

East Sussex funding gap

**Learning disability directly provided services**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) from parents & carers**

Table of contents

[The need to make savings and suggestions for alternatives 2](#_Toc182490031)

[Alternative services and how the change would be managed 4](#_Toc182490032)

[The impact on staff and staffing levels 7](#_Toc182490033)

[Facilities and the buildings 8](#_Toc182490034)

[Transport to alternative services 9](#_Toc182490035)

# The need to make savings and suggestions for alternatives

## How much will the closure of each service give the Council to fill the gap in budget?

To determine the potential savings, we took the overall gross budget for a service and subtracted the costs of closing the service, such as redundancies and pension costs, and the cost of people attending alternative services.

This gave us estimated savings proposals of:

* Community Support Service: £286,000
* Linden Court: £200,000
* Steps to Work: £194,000
* Hookstead: £124,000

To read the full Cabinet report please visit: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council)

## Who asked you to identify savings and how did you come to these proposals?

All departments have been required to identify savings to contribute. Adult Social Care and Health is the largest spending department and is expected to identify savings proportionate to its size. All services within Directly Provided Services were considered when considering options for savings. The decision to put forward the current proposals was based on the potential savings they offer and our ability to provide people with alternative services run by either the Council or the independent sector.

## Why is it always disabled people and those without a voice who are affected by savings?

We know it can feel this way, but all Council departments are being asked to make savings. The Adult Social Care proposals are being publicly consulted on and have therefore been more widely reported. Information about other savings proposals will be going to the Council’s Cabinet in November.

## Which services are protected from having to make savings?

The priority funding areas are the community care budget, carers services, funding for the voluntary and community enterprise sector (VCSE), and funding for staff working in frontline roles and supporting the care market. You can find more information about these priority funding areas in the consultation summaries.

## You will make a saving in the short term by closing day services, but won’t it cost more in the long term?

We are aware that the current proposals address a short-term need and that there could be a long-term impact that leads to greater costs. As local authorities have to set a balanced budget, we have been forced to consider making some difficult decisions.

## How will the proposals save money if more people end up moving out of home and going into residential care?

If the proposal to close the day services is agreed, we would work with people to find a suitable alternative to meet their assessed care need. It is possible that some people’s needs might mean that a residential or support living place was needed. We acknowledge that this would be more expensive than a day service.

## Why aren’t people paying their client contributions?

There will be a range of reasons that some people don’t pay their financial contribution. However, it does cause significant pressure on the Adult Social Care budget. We do have a project looking at how we manage debt, but the financial pressures we face mean we need to identify savings for next year.

## Would it be more of a saving to close St Nicholas instead of Hookstead and have you done the cost analysis of this?

St Nicholas is larger than Hookstead and would be able to offer everyone from Hookstead a place in its day service. In contrast, Hookstead is not large enough to allow us to offer a place to everyone at St Nicholas. Therefore, the amount we would save by closing St Nicholas would be lower.

## Would it be more of a saving to close Beeching Park instead of Linden Court and have you done the cost analysis of this?

The rationale for retaining Beeching Park is based on its location. If we only have enough budget to run two day services in East Sussex then having one in the east and one in the west of the county are the best locations to ensure we are meeting the needs of people across the county.

## There would be less services in the north of the county and all of the services would be on the coastal strip. Where is the vision for Crowborough?

The proposals that have been put forward are in response to the challenging budget position we face at the Council. If the proposal went ahead, the Council-run day service in the west of the county would be in Lewes, but there are independent providers in other parts of the county.

## Could people attend for less days and there still be a saving? Has this been explored?

This will be considered as part of the consultation process.

## If neither service is at full capacity, why not try to increase capacity in each service as this will bring in income?

As the savings we are proposing mainly relate to staff costs this wouldn’t help us close the funding gap and would mean increasing staff numbers, which we do not have funds for.

## If you pay for other services, will it cost more and if so, where are the savings?

Placements in the independent sector don’t necessarily cost more than those services we run ourselves at the Council.

## Are you buying services from other local authorities or supporting the independent or private sector to develop their services?

If alternative providers are used it is most likely these would be from the independent sector. These placements would be funded through the community care budget.

## What other providers offer Supported Employment services?

There are a variety of supported employment providers across the county and Care Managers would discuss these during an individual’s review of their needs.

## If these proposals aren’t agreed, have you looked at other proposals to save money?

We have considered all our services in developing the current proposals. If any of the proposals don't get agreed, we expect that alternative savings would have to be identified.

## Will there be an Equality Impact Assessment and will it include the impact on carers?

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is in progress for each proposal and includes consideration of the impact on carers. The EqIAs will be available to Councillors to aid their decision making.

