

Welcome to issue 2 of this bulletin, which aims to keep you up-to-date with developments taking place in the Aiming High programme.

As part of this programme, the county council agreed proposals to transform short break services for children and young people with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities (LDD) in Hertfordshire.

Since then, we have carried out a huge amount of work to progress these proposals and ensure that we meet the Full Service Offer (FSO) by March 2011. An update of where we have got to is outlined below:

Overnight Short Breaks

Overnight short breaks are intended to give the most severely disabled children a chance to spend some time away from those who usually look after them, and to provide parent and families with a valuable break from caring. Making sure that there is fair and equal access to residential short breaks across the county, and that our residential units are fully accessible is a key part of our approach.

Wilbury House

The building works at Wilbury House will start on 25th October and should be completed by the end of February.

We have found alternative accommodation for children and young people at Lincoln Close in Welwyn Garden City whilst the building works are underway. We have met with young people and their families to ensure a smooth transition to Lincoln Close. Some families have decided not to move their child but to receive support through an outreach service.

The Pines

The contract for the residential provision at the Pines has been awarded to Action for Children working in partnership with KIDS who will be providing the services for the Hub. Services are expected to start from January/February 2011.

We have chosen 'Green Dreams' to be the provider for the play area at The Pines. Full plans will be drawn up in consultation with parents and the service providers. Development of the play area is expected to start once the building work has been completed.

West Hyde

The planning permission application has now been approved after comments received from parents and carers were taken into account. Drawings of the design of the unit can now be found on the Aiming High web site.

Four information events took place during July and September for parents and carers to visit the site, find out about plans and give their comments on some aspects of the unit.

We expect the unit to open in Spring/Summer of 2011

Adventure Playground

The planning permission application has now been submitted and we have commissioned the disabled children's charity, KIDS, to design, build and run this service. Drawings of the proposal from the planning permission application can be found on the Aiming High Website under 'Aiming High Updates.'

We will consult with the Aldenham Country Park advisory board, local residents and existing park users.

Capacity Building

There are a number of themes in this project. The main achievements so far are:

- The project team is working with the Customer Focus Team (CFT) to provide an effective directory of accurate and easily-sourced information as part of the Full Service Offer. The CFT is also working directly with parents, carers and Adult Care Services.
- Funding for trainers to upskill staff in universal services has been identified through a grant application process. Several events were held with training providers, parents and carers, and staff and volunteers from organisations in a variety of universal services to ensure a co-ordinated approach. As a result a training programme has been developed 'Working to Include Disabled Children and Young People' and a Training Administrator recruited.
- There is a pilot being run in some specials schools to ensure pupils aged 14 – 19 have an individual person-centred transition plan. Work is also being carried out with the Transition Team to ensure those disabled young people aged 16 – 18 that are children looked after with complex needs and are known to the Disabled Children's Teams, have a detailed plan for transition into Adult Care Services.

Hub and Spoke Model

One Hub is going to be based at The Pines residential unit and will be up and running in January 2011. The second Hub will be based in the west of the county but will not be housed on the same site as the West Hyde residential unit.

Facilities will be developed around the hub for disabled children and young people, their siblings and parent/carers and all those supporting and/or providing services for disabled children and their families. The spoke element of the model is intended to encourage the use of mainstream/universal provision where appropriate whilst ensuring that specialist provision is available where necessary. Alongside this update is a more detailed explanation of what the Hub and Spoke model will look like.

A workshop has taken place to scope out the specifications for what the hub in the west of the county should look like and what role it will fulfil. Representatives from HCC, Health, Carers in Hertfordshire and the Parent Carer Involvement Board all participated. There was general enthusiasm for the benefit that this new initiative will provide to children and young people with LDD within Hertfordshire.

A detailed specification is now being drawn up to allow the contract for the Hub to go out to tender.

Transitional Arrangements

In general parents are happy with the transitional arrangements being put in place for their children. We are responding to any questions or concerns arising from the de-commissioning of units or reorganisation of provision on an individual basis.

Following some feedback from parents, we would like to clarify that every child and young person will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will receive their provision from either West Hyde or one of our other short break units.

During this period, while the county council is reorganising its short break provision, it is important that any necessary changes are done with minimal upheaval for the child or young person and their families.

In order to ensure that all young people approaching this transitional age are adequately catered for, Pauline Meredith is heading up all the re-provision. Pauline is working closely with the Hertfordshire Transition team and together they will be making sure that all children and young people receive the support they need.

Pauline will contact each family that will be affected by the re-provision of residential units.

Shared Care Team Developments

AHDC funding has enabled us to recruit another full time fee paid (SC+) carer who provides short breaks to several children and young people.

We have also been able to provide care for more children with complex needs through SCextra. This scheme means that the carer receives an enhanced payment for day care which acknowledges the expertise and skills required to care for some of our young people with more complex health or behavioural needs.

Please visit the Aiming High website for further information and updates:
<http://www.hertsdirect.org/caresupport/childfam/specialneeds/aimhigh/>