

**CABINET – 2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2005**

**REPORT OF DIRECTORATE OF ADULT, COMMUNITY AND HOUSING SERVICES**

**REPROVISION OF AUDNAM CENTRE**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Cabinet approval for proposals for the re-provision of Audnam Centre

**Background**

2. The White Paper 'Valuing People' (2001) required Councils to modernise day services for people with a learning disability. An action plan for the modernisation of day services was approved by the Learning Disability Partnership Board in 2003.
3. There has been significant progress since 2003. Service users and carers are more involved in planning the service. People with a learning disability have more choice about how they spend their days in 'real' community activities – employment; education; leisure and arts; and volunteering
4. The Pulse Team has been established to develop a number of new community based services. The Team now provides successful community opportunities for around 55 people per day.
5. In addition, many of the people who attend a centre at the start of the day spend most of the rest of the day out in the community. The table below shows the average daily attendance but many of the clients who form the 'average daily attendance' are not at the centre, except at the beginning and end of the day. The 'average daily attendance' at Audnam is 48, but the average number of people who spend the whole day at the centre is only 23.

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Average daily attendance</b>
Audnam	70	48
Amblecote	106	77
Lower Gornal	139	124
Mere, Stourbridge	85	66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>315</b>

6. Coseley Employment Preparation Unit was closed in June 2005 and the 27 previous attendees were provided with alternative activities.

7. The four main centres are operating well below their capacity for much of the week, thus creating surplus accommodation. The Council can now move to re-providing an improved service from three buildings, rather than four.
8. It is also important to maintain the momentum for change and improvement in the Day Service. In particular:
  - a. It has become increasingly difficult to deliver an extensive range of activities in the community, which require a higher staff ratio, while at the same time maintaining a service from four centres.
  - b. The Service must focus more resources on delivering services for people with high dependency, who are living at home with family carers. This group includes people with challenging behaviour and those with multiple and profound disabilities.
  - c. We must help more people to move on to services offered by alternative providers in the independent sector. There is a continuing commitment to people who have been using the service for many years, but for some this service may be provided outside centres and/or by other providers.

### **Audnam**

9. Audnam is the smallest centre, providing 70 places. 67 different individuals attend the centre every week. It is also the oldest centre, built in 1960 and would require investment of around £300,000 to bring it up to standard.
10. The centre has no dedicated special care facilities. Accessibility is difficult for people with mobility problems and corridors and doorways preclude wheel-chair users.
11. Audnam is situated only a quarter of a mile away from the larger Amblecote Centre.
12. Audnam also has the largest percentage of people attending activities in the community. Of 70 places, daily attendances at the centre building are shown in the table below.

	<b>Full day attendance</b>
Monday	19
Tuesday	16
Wednesday	27
Thursday	13
Friday	38

13. Most of the people who attend Audnam have been going to the centre for several years, some in excess of 30 years. There is a parents/carers group, known as the Watch Committee, who raise money for the centre. Community activities from Audnam are facilitated by the use of two minibuses purchased by the Committee

14. Meetings with parents and carers took place in April to brief them on options for the future of the centre. Parents understand the problems with keeping the centre open.
15. A Directorate working group, involving parents/carers, has been considering the re-provision of Audnam Centre.
16. Building on the discussions in the working group, two different options have been developed:

**Change of use to a resource centre for Learning Disability comprising four different elements of service**

A Café to be run as a social business by service users

17. The existing kitchen & dining area would be developed to provide a café open to the public. The café would also be a meeting place for people with learning disability in order to maintain friendships

Information Centre

18. A 'one stop shop' for people with a learning disability, providing accessible information, advice and sign-posting to services together with a library.
19. Regular surgeries would be by key agencies. The Information Centre would include a meeting room for support groups

Communication Service

20. Linked to the Information Centre, there would be another social business providing a 'translation' service – documents, leaflets etc translated into a range of accessible formats. This enterprise would be supported by NHS Communication Therapists and would provide 'expert' advice to organisations on meeting the information needs of people with learning disability.

An office base for the PULSE team

21. These four schemes could be accommodated within the existing Audnam building which is located on the main Stourbridge to Wolverhampton road, with easy access to public transport, making it ideally placed for drop-in type purposes.
22. The number and type of staff required for a Resource Centre would depend on the facilities being offered, but it could be that local authority staff would work in tandem with staff from other organisations, thus reducing the numbers of directly employed staff required.

**Closure of the Audnam building and re-provision of the service elsewhere.**

23. As shown in table 2 above, most service users now receive their day activities away from the centre. If the centre were closed, we estimate that approximately 18 service users would require an alternative service in another centre.