## Have you done an Environmental Impact Assessment?

An ‘environmental impact assessment’ (EIA) is generally required where a local planning authority is deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project that is likely to have significant effects on the environment. A formal EIA has therefore not been completed as part of these proposals. However, feedback on potential environmental impacts can be shared with us through the consultation process.

## Is it a forgone conclusion? Has the decision already been made?

No decision has been made on savings yet. We are gathering people’s views through the consultation, including at consultation meetings and through the online surveys. All your views will be shared with elected councillors, and they will make a decision on the future of our services in February 2025.

## What guarantees do we have there won’t be more cuts in a few years?

Unfortunately, given the uncertain financial future we face it is not possible to make any guarantees about the future of services.

# Alternative services and how the change would be managed

## Would people be guaranteed a place in the alternative Council-run service?

If the proposals are agreed people will have a review of their care and support needs. We will ensure that these needs are met either with a Council run service or an alternative option in the independent sector.

## The proposed new session times aren’t suitable for working carers. Why have they changed?

We are proposing that session times return to those similar to the ones we used pre-pandemic, although we are planning to retain the twilight session which have more of a social theme. What this gives is more flexibility for people to arrive for their session on time as this has been routinely problematic for many people and their carers. It also provides a longer lunch break where people can eat with less pressure to finish on time for the start of the afternoon session. If the change went ahead, then care staff would be on duty from 8.30am as they currently are. Therefore, people could arrive from 8.30am onwards and spend time with friends before sessions start.

## How many people would move to the alternative Council-run service?

If the proposals are agreed, we will know how many people are transferring to the alternative service once the reviews of people’s needs are concluded. We know that we can offer everyone from Hookstead the same level of service at St Nicholas and we know that we can offer everyone from Linden Court the same level of service at Beeching Park.

## Can we visit the alternative Council-run day services?

Service managers are in the process of arranging visits to alternative services for parents and carers. More information will be shared about this as soon as it’s ready.

## If someone moves to another service, would they have to pay the full cost?

What people pay is based their financial assessment and agreed client contribution, as is currently the case.

## When undertaking an assessment of the person using the service and or carer, how would you decide who has the prioritised need?

Care Management would undertake a review of care and support needs. There isn’t a prioritisation of needs between the person and their carer or between adults accessing services.

## How realistic is it to assess 200 people in six weeks if the new arrangements are expected to be in place from April?

We recognise that the timescale to implement these changes is challenging. We would work with Care Management to complete the reviews and transition to new services as quickly as we can, without compromising on the quality of the work we undertake.

## Can you assure us that there are alternative services out there to support people?

There are alternative service providers in the independent sector. Care Management would work with people to identify the right option for them.

## What do you mean when you say that support needs would be met by independent providers if the proposal goes ahead?

Support needs would be met either by a personal assistant or an independent provider who offers support in the community.

## Would you find an alternative service for people or do they have to find them?

Any alternative service provision would be discussed with you and identified as part of the review process. Care Management and our brokerage team would help you to identify alternative services.

## How would you make sure that any new service is effective and doing what it should?

Through regular reviews with Care Management and feedback from the person getting the service. That could include an emergency review if the service wasn’t working.

## How would you help people transition to a new service?

Our staff are very skilled and know people who use our services well. Once we know who would be attending our alternative services or independent sector providers we would work with people and their parent/carers to plan their transition.

## Can people increase their sessions in a day service to five days now that the services will be open all week?

Our priority is to make sure everyone gets the same level of service they currently have. Once everyone has settled, we can see if there is space for people to increase their sessions. If there is thought to be a need for an increase in service, this can be discussed and assessed by a care manager or discussed during the annual review.

## By increasing capacity in the service to 5 days a week, does this mean that we will be ‘bidding’ for AM & PM sessions?

We need to ensure the service sessions are maximized across the week. By sharing out AM, PM & Twilight sessions over 5 days we can provide everyone with the same level of service that they currently get. This likely means that session times and days would change from what currently happens. People attending a day service, and their parent/carers, would tell us their preference and the service would plan and negotiate to meet everyone's wishes as far as is possible.

## Can you confirm that the respite services at Grangemead & Greenwood are unaffected?

Yes, they are not affected by these proposals.

## Where would school and college leavers go in future if the day services close?

The nature of special schools is that they have a broad catchment area. School leavers would be supported in the way they are now, but there would be fewer options for them in East Sussex.

## How will people integrate into their local community if you are offering a day service that isn’t local?

Our day services provide support to adults from a wide geographical area, so they aren’t necessarily supporting people to integrate into their own community at the moment. We do acknowledge that reducing the number and location of day services will make that part of the work less likely.

## How will the reduction in community sessions work for people who prefer to be out and about?

Community sessions are more staff intensive. We therefore need to consider how we run these in future and make the best use of our staff resources. We are still planning to have a community offer as part of the new timetable, but it may not be possible to have the same number as we do now.

