical disabilities – hydrotherapy sessions in a spa bath helps alleviate discomfort in limbs and provide relaxation.
- 4.5 The external play area of the site is in need of refurbishment, as current facilities are becoming worn out. Improvements would include up to date play equipment and safety surfaces to allow young people to enjoy physical exercise, in a safe environment.
- 4.6 The Disabled Children Team has identified an additional 80 families on their current caseloads who would benefit from expanded services that would operate from Barnes Heath House.
- 4.7 Unlike many other children's facilities, Barnes Heath House is open 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, which allows for improved support to families at critical times, eg evenings, weekends, and school holidays.
- 4.8 The development of outreach and intervention services based at Barnes Heath House is fully consistent with national and local priorities, ie supporting families to continue to look after their children, preventing service users from coming into care, supporting disabled children and young people with the support of professional staff to access and make better use of existing community resources, which are available to other people. This is in line with the inclusion agenda and social model of disability.

## **5. Impact on Staff**

- 5.1 The current team at Barnes Heath House have been fully committed to and involved in developing a wider and more imaginative range of services to disabled children and their families. It is recognised that there will be some disruption during the period of building improvements, but this is inevitable to achieve the longer-term aim of improving facilities at the site and further enhancing support to children, young people and their families.
- 5.2 The staff from Mayfield Family Centre and the Social Inclusion Service who are likely to move to Barnes Heath House will benefit from working in a facility, which will provide improved and more imaginative interventions for disabled children and their families.
- 5.3 The key staff have been fully consulted regarding these developments.
- 5.4 Staff will have available to them professional development and training opportunities which will build and strengthen their current skills and so enhance their ability to provide enhanced and more flexible support to children, young people and their carers.

## **6. Budget, Project Plan and Timescales:**

- 6.1 The main cost element of these proposals is a capital investment to improve the facilities of the site. This project will be integrated into the Department's capital works programme.
  - 6.1.1 Draft plans have been drawn up and total costs for all proposed improvements have been estimated by City Consultants. These costings have been calculated on the basis of all alterations being progressed as one project. The detailed costings are available, but are not included in this report given the proximity of the tendering process and the commercial sensitivity of this information.
  - 6.1.2 The main elements of the project are listed below:
    - a) Building of extension and internal refurbishment of current work areas, including improvement to car park facilities.
    - b) Refurbishment and extension of spa bath suite
    - c) Conversion of bedrooms into lounge and kitchenette
    - d) Conversion of existing lounge into bedroom, with en-suite bathroom
    - e) Refurbishment of central garden area (replacing existing play equipment and safety surfaces).

6.2 It is proposed the project will be funded by:

- a) Ringfencing the capital receipt from the sale of the Mayfield Centre. Both the disposal of the centre and the application of the receipt would be subject to Cabinet approval;
- b) Applying part of the Children and Young People's Services Departmental Reserve. This would be subject to clarification of other potential calls on the reserve.

6.3 The project is planned to be implemented as a single programme. It is estimated it would take approximately 12 to 18 months to complete. The project would then progress through 4 distinct phases:

- a) Tendering Process
  - Planning permission sought
  - Developing/finalising the brief & sending out for tenders)
  - Waiting for responses ) 9 to 12 weeks
  - Reviewing tenders )
- b) Agreement for Tender
  - Finalise legal arrangements ) 1 to 2 months
  - Finalise funding arrangements )
- c) Pre-Contract Period
  - Site meetings )
  - Lead in time ) 1 to 2 months
  - Ordering of materials etc )
- d) Building Period 9 to 12 months

6.4 The ongoing revenue costs for the unit will be met from the existing budget allocation to Barnes Heath House and the remaining Mayfield budget that has been agreed to finance the Outreach workers.

## **7. Consultation Process**

- 7.1 Consultation meetings are taking place between representatives of Barnes Heath House, Mayfield staff, HR, UNISON, Property Section, Parent and Carer Council, to discuss the development of the Outreach and Inclusion Projects. The Parent and Carer Council represents the views of service users and all involved have been positive about the development of the service. There will continue to be ongoing discussions with key stakeholders throughout the implementation of the programme, including current families using Barnes Heath House.

## **8. Headline Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The Capital costs and potential sources of funding have been outlined in Section 6. (Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, (252) 7750).
- 8.2 All revenue costs will be met from existing budgets.
- 8.3 The Department will need to obtain the necessary planning permission under building regulations to allow for the redevelopment of the site. This should take a period of six weeks and is incorporated into phase one of the project.

## **9. Headline Legal Implications**

- 9.1 Subject to any required ongoing legal input concerning the reallocation of any remaining staff from Mayfield Family Centre, there are no other legal implications arising from this report.  
(Kamal Adatia, Barrister, (252) 7044).

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 Cabinet is asked to:
- 10.1.1 Support the strategy for the development of Barnes Heath House as described in the report.
- 10.1.2 Agree to the disposal of the former Mayfield Family Centre, and the earmarking of the capital receipt for the development of Barnes Heath House.
- 10.1.3 Agree in principle to the proposed works at Barnes Heath House, subject to the formal addition of the scheme to the Capital Programme once the scheme costs and funding projections are clarified.

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<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reason</b>	N/A
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	N/A
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Executive (Cabinet)