24. Each of these service users would need to be reviewed and a new care plan agreed with them and their carers. They would then be carefully introduced to a new centre. This process could take about twelve months, based on our recent experience with the closure of the Employment Preparation Unit. The length of time which some service users have spent at Audnam will mean a significant adjustment which will be managed with care.
25. A commitment will be given that no one's existing service will be withdrawn or reduced except by agreement with them.
26. Dudley has recently joined the 'In Control' pilot run by the Valuing People Support Team at the Department of Health. In Control offers people with disabilities the opportunity to take more control of their lives and arrange the support that they want. Support can be arranged by people buying existing services or using the available funds more creatively, for example, to employ their own staff. By unlocking the funds tied up in Audnam, some of this money could be used as 'individual budgets' for some of the service users to buy their own service. Our staff or independent advocates would help them to access support services of their choice. This initiative would be very much in line with the thinking in the Adult Services Green Paper – Independence, Well-being and Choice.
27. The 'social day' on Fridays would continue, but at a different venue and in a new format, with smaller groups of friends meeting up to maintain contact.
28. The community activities for Audnam service users would be co-ordinated from a different centre. Alternative transport arrangements can be made for service users to attend at different venues.

### **Summary**

29. The four day centres are under-utilised as a result of the successful growth of community activities. Audnam is the centre, which most lends itself to re-provision for the reasons given in paragraphs 9 to 12 above.
30. The Council has to consider whether to re-provide the centre as a new service or to close it altogether. Change of use would be more acceptable to parents/carers and to service users. There could be an exciting opportunity to develop the centre as a new resource for people with a learning disability.
31. The development of an information centre would meet the information needs of carers and service users. The opportunity to develop two new social businesses would help to achieve the Valuing People targets relating to improving the employment of people with a learning disability, an area where Dudley is currently below target.
32. The main problem with re-provision as a new service is the issue of affordability. The Council is unlikely to be able to secure the funding necessary to refurbish the building to make it fit for purpose.
33. In contrast, closure of the centre would also provide opportunities to use the capital and revenue savings to enhance the service provided in the community and in other

centres and to achieve better value for money in line with the new Learning Disability Strategy.

## **Finance**

### **Estimated cost of refurbishment**

34. A report was commissioned from Dudley Property Consultancy in February 2005. The report identified the specific costs of re-furbishment as follows:

Hall & Dining Room windows	£15000
Flat Roof & Facia	£40000
Upgrade electrical system	£75000
Replace heating system	£80000
General redecoration	£16000

Total **£226,000**

35. Some alterations would also be required to make the building DDA compliant

Front entrance & counter	£10000
Increase width of some doors and fire exits	£12000

36. In general, complete refurbishment of the building was estimated to cost between £300,000 - £400,000 plus fees at 8%.
37. The capital monies required to carry out refurbishment could only be found through external or complementary funding sources. These funding sources are uncertain and it is not realistic to assume that the refurbishment could be funded in this way.

### **Closure**

38. No redundancies are anticipated as the staff could be redeployed to posts in other centres. Some of the posts on the Audnam establishment will have to be retained in the short-term to help clients with the transition to a new placement.
39. The market value of the site is approximately £300,000. This is based on the assumption that planning consent could be achieved for residential development, which is not certain in this case, because of possible problems with access from the busy A491. If the building was sold for commercial/office use, the valuation would only be circa £200,000.
40. It is proposed that part of the capital receipt from the sale of the site should be re-directed to improve the fabric and facilities in other centres. This could include setting up an information centre and communication service in one of the other centres.
41. Audnam also owns a semi-detached house in Brockmoor, known as 'Midway', which is used as a satellite base for community activities. This property, which is valued at £95K, could also be sold to maximise the efficiency gains from the closure of the centre. Alternatively, it could be used as a base to develop independent living skills, to

enable more people to live in the community, thus reducing reliance on residential care.

### **Law**

42. The provision of day centres is permitted by legislation such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Council may do anything incidental thereto under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Equality Impact**

43. The content of this report is consistent with the Equal Opportunities policy of the Council.

### **Recommendations**

44. Audnam Centre is closed by the end of 2006.
45. Alternative services are provided for all clients who attend the centre and require a buildings-based or community service.
46. The Directorate explore the possibility of enabling some clients to purchase their own service with funds released from the closure, through the In Control pilot.
47. The capital receipt from the disposal of Audnam will be used to improve facilities in the other three centres.



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Linda Sanders  
Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Contact Officer : Richard Carter  
Assistant Director, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health  
Telephone: 01384 815820  
Email: [Richard.carter@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.carter@dudley.gov.uk)

### **List of Background Papers**