

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Engagement on the future model of supported living provision,

Stepdown of Avoca Lodge, Gransha Park Site

As part of the reform and modernisation of Adult Mental Health Supported Living services, the Western Trust implemented a staff engagement exercise as part of the review of supported living. This included providing information and questions and answers in respect of the repurposing of Avoca Lodge. Following these staff engagements, the Trust approved to proceed with further engagement exercises with staff, service users and families to determine if a wider public consultation is required.

The initial planned meeting in November 2022 with the Trust Consultation Group was stood down due to ongoing industrial Action. A meeting with Trade Unions was then convened on 12 January 2023 and the engagement commenced for 4 weeks, which closed on 9 February 2023.

Following this period of engagement, and taking on board all feedback from staff, service users and families, the Western Trust have now approved to proceed with the stepping down of Avoca Lodge as the change is not deemed to be major or controversial. This will now involve relocating the service users to other suitable facilities nearby and deploying staff to other Supported Living facilities in the Trust.

Our service user's health and well-being is our priority and we will continue to support and engage with them and our staff throughout the transition.

The Trust senior team have been communicating with the Trade Unions and meeting with staff, all service users (together with Service User Consultant) and families on Thursday 23 February 2023 to discuss the outcome of this proposal to stepdown Avoca Lodge.

As part of the reform and modernisation of supported living, it is anticipated the future service model will present opportunities to further develop and upskill our current workforce.

The review of supported living is ongoing and information and the final report will be provided when available. Planning in respect of the Avoca Lodge premises, as part of this review of supported living, is also ongoing.

Background

Adult Mental Health (AMH) in the Western Health and Social Care Trust (Western Trust) in collaboration with contracted housing providers and NIHE Supporting People operates a supported living service. The service was developed to facilitate the closure of the long stay psychiatric inpatient wards in the 1980's and 1990's. The service enables individuals with

significant mental illness to maintain a home address outside of the hospital environment and to live independently in the community. Each individual has a personalised support plan to help them maintain their tenancy and their mental and physical well-being. The individual lives as a tenant within a supported environment with access to 24/7 support.

Given the limited development in the service model since its inception and changes and challenges across wider mental health service delivery, Adult Mental Health (AMH) services in the Trust area are undertaking a review of supported living provision.

What our review has found to date:

- There is an increased level of complexity amongst service users being referred to Supported Living;
- Increased vacancies in contracted Supported Living and an increase in high cost placements;
- Higher numbers of medically fit patients who are having their discharge delayed from mental health inpatient facilities;
- Increased staffing challenges and use of bank/agency staff to help service users with complex needs.

AMH services are working to develop a future model of supported living provision that addresses the highlighted challenges and ensures that thresholds for accessing supported living are more inclusive and address not only low intensity needs but also clients that require more intensive support, rectifying the current gap in service provision.

Avoca Lodge

Avoca Lodge opened in 1996 and is an Adult Mental Health Supported Living facility based on the Gransha site. It is a house of multiple occupancy (HMO) and has the capacity for ten tenants comprising of ten bedrooms. The tenants share bathrooms, toilets, kitchen/dining and social/living space. It is currently home for seven tenants all of whom, secondary to enduring mental illness are assessed as requiring a high level of support to maintain community living and have an individual care and support plans to meet their assessed need. Whilst offering an excellent level of support and care to its current tenant group, the building design and amenities fall short of modern standards. Over the past four years a further 8 tenancies have been offered to individuals with varying levels of need, however for multiple reasons, including levels of complexity, these have not been sustained within Avoca Lodge. Avoca's 10 spaces represents 3.3% of the total capacity of Adult Mental Health Supported Living places available. There are currently 12 long term tenancies within contracted supported living facilities across the Trust, 9 of these are within Derry City within 5km from the Gransha site (Dunvale House, Clondermott and Ballyoan).

As a result of the findings the Trust commenced an Engagement exercise on 12 January 2023, proposing that Avoca Lodge is stepped down and the tenants, supported by their current key worker, care team and family move to another local facility that will continue to meet their support and care needs. In this proposal Service users would be supported by their care teams to make decisions regarding their future home based on their assessed

need and available places. The tenants would remain under the care of their current Community Mental Health Team key worker and Consultant Psychiatrist.

All Supported Living and nursing home facilities are monitored by Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and as such there would be no deterioration in the level of support and care that each tenant will receive. There would also be no staff posts lost as a result of any proposals.

The current supported living model consists of a high number of low intensity support beds which are not all being utilised and does not meet the needs of those clients who require more intensive support. The overarching aim of the proposal is to develop a service that can meet the gap in service provision for those individuals with mental illness, who have higher levels of complexity, in their own communities.

As part of the initial engagement, all affected staff, service users and their families, as well as Trade Unions have been briefed on the proposals and participated in feedback exercises.