

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCILEDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 17TH FEBRUARY 2014FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES – 26TH FEBRUARY 2014GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 26TH FEBRUARY 2014EXECUTIVE – 3RD MARCH 2014Report by the Director of Children's Services on a proposal for the closure of
Bridge House (Bedford Ward) Adolescent Resource CentreSUMMARY

There is one remaining Adolescent Resource Centres (ARC) in Wandsworth; Bridge House, 1A Larch Close, SW12 9SU (Bedford Ward). The unit has the capacity to accommodate up to seven young people, six on a short-to medium-term placement and one on an emergency overnight basis only. Bridge House takes young people aged 11-17 years old, providing placements for young people with more challenging behaviour who cannot be safely accommodated in foster care placements.

The strategy over recent years has been to significantly reduce the use of residential care for Children Looked After (CLA), in favour of family placements and this has been reflected in the gradual closure of a number of residential units across the Borough in the last fifteen to twenty years.

This paper proposes the closure of Bridge ARC. The proposal is being made in the context of the high costs and variable occupancy levels at Bridge House. Some of the revenue resources released will be re-directed to commissioning more appropriate placements within the Private and Voluntary (P&V) sector, and re-invested in three FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) posts of Outreach Worker to provide intensive adolescent support to prevent admissions into care and rehabilitate adolescents in their homes or to a wider family network.

Director of Finance Comments

If approved, the proposals in this paper would result in negative budget variations of £299,000 in 2014/15 and £399,000 in 2015/16 and a full year, equivalent to an annual reduction on Band D Council Tax of £3.41. The estimated severance costs in relation to the proposals are in the region of £160,000 which would be expected to be met from within existing budgets in the Children's Services Department in the first instance. In the event that

departmental budgets become significantly pressured during the 2014/15 financial year, the Service Transformation Fund could be used to meet these costs.

Conclusion

The proposals reflect a number of changing factors including the limited ability to match complex placement needs of Wandsworth's looked after young people. The proposals would deliver improved alternative placement for young people and better value for money.

GLOSSARY

ARC(s)	Adolescent Resource Centre(s)
CLA	Children Looked After
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
IFA	Independent Fostering Agency
P&V	Private & Voluntary

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or recommendations on the report, these will be submitted to the Executive for its consideration.
3. The Executive are recommended to:
 - (a) approve the closure of Bridge House ARC in June 2014 and declare the property surplus to requirements on the closure of the unit; and
 - (b) approve negative General Fund budget variations of £299,000 in 2014/15 and £399,000 in 2015/16 and a full year, when considering the budget variations report elsewhere on their agenda.
 - (c) subject to no other funded service requirement for the property being identified, authorise the Borough Valuer, to prepare the property for disposal including the preparation and submission of a planning application if appropriate and the procurement of survey information and to market and dispose of the property including by auction on terms to be approved by the Borough Valuer in consultation with the Borough Solicitor and Assistant Director of Administration.

4. The General Purposes Committee are recommended to approve the proposal to create three FTE posts of Outreach Worker and to delete nineteen posts (18.64FTE) as detailed in paragraphs 10 and 20 of this report.

INTRODUCTION

5. It is nationally recognised that there must be improvements in the holistic quality of residential care, and for this to translate into improved outcomes for young people. Young people in residential care in Wandsworth have multiple complex needs and there is always going to be a challenge in achieving better outcomes and life chances for these young people. Evidence demonstrates that the potential for negative influence in residential settings is high. With the roll-out of Youth Support Teams (Paper No.10 - 90) it is timely to review the care placement of adolescents looked after by Wandsworth.
6. The strategy over recent years has been to significantly reduce the use of residential care for CLA, in favour of family placements, and this has been reflected in the gradual closure of a number of residential units across the borough in the last fifteen to twenty years.

