

**Evaluation of the engagement and consultation work programme on the future of Hafod y Gest Residential Home between July 2010 and January 2012**

## **Introduction**

Following the period of consultation on the future of the Hafod y Gest home, the Council Board resolved, in December 2011, that Gwynedd Council should return to hold thorough discussions with the community in order to identify and develop a provision which meets the community's requirements and aspirations.

In light of this, the Gwynedd Older People Services Transformation Project Board decided to evaluate the engagement and consultation work programme on the future of Hafod y Gest by asking those who participated, or who were affected by the programme, to identify:

- what worked well
- what did not work as well
- what lessons from the experience could be learnt for the future

This document therefore summarises the main messages of the evaluation and identifies what worked well, what did not work as well and the matters to be considered for the future.

Should you wish to receive further information or comment on the document, individuals are asked to contact Emma Davies. In the meantime, Gwynedd Council wishes to thank everyone who participated in the evaluation and we hope that the messages will be considered and incorporated in other projects in the future.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **What went well**

1. Joint working in the past to obtain input from stakeholders to developments in the Porthmadog catchment.
2. The appreciation of the staff of the home of the support received from the Engagement Manager and other managers in coordinating and gathering their observations on the consultation and in forming a response on their behalf.
3. The support for the residents and families of Hafod y Gest from the home's committed and professional staff, who were in a period of uncertainty themselves.
4. The opportunity to meet with the Corporate Director to seek clarity and to discuss some contentious issues.
5. Families in particular liked the fact that there was a strong procedure in place in relation to correspondence and arranging update meetings.

### **What did not go as well**

1. Stakeholders in general were of the opinion that the consultation had not been open or fair, neither had it succeeded in meeting its aims and objectives and had impacted negatively on many.
2. Not all stakeholders were identified until late in the process.
3. Stakeholders were not convinced that there was clear justification for the reasons of the consultation and they did not clearly reflect the real situation in the community.
4. Not prepared to accept input from stakeholders in the period in question to develop possible options – need to encourage the Council to be more inclusive when discussing developments.
5. The process did not give stakeholders the confidence that they were being given a real opportunity to express their views and to discuss new ideas and options for the type of care provision needed.
6. A number expressed their opinion that the options had been forced upon them, and that there was insufficient time to express their opinions on accommodation and care needs.
7. The users and families of the home noted that it was not clear as to whom the consultation was aimed at. It was explained that the consultation options were much too limited and that they were more suited to future users rather than the needs and the current situation of the existing residents and families of the home.
8. There was an unanimous opinion that there had been massive defects and gaps in the communication procedure during the consultation process, such as not communicating information soon enough, inconsistent messages and the presentation method was debatable. Observations were expressed regarding the standard of the language and terminology used, which was complex and unclear.
9. As a result of the lack of information, a number of people misinterpreted the concept of Extra Care Housing and the type of care available and came up with their own conclusions and definitions.
10. There was an opinion that the lack of information on matters along with inconsistent messages being communicated led to stakeholders losing faith and confidence in the Council. As a result of the lack of information, a number of people misinterpreted the concept and came up with their own conclusions and definitions.

11. There is a need to find a better way of communicating with stakeholders rather than through letters, meetings were appreciated.
12. The open days were appreciated, but it was felt that they had been arranged too late in the process and that their timings were not convenient for all.
13. Individuals had appreciated the opportunity to voice their opinion in a questionnaire, however, they were of the opinion that these were closed questions and that they had been design to guide them towards the desired outcome.
14. There is a need to strengthen arrangements for responding to enquiries in a timely fashion on matters requiring clarity or requests for information and support.
15. Need a mechanism for correcting misleading observations made at public meetings.
16. Important to see Senior Managers during periods of consultation and that they are present at such events and meetings.

### **Matters to be considered in the future**

1. Establish a comprehensive communication scheme, based on good practice, identifying all stakeholders and the relevant communication method for them, ensuring that the communication approach uses simple and clear language throughout the process and prior to its commencement.
2. Invest time and resources to strengthen engagement and consultation processes, ensuring timely input from stakeholders to develop services, options, information packs and plans.
3. Need to consider including a definition of terms at the beginning of a consultation in order to avoid problems that occurred due to confusion regarding language and terminology.
4. During a period of consultation or decommissioning of a service, there is a need to consider training or introduce guidelines for staff, practitioners, families and officers that will outline:
  - a. The procedure for referring new cases to the Home
  - b. What support is available
  - c. The role and responsibilities of individuals during the period.
  - d. The role and responsibilities of the advocacy service.
  - e. Support for staff in terms of mechanisms for coping with change and stress management.
5. Ensure that social workers are available to visit users regularly in order to have individual discussions regarding their needs and concerns.
6. Alleviate the concerns of service users and their families by assessing their care and accommodation needs and forming possible options before the commencement of a period of consultation.
7. Before service users decide to move to a Council Residential home, there is a need to consider explaining the situation and the future of the provision to them.
8. Secure project arrangements that facilitate and support Gwynedd Council projects.