Residential care for older people: Frequently asked questions

Swansea Council is proposing a major investment in its social care homes to secure them for the long-term.

It will also move to strengthen the services it provides to the most vulnerable older people to meet the need for more complex care, and increase respite care which many families currently struggle to access.

There are also proposals to change the way residential services are provided to focus resources on those most in need and to provide care that others are unable to.

The council’s cabinet has agreed to start a consultation seeking the views of residents, staff and the public.

Why are we proposing these changes?

We want to continue supporting everyone as well as we possibly can, while dealing with some challenges that have become difficult to manage in recent years. Currently, we provide residential care, as well as support to families who care for relatives (known as respite care) and intensive social services support to help people remain in or return to their own homes (known as reablement).

As people are living longer there are a lot more people needing support than there used to be. Also, there are more people with dementia and other conditions that we call “complex needs” that need specialised support.

At the same time, people are asking for support to remain in their own homes for longer, and to live active lives. Carers are also looking for more respite to help give them breaks from caring for loved ones, so they can look after them better and for longer.

Looking to the future, we will have 42 more beds than needed in council-run residential care homes. It is not responsible or defendable to keep so many empty places, when the money could be used to improve our other services and to support more people in different ways.

What is complex care?

People who have complex needs are those who, for example, have a range care needs which are more complicated to manage. These might include dementia, complex medication regimes or those who have manual handling needs that require equipment or more than one person to complete such activities. There’s a more extensive list on page six of the report to Cabinet which can be found here: xxxxxxx

People who need complex care do not always need long-term residential care as some can be helped to live in their own homes with appropriate support that respects their wishes and aspirations. The council provides this complex care, sometimes
alongside health service colleagues, to people in their own homes. The council also provides long-term residential complex care and respite support to give family members a well-earned break. The proposal is to focus council resources on this kind of care in the future because the council is very good at providing such services.

**How might residential care change?**

No decisions have been made and none will be until we have assessed the feedback from the consultation process. One thing that won't change is our commitment to residents and their families who will receive the best-possible support delivered by people who treat them with care, dignity and respect.

A lot of preparatory work has been done over the last two and a half years to look at different ways of delivering social care. We've involved a range of organisations, including voluntary and carers’ groups, as well as trade unions and our staff.

This work has led us to conclude that the most effective way we can provide the best care in the future is by focusing our staff and resources on providing residential care for the most complex needs, respite care and reablement services.

Overall, our aim is to improve our services and to support people in different ways.

This would enable us to focus on providing the specialised support needed in these areas.

All other types of residential care needs would be met by the independent sector who we already work closely with.

The proposals being consulted on would see the council focus its resources on the five Council-run residential care homes that are best suited to deliver future care needs. We are committed to maintaining them in the years ahead however, it would mean that Parkway Residential Home would close.

**Why has Parkway been identified for closure?**

It is important to remember that no decisions have been made about the future of Parkway and none will be until the Council’s Cabinet has assessed feedback from the consultation process.

The council identified Parkway by looking at all six of its residential homes ahead of the consultation to identify which care homes would offer the best fit, assessing the condition of the building; occupation levels; nearby alternatives; investment needed and long-term viability.

Parkway is suitable for its current purpose which is providing care for people who do not have complex needs like dementia. However, if the proposals being consulted on are accepted, the council would, over time, stop providing non-complex residential care. Unfortunately, Parkway is less accessible for providing complex care compared to the other five care homes. Parkway scored lower overall when compared to the other five council-operated care homes in
terms of the condition of the building and has lower occupancy rates than four of the other five homes.

At the moment there are 20 residents in Parkway and six surplus places and a further 10 beds which are no longer used due to lack of demand. These have been de-registered with the CIW so can no longer be used as residential care beds. This proposal would not affect residents in any of our other Council-run residential homes.

What happens next?

It must be stressed that no decisions have been taken other than to begin a consultation. The consultation starts on April 30 and ends on July 23 so there’s plenty of time for people to have their say.

Those directly affected and their carers will be offered support to make sure that they have the opportunity to know what the proposals are about and have the chance to comment on them.

All views will be taken into account before a report goes back to the Council’s Cabinet for a final decision, which is likely to be later this summer.

What if I am a resident of Parkway or have a friend or family member living there?

It is natural that you will feel concerned about this proposal and how it might affect you.

However, please be assured that we remain committed to making sure that all residents and their families will still receive any support they need, and we would work with them to determine the best possible outcomes for them.

If we did decide to proceed with the closure of Parkway Residential Care Home, we would meet with every resident to plan and support a move to another home. Neither any resident nor any family will be left to fend for themselves. Should the council take the decision to close Parkway, the council is committed to supporting you.

Should the home close at some point in the future residents would either be supported in moving to another council-run residential home or supported in a home provided by the independent sector. There would be a phased approach to any moves to suit the needs of the residents.

Does this mean you are privatising residential care in Swansea?

No, it does not mean that at all. The council’s commitment to providing the best-possible residential care to those with the most complex needs will not change in any way. This year alone the council is spending £111m on social services.

Even if Parkway closes, the council will still be providing care in five residential care homes which is enough to meet the demand. The care we’ll be providing will be by
experienced, caring staff who are experts in supporting those with the most complex needs.

We believe the complex residential care services we provide are the best in Swansea and will be even better in the future.

If the demand for social care is going up, why are you reducing the number of available beds?

There is rising demand for social care. But the demand for care and support is from people who want to live in their own homes as independently as possible for as long as they can. One important consequence of this is that people do not want to move into long-term residential care until they have to.

Therefore people tend to go into residential care later in life, when they generally have more complex needs such as dementia. So while the overall number of people who may need social care is rising, demand for the most complex support that can only be provided in long-term residential care is not growing as fast.

In addition, if the council’s new way of providing social care is approved, it will only be providing complex long-term residential social care in future. Other types of long-term residential care will be provided by the independent sector.

Therefore, if the council’s proposals are approved, the most sensible approach would be to close Parkway because it is least able to deliver our preferred future model.

Parkway is in a good condition

Yes, the quality of facilities at Parkway is currently good – it is capable of providing non-complex long-term residential care to a good standard. However, if the proposals are approved, Parkway will be less suitable compared to the other care homes in the future when the council is providing only complex long-term residential care, residential reablement and respite.

The staff at Parkway are great

Yes, they are. Staff at Parkway are committed, caring and supportive of the residents who live there. If Parkway is closed, we will do everything we can to ensure that they will not lose their jobs with the council. If possible, we want to use their expertise and experience in other social care settings.

The council has already decided to close Parkway

No, we haven’t done that. What we have done is a review of the social care services we currently provide and looked at what is needed for the future. Our proposals are about what these services should look like in the future; rather than what the services are like now. Demand for social care is rising, so is demand for different kinds of social care which reflect people’s changing needs and expectations.
A decision about the future of social care services in Swansea – including one on the future of Parkway – will not be taken until we have feedback from those affected. A final decision will be taken by the Council’s Cabinet once the consultation has ended, taking account of all of the responses received.

What if I have further questions?

If you have any questions at this stage, please contact us on 01792 636519.