

RESIDENTIAL CARE PROPOSALS – Frequently Asked Questions

What are the current arrangements for residential care in RCT?

There are currently 30 care homes for older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf, offering a total of 1,224 beds. Of these, the Council currently operates seven residential care homes offering 237 residential beds. The remaining 23 care homes are provided by independent providers contracted by the Council, offering 989 registered residential and nursing beds. In addition to the above, there are also three extra care facilities currently operational in RCT, providing 140 units of accommodation. Future extra care facilities are currently progressing well at Dan-y-Mynydd (Porth), scheduled to open during 2025/26, and plans for Mountain Ash, scheduled to open during the winter of 2027. In addition, there is a planned new development in Treorchy, which will provide an alternative accommodation with care for older people once a suitable site becomes available.

Which Council-run homes provide dedicated support for dementia?

Tegfan Residential Care Home in Aberdare is in the process of transitioning to a dementia residential only home, to provide 46 beds. Parc Newydd Care Home in Talbot Green also accommodates a 10-bed unit suitable for residential dementia care, after recent works were completed. Proposals recently agreed by Cabinet will ensure the new care accommodation at the former 'Chubb' Factory site in Ferndale will be dedicated to dementia care, creating 32 beds. Meanwhile, the new care accommodation at Darran Road in Mountain Ash has recently received planning permission and will provide 15 dementia care beds within the development.

What service changes are being consulted upon?

At their meeting on September 19, 2024, Cabinet agreed to initiate a public consultation in respect of proposals to alter the Council's existing residential care provision in Ferndale and Hawthorn, to better align to current demand for residential care. It is also part of an ongoing significant investment programme to modernise residential care in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The following two Frequently Asked Questions outline the respective proposals for Ferndale and Hawthorn in further detail.

What are the proposals for Ferndale?

Ferndale House Care Home is proposed to be permanently decommissioned, as it doesn't meet the modern standards required to provide continuing high level and quality care accommodation. It has had low resident numbers over a prolonged period and is therefore no longer financially sustainable. The change would only take effect once suitable alternative accommodation is found for the care home's residents. It is also taking place alongside an agreed investment in a brand-new care accommodation dedicated to dementia, earmarked for the 'Chubb' factory site in Ferndale. All residents of Ferndale House would have the opportunity to move back to the brand-new facility when it opens, subject to their assessed needs and wishes at that point in time.

What are the proposals for Hawthorn?

Cae Glas Care Home in Hawthorn is proposed to be permanently decommissioned, as it has not reached its full capacity and is not operating in a financially sustainable way. These changes would come into effect once a suitable alternative accommodation is found for its current residents.

What does decommissioning mean?

In this instance, decommissioning refers to the formal structured process of permanently closing down a residential care home to meet the changing needs of the County Borough, and to improve the efficiency of future care provision service delivery provided by the Council.

Is there enough capacity elsewhere, to cope with the loss of beds under the proposal?

As of August 9, 2024, the Council's residential care homes were supporting 156 permanently occupied beds out of a total 237 available beds, representing a current permanent occupancy of 65.8%. This means that more than a third of the currently available beds are vacant. This spare capacity is anticipated to increase even further when the planned extra care developments become available, as an alternative accommodation with care option for people. If the proposed changes were to be agreed by Cabinet, there would continue to be sufficient overall capacity available, and in addition to the proposed extra care developments, there is sufficient residential care provision to meet current and future demand.

What if there is an increase in demand for new admissions?

As part of the proposals now being consulted upon, it is recommended that the Council restricts admissions to in-house residential care homes, other than in exceptional circumstances where an alternative placement that can meet the assessed need is not available. This is in order to minimise any potential impact on residents until a final decision is made on the proposals.

What about the welfare of care home residents?

If the proposal were to be agreed by Cabinet following the consultation, the welfare of residents would continue to always be the primary consideration in the event of any home being de-commissioned. This process would be carefully planned and managed over a period of time, and in line with national best practice guidance. Each resident would be offered sensitive care and support arrangements to assist in their safe transfer to another care home of choice that would meet their needs. This would include the involvement of residents, families, friends, advocates, and care home staff. Each resident and their family would be supported by a Social Care Practitioner who would assess individual needs and discuss preferences and help to choose an appropriate alternative service. This would take into account specific issues such as long-standing friendships and continuity of care.

Why is the Council considering these changes?

The Council is committed to providing the best possible service to those who need it, and to modernise the local accommodation with care options available. It is also responding to the falling demand for traditional 'care homes' towards respite care, complex care and independent living with support. This is reflected in that more than a third of available beds in the Council's care homes are currently vacant – and it cannot be left to stay that way or decline even further. Ferndale House has had low resident numbers over a prolonged period and is therefore no longer financially sustainable, while Cae Glas Care Home has not reached its full capacity and is not operating in a financially sustainable way. The Council has a responsibility to ensure its adult care services are sufficient, of good quality, and are sustainable. The Council's provision must therefore be continually reviewed to ensure its care and support offer meets older people's needs, against a backdrop of changing demand and significant financial challenges in the public sector.

If the proposals are agreed following consultation, when would any changes come into effect?