BACKGROUND

7. Bridge House, 1A Larch Close, SW12 9SU (Bedford Ward) is the last remaining ARC in Wandsworth. The unit has the capacity to accommodate up to seven young people, six on a short-to medium-term placement and one on an emergency overnight basis only. The ARC take young people aged 11-17 years old. The unit provides placements for young people with more challenging behaviour who cannot be safely accommodated in foster care placements. The placement may be their first experience of being looked after, or may follow a previous placement disruption. The aim will always be to achieve a speedy return home whenever possible, but many young people will require a longer stay before moving into an appropriate longer-term placement, or on to the Independent Living Scheme. Table 1 below provides information on Wandsworth CLA population over the last seven years, however, there was an increase in 2012 particularly amongst the 11 – 17 age-range. The increase in numbers is partly attributed to the Council accommodating homeless 16 and 17 year-olds, including unaccompanied asylum seekers. The trend reflects the success of this Council's policies in supporting children and young people remaining with their families where appropriate, and in achieving permanency e.g. kinship adoption for those who come with care.

Table 1: Numbers of CLA

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total CLA as at 31 March	278	254	236	231	206	208	217
Young People							

Bridge House

CLA aged 11-17	146	151	135	138	121	114	125
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8. Increasingly, young people entering residential care have mental health problems and this requires staff to have the skills necessary to support them. Many of the young people using Bridge House have suffered multiple placement breakdowns. These young people often present challenging and self-destructive behaviour and sometimes damage buildings, assault staff and cause disturbance to neighbours.
9. It is a struggle to get the expertise needed to run cost-effective and good quality adolescent units that can meet a diverse range of needs. It should be considered whether it is more cost-effective to purchase placements in the independent sector, especially considering that Bridge House has generally not been fully occupied. (See Table 2 below).

Table 2: Average occupancy for Bridge House

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Bridge House	4.8 (80%)	5.9 (98%)	4.6 (80%)	4 (67%)	5.03 (84%)

PROPOSAL

10. It is proposed to close Bridge House ARC, re-invest a proportion of the budget in preventative services, add an amount to the placements budget and take the remainder as a saving. The current budget of Bridge House is £778,470. (See Table 3 below). If Bridge House is closed it will no longer be needed by the Children's Services Department and will be surplus to requirements.

Table 3: Bridge House Budget (£865,733)

Provision	Allocate (£):
Specialist Intensive short-term Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements.	£240,117
3 FTE intensive adolescent support workers to prevent admissions to care and rehabilitate adolescents home or to wider family network (3 x £33,451).	£100,353
Rent and charges for 2 one bed flats as temporary/emergency	£8,000

accommodation (72 hours max).	
Agency care to support young people in temporary/emergency accommodation (72 hours x £18 x 24 admissions).	£31,000
Total reinvestment required:	£379,470
Total full year saving:	£399,000
Total Bridge House budget:	£778,470

IMPACT ON CURRENT PLACEMENTS STRATEGY

11. Currently the main admissions to Bridge House take place in the day time or through the emergency 'out of hours' duty social work team. The policy is to avoid admitting young people into care. Where this is not possible the initial response is to try to identify foster carers. Where this proves unsuccessful some young people may remain within ARC provision for some time, and in some cases until they are ready for semi-independent living as part of leaving care.
12. In the absence of Bridge House availability, it will be necessary to revise procedures for out-of-hours and emergency admissions. The CLA Commissioning Service has identified several local providers of residential care who could accommodate emergency admissions for Wandsworth children at a unit cost less than or equivalent to current unit costs for ARC provision¹. There should be sufficient capacity amongst these providers to cope with Wandsworth demand. Examples of providers are Choices Lifestyle (Croydon), Richmond Psychosocial Foundation (Putney), Ingleside Care (Croydon) and Ownlife (South West London). The first two organisations have entered into a previous arrangement with the authority; the latter have provided same day service on placements. It is also proposed to have a number of foster carers who will be able to take on more challenging young people. These foster carers will be supported by the new outreach workers (see Table 3) who will be working in the evening and at weekends.

COMMISSIONING PROPOSALS

13. If the proposal to close Bridge House ARC is agreed, it should be possible through the use of alternative children's homes to manage demand. These children's homes are preferred providers whose weekly charges average around £2,995 per week, which equates to a considerable annual saving over the unit cost of Bridge House. Fees are negotiated annually as part of the sub-regional commissioning arrangements with the five other local authorities in

Bridge House

South West London. By procuring jointly, more competitive rates can be negotiated with local providers who rely heavily on the five councils for their income. These providers offer services which meet a range of young people's needs as they all operate with different specialisms.