## What lessons have been learned from previous mergers of day services?

The lessons that managers have learned from previous mergers are:

* It will be a busy time for people who are affected, their parents and carers, and staff and it would take time to adjust.
* The good relationships that managers and their teams have with people who use the services, and their parents and carers, helps with merging services.
* Maintaining good communications between the services and people using them, and their parents and carers is pivotal and means that if there are teething problems we can work through these together.
* Patience and flexibility from all involved is key, as however much planning is done it is likely that unforeseeable issues will arise.
* How skilled our teams are in meeting people’s needs during periods of change that how hard everyone works to help people adjust.
* People will gradually settle into a new routine and make new friends. Once people have adjusted, they typically enjoy their new service and parents/carers grow to value the new service.

# The impact on staff and staffing levels

## What happens to the staff?

We will be meeting separately with colleagues affected by the proposals for a staff consultation. We are holding several staff vacancies across Learning Disability Services, and we will discuss this individually with colleagues. We are committed to retaining as many staff are we can, and some may transfer to one of our other day services if this works for them.

## Would staff transfer to the alternative Council-run services from the current services?

If the proposal went ahead, we anticipate some staff would transfer over to one of our other day services. This will be discussed with individual team members during the staff consultations about the proposals.

## Is the saving mainly on staff wages?

The majority of the budgets for services is spent on salaries, so the savings would mostly be made there. There could also be further savings through different uses, or disposal, of buildings.

## If you are proposing to move people to another day service, they will need the same level of staffing, so how would you make a saving?

People’s support needs will still be met, but less staff would be needed to run one day service compared to the number needed to run two services.

# Facilities and the buildings

## Can you tell us the size of each day service as a comparison?

This information is based on metres squared (m2):

* Hookstead day service - 411 m2
* St Nicholas day service - 660 m2
* Linden Court day service - 1006 m2
* Beeching Park day service - 893 m2 and Working Wonders - 439 m2 (the combined size of the two services which use the Beeching Park building is 1332 m2)

## What is the legal capacity for the day service buildings?

We have a Health and Safety Management System and workplace policy which set out guidance on how to manage building and room occupancy, and the number of water closets and wash stations that are required. These proposals reflect the standards we are required to meet.

## Are there enough toilet facilities in the day services for more people?

We know that St Nicholas would need another bathroom for wheelchair users. There are sufficient toilets within the two day services we are proposing to keep open to accommodate the additional people.

## What would happen to the empty day service buildings?

Once we in Adult Social Care no longer need a building, we hand it back to the property team at the Council. They would then make a decision about whether the building is surplus to requirements or whether it could be used by others.

## As there are less people attending Linden Court, could you use less of the building and rent out some space, or find a smaller local building to use instead?

Rental income for buildings such as this is low and wouldn’t achieve the cost savings required. There aren’t many smaller buildings that the Council own that would be suitable and any adaptations needed to a replacement building would come at a cost, which we cannot afford to fund.

## Why did you spend lots of money on Hookstead five years ago if you’re now going to close it?

At that time, we didn’t face the funding challenges that we do now. The other services using the building will be continuing and if the day service does close, we would look to find alternative uses for that part of the building.

## Could Bellbrook be used for a day service instead?

Bellbrook is currently used for office space and part of the building is leased to independent sector providers. Moving day services to Bellbrook wouldn’t achieve the savings that we have identified could be achieved if the service at Hookstead closed.

## Has Southview Close been sold?

Southview Close was sold by East Sussex County Council on 9 August 2023 and as such is not part of the existing property portfolio.

## Does the money from the sale of a building adult social care is using go to the department? If not, why?

East Sussex County Council seeks to maximise the value of any sale proceeds from the disposal of a property. All county property is a corporately owned resource, even though occupied by a specific service. When property assets become surplus and are no longer required for the day-to-day provision of service, a number of options need to be considered such as:

* Effective and efficient management for their re-use within the Council.
* A relevant use by the Community.
* A disposal to help facilitate the capital programme’s aims whilst minimising any ongoing maintenance and revenue implications.

# Transport to alternative services

## With longer journeys meaning there would be additional transport costs, how are you making a saving?

The likely additional costs for transport have been factored in to the savings proposals. Although, we wouldn’t know the precise costs until we know which alternative services people were attending and what that meant for their journey.

## How would people travel to their new service, how long would it take and what happens if the new journey isn’t suitable for them?

All these questions would be discussed as part of the review process with the Care Management team and reflected in their support plan. We don’t intend to put people in an unsafe situation and would work with them to agree what is best for them.

## Are there enough taxi companies to take on the extra journeys that would be required?

Yes, we believe so.