Following approval during the Cabinet meeting on Thursday, September 19, the proposals are now subject to consultation – which will run from October 1 to November 30, 2024. The feedback received will then be collated by officers, and Cabinet will meet at a future date to make any final decision. Timescales will be set out as part of this process.

Is this a cost-cutting exercise?

While the proposals could generate an estimated revenue saving of around £2m in a full year, the Council's commitment to modernising residential care options for older people has

resulted in a much bigger investment in new facilities across local communities – reflecting the demand for respite care, complex care and independent living with support. This includes popular Extra Care housing schemes being delivered in Aberaman (Maesyffynnon) and Graig (Cwrt yr Orsaf) in recent years, along with a third currently being built in Porth. In addition, an agreed multi-million pound investment will provide further Extra Care and residential dementia beds in Ferndale and Mountain Ash, a new accommodation dedicated for people with learning disabilities in adulthood in Church Village, and a future scheme for Extra Care and residential dementia care in Treorchy.

Why can't we keep all of the current care homes?

The current in-house residential offer is based on a traditional model of care, and much of the estate is showing its age. This includes the condition of the buildings and their fundamental design and purpose. The Council has a duty to consider its current model now, reflecting on the needs and aspirations of current and future generations, who increasingly have changing expectations. There are also pressing financial challenges for the Council and in this context, officers have considered the under-occupancy across the in-house residential care services and proposed the closure of two care homes.

How are you going to manage the transition of all residents if the proposal is agreed?

All residents would be fully-supported throughout this process. The Council's dedicated assessors would ensure assessments and reviews for each resident are up to date or renewed, and will discuss the available alternative accommodation options available to meet their care and support needs. The dedicated assessor would work closely with each individual and their families while carrying out the assessments. Advocates and support workers would be on hand to support the resident and their families through this transition.

Would residents be placed locally, should their home close?

Should Cabinet agree to decommission any homes following consultation, placing residents locally would be an important consideration, and we would be looking to strike a balance between providing alternative provision of the right quality and geography. We would work alongside individual residents, families, carers, and advocates to bring about the right future care alternative that best suits their needs.

Will residents' views be taken into consideration, in relation to where they are moved?

There would be independent advocates and support workers on hand to ensure the wishes and views of your relative are paramount in any options presented to each individual. This would take into account specific issues such as long-standing friendships. Consideration and support would also be given to individuals relocating to another care home of their choice.

How will detail of the proposed transition be communicated to service users, their families, and care home staff, if the proposals are agreed by Cabinet following consultation?

Please be assured the Council will work very closely with staff, trade unions, carers, care home residents and their families, and advocates, throughout this entire process – from the current consultation through to any potential changes which could be made in the future.

What would happen to staff if any home closes?

If any decision made affects staff, there would be a separate staff consultation exercise during which the Council's Management of Change procedure will be followed. The Council's Human Resources department would work closely with the service and Trade Unions should any implications arise that relate to staff. An engagement and communication plan would be delivered to staff to ensure good access to information and advice regarding their rights and entitlements, their options, and the expected timescales of key events.

What are your plans for the care home buildings proposed for decommissioning?

The Council has no current plans for the two care home sites proposed for permanent decommissioning (Ferndale House Care Home and Cae Glas Care Home) as no final decision has yet been made on their future.

Why is the Council not proposing to keep Ferndale House open until the new dementia care facility in Ferndale is ready?

Due to its layout and age, Ferndale House is an environment that does not enable residents to be provided with the very best level and quality of accommodation that we would wish. These factors are likely to have contributed to the prolonged low resident numbers, and the home not operating in a financially sustainable way. This is likely to continue even further into the future. Therefore, the early transfer of residents from Ferndale House during the interim period ensures that residents are in a suitable accommodation whilst the brand new dedicated dementia accommodation for Ferndale is being built. During the consultation, consideration will be given to any extended travel that families of current residents may incur if the proposals are agreed – during the interim period between Ferndale House closing and the new care home becoming available.

Has the decision already been made?

No decision has yet been made on the preferred option put forward for consideration. Cabinet Members agreed to initiate a public consultation on the proposals at their meeting on September 19, and the consultation will therefore take place from October 1 to November 30, 2024. This will be an extensive process that engages with staff, carers, care home residents, their families, and advocates – along with the wider general public. The feedback received during this process will be considered in great detail before any future, final decision is made by Cabinet.

How do I have my say in the consultation?

Following Cabinet's decision, a formal eight-week consultation period will take place from October 1 to November 30, 2024. As part of this, a single and independent consultation exercise will be carried out covering both homes impacted under the proposals. Individual residents and their families will be supported to understand and engage with the consultation process and the potential implications for them. Face-to-face consultations will be arranged and an information pack distributed for residents to ensure the relevant information is presented in an accessible and clear format. In addition, there will be staff engagement at each home impacted, where they will be encouraged to share their views on the proposals.

Public meetings will also be arranged across various settings to encourage the wider residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to have their say. The consultation also includes an online public questionnaire which can be found on the Council's website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/currentconsultation. For more details, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/consultations.

What is the procedure – what happens next?

Following the public consultation (ending on November 30, 2024), a report will be drafted by Officers outlining the feedback received. Cabinet will consider the feedback at great length before any future decision is made.