14. In addition it is proposed to provide one/two-bed accommodation within Wandsworth which can provide temporary/emergency accommodation. Negotiations are being undertaken with local housing associations about running this semi independent provision.

FINANCIAL

16. The current unit cost of a placement at the ARCs is £3,237 per week (based on the actual rates in 2012/13). An average unit cost in a comparable residential unit is £2,995 per week.

STAFFING

17. It is anticipated that it will be possible to offer redeployment to some staff. The new outreach posts will be ring-fenced to the ARC staff in the first instance.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

18. The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Council when exercising its functions must have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. As such an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken on the proposed closure of Bridge House. See Appendix 1.
19. The EIA has not identified any adverse impact in relation to any of the protected characteristics. In reaching this conclusion the EIA has taken into account the national policy of working to keep young people with their families and avoiding residential care and noted that alternative support will be put in place for young people who might otherwise have accessed services at Bridge House.

HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES COMMENT

20. The proposal to close Bridge House ARC will result in the deletion of a total of 19 (18.64 FTE) posts, of which 13 (13 FTE) are currently occupied. The report also proposes to establish three (3 FTE) Outreach Worker posts. Staff at Bridge House ARC will be counselled in accordance with the Council's Redundancy/Redeployment agreement, however it is anticipated that ring-fenced recruitment to the three new Outreach Worker posts to current staff at Bridge House will enable redeployment opportunities to some of the staff.

The table below sets out the posts to be deleted at Bridge House ARC

Position	Estab FTE	Position Reference
Manager	1	S7305
Deputy Manager	1	S7308
Deputy Manager	1	S7317
Senior Residential Worker	1	S7320
Senior Residential Worker	1	S7329
Residential Worker	1	S7336
Residential Worker	1	S7337
Residential Worker	1	S7339
Residential Worker	1	S7340
Residential Worker	1	S7363
Residential Worker	1	S7364
Residential Worker	1	S7365
Residential Worker	1	S7378
Residential Worker	1	S7384
Residential Worker	1	S7338
Administrative Assistant (PT/23)	0.638889	S7385
Cook	1	ST411
Domestic Assistant	1	ST503
Domestic Assistant	1	ST503A

The reorganisation has been managed in accordance with the Councils Code of Practice for Managing Staffing Reorganisations.

BOROUGH VALUER COMMENT

21. The usual consultation will be carried out with all departments to ascertain whether there is any other budgeted service need for the property and if there is not, title reports will be obtained and the property prepared for disposal to achieve the best consideration reasonably obtainable. On vacation of the property security will be provided by occupation by guardians pending its disposal.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE COMMENT

22. If approved, the proposals in this paper would result in negative budget variations of £299,000 in 2014/15 and £399,000 in 2015/16 and a full year, equivalent to an annual reduction on Band D Council Tax of £3.41. The estimated severance costs in relation to the proposals are in the region of £160,000 which would be expected to be met from within existing budgets in the Children's Services Department in the first instance. In the event that departmental budgets become significantly pressured during the 2014/15

Bridge House

financial year, the Service Transformation Fund could be used to meet these costs.

23. The actual average unit cost of £3,237 per week for Bridge House has been calculated on the basis of the actual costs and occupancy rates in 2012/13. When compared with the costs of the externally commissioned placements this average unit cost is higher than the average unit cost in comparable residential units of £2,995 per week. Whilst the costs are variable and are very much dependent on individual needs, there are currently five providers whose charges are significantly lower than this average. It should also be noted that Bridge House has not been fully occupied since 2009/10.
24. Therefore it appears to make financial sense to purchase external placements, as currently even at full occupancy the market offers cheaper placements than Bridge House. However, should there be a large increase in demand for external places from other boroughs then the market rate could rise substantially. This is a volatile area and needs to be kept under regular review.

CONSULTATION

25. The Staff Side have been consulted on this report and any comments received from them will be submitted to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CONCLUSION

26. The proposal reflects a number of changing factors including the limited ability to match complex placement needs of Wandsworth's looked after young people. The proposals would deliver improved alternative placement for young people and better value for money.

The Town Hall
Wandsworth
SW18 2PU

PAUL ROBINSON
Director of Children's Services

7th February 2014

Background Papers

No background papers were used in preparing this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the Committee Secretary Ms. Rachel Williamson (Tel. 020 8871 7857); email: rwilliamson@wandsworth.gov.uk can supply if required.

Initial Equality Impact Assessment – Bridge House

Department	Children's Services
Policy	Closure of Bridge House
People involved	Sean Dunkling, Clare O'Connor

1. What changes are being proposed?

The closure of Bridge House (Bedford Ward) Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC).

2. What is the rationale behind these changes?

The proposal is being made in the context of the high costs and variable occupancy levels at Bridge House ARC. Alternative options are considered necessary to deliver improved alternative placement for young people and better value for money. This proposal reflects a number of changing factors including limited ability to match complex placement needs of Wandsworth's looked after young people.

3. What information do you have on the policy and the potential impact of your policy change in relation to the following?

	List information you have. Do not put what the information shows you
Race	White British 1 Mixed White Irish/Black Caribbean 1 Mixed Black 1 Mixed White British/Black Caribbean2
Gender	Residents 3 male 2 female, overall profile of CLA is 216 young people of whom 139 are aged 10 - 13
Disability	No residents are assessed as disabled.
Age	Service is for young people aged 11 to 17
Faith	<i>Not collected</i>
Sexual Orientation	<i>Not collected</i>

4. Thinking about each group below please list the impact that the policy change will have.

	Impacts of policy change
Race	There are currently5 young people placed at Bridge House. Move on plans are being developed for all young people who will be moving on well before the proposed date of closure.

	<p>The proposed plans are part of a reconfiguration of services which aims to prevent young people from entering care, to support young people in their families and where this is not possible provide tailored support for young people. Closure of Bridge House will not mean that young people who were previously supported there are not able to access support. Funding will be available to support placements in the Private and Voluntary (P&V) sector. Placements will be spot purchased from a preferred provider list on an individual basis. The process for making future placements will also include outcome based element with the intention of improving outcomes for CLA.</p> <p>In addition three FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) posts of Outreach Worker will be created to provide intensive adolescent support to prevent admissions into care and rehabilitate adolescents in their homes or to a wider family network.</p> <p>This is of particular importance as it is recognised that BME young people are over-represented amongst the CLA population in Wandsworth.</p> <p>CLA Commissioning Service has identified several local providers of residential care who could accommodate emergency admissions for Wandsworth children, thus ensuring young people who need emergency placements can still be supported.</p>
Gender	<p>There are currently 5 young people placed at Bridge House. 3 male. 2 female.</p>
Disability	<p>Increasingly, young people entering residential care have mental health problems and this requires staff to have the skills necessary to support them. Many of the young people using the units have suffered multiple placement breakdowns. These young people often present challenging and self-destructive behaviour. The closure of Bridge will not mean that these young people are not able to access support rather budget will be allocated to purchase, where required, specialist placements with specialist support for these young people.</p>
Age	<p>This is a service for young people</p>
Faith	<p>No data collected however the proposed plans are part of a reconfiguration of services which aims to support young people in their families and where this is not possible provide tailored support for young people. Closure of Bridge House will not mean that young people who were previously supported there are not able to access support</p>

	Purchasing placements within the voluntary sector mean that if a young person is in need of personalised support they can be matched with an experienced provider.
Sexual orientation	<p>No data collected however the proposed plans are part of a reconfiguration of services which aims to support young people in their families and where this is not possible provide tailored support for young people. Closure of Bridge House will not mean that young people who were previously supported there are not able to access support.</p> <p>Purchasing placements within the voluntary sector mean that if a young person is in need of personalised support they can be matched with an experienced provider.</p>

5. Is a full EIA required? No.

- Does the policy support a frontline service? Yes
- Is it clear what impact the policy change will have on all the equality groups? Yes
- Overall will the change have a negative impact on any of the equality groups? No.

Comments - Please give the rationale here for not undertaking a full EIA

The proposed plans are part of a reconfiguration of services which aims to support young people in their families and where this is not possible provide tailored support for young people. Closure of Bridge House will not mean that young people who were previously supported there are not able to access support. This is of particular importance as it is recognised that BME young people are over-represented amongst the CLA population in Wandsworth.

6. Through the initial EIA have you identified any actions that needed to be implemented to improve access or monitoring of the policy? (please list)

n/a

Signed

Date

Approved by: Clare O'Connor