



Inverclyde Branch

e-mail: unison@inverclyde.gov.uk

Old East Branch Library

30 Bawhirley Road

Greenock

Inverclyde

PA15 2BH

Tel: 01475 715900

www.unisoninverclyde.org.uk

www.facebook.com/unisoninverclyde

www.twitter.com/unisoninver

26th April 2019

Alice Harper
Chief Executive
Quarriers
Quarriers Village
Bridge of Weir
Renfrewshire
PA11 3SX

Dear Alice

Consultation on the closure of three Adult Residential Care Homes

I am taking the opportunity to present UNISON's position regarding the proposal to close three adult residential care homes within Quarriers Village. This is UNISON's contribution to the consultation process and I trust you will give due consideration to the various points set out below.

Background

UNISON were advised on the 26th March that, following a meeting of the Quarriers Board of Trustees the previous evening, the board were proposing to close three residential care homes in the upper part of Quarriers village. The three establishments affected were Davidson house, Kelly house and Parklands. Quarriers provide residential care services within a total of seven homes within the village. The other four homes were not affected by this proposal. On the same day we received a copy of the HR1 form and notification of the commencement of discussions around a collective consultation under the TULcRA regulations. The consultation period would run until the 27th April at which point, we were advised, a final decision would be taken on whether or not to proceed with the proposed closures. There are 58 staff employed across the three services.

Context

The three adult residential care homes which Quarriers are proposing to close are Davidson house, Kelly house and Parklands. There are four other residential homes run by Quarriers in Quarriers village and these are not affected by this proposal. These are Ashgrove, Fountainview, Glen Valley and Merrybrook.

In setting out the reasons for this decision, Quarriers' senior management team (SMT) state that market dynamics have played a significant contributory part. Specifically that local authority procurement is moving away from residential care in favour of supported living. In relation to the three affected services UNISON has been told that all three have made significant losses which have contributed negatively to the organisations' budgets over the past four years. It is not clear from the information provided what the figures are but it appears that the deficit for 2018/19 was approximately £300,000. It has been suggested that this is due to several factors:

- High staff turnover and sickness absence has resulted in high usage of agency staff. Agency staff usage in these three services is 20% higher than it is within adult services across the organisation.
- Two of the three services have been unable to fill the number of registered beds over the last four years.
- Staffing levels within these care homes cannot be reduced even in circumstances where there is reduced occupancy.

Quarriers' position is that in order for these services to become financially viable it would require funding of £640,000 on a recurring basis and additional capital funding of £345,000 to upgrade the three buildings. In addition the funding model would need to change whereby beds would be purchased on the basis of block funding and not the existing model of spot funding. Quarriers have stated that they are not in a position to make any contribution to the required additional funding. This means that the local authorities who currently commission these services would need to jointly provide both the additional revenue and capital funding. There are seven local authorities who currently provide spot funding. Inverclyde Council is the largest commissioner, spot funding seven of the existing twenty funded beds.

None of the three services have full occupancy. Kelly House has one void, Davidson house has three voids and Parklands has three voids. Parklands also provide a single bed for respite when there is a void.

UNISON Comments

There is no dispute that adult residential homes in general and these three homes in particular present significant financial challenges to those who provide these services. Spot funding as a model presents significant financial risks. It is not known to UNISON how or when these arrangements came into place within Quarriers village.

However we are concerned that we were only made aware that these services were in financial difficulty a few weeks ago at the beginning of the statutory consultation period. Especially as we are now being told that these financial difficulties have existed for, to varying degrees, four years. We also understand that the local authorities were also only told this at the same time. It must have

been obvious to Quarriers that the scale of the investment required to address this was significant. That sourcing a financial solution within a 30 day consultation period would be near impossible. There are seven local authorities who required to be consulted with (in fact at the beginning of the consultation period there were eight local authorities but sadly one person being supported has since passed away). In terms of leading the process of bringing local authorities on board, this fell to Inverclyde. We presume this is because Inverclyde is the largest single funder and/or because the services affected fall within Inverclyde Council's boundaries. In any event as lead authority Inverclyde Council were tasked with consulting with the other six councils in an effort to agree to the additional investment. Again this would have been extremely difficult to achieve given the timescale constraints.

In essence the Quarriers financial solution was that seven local authorities would have to collectively invest £640,000 towards the running costs of the three services. In addition they would also need to collectively invest £345,000 of their capital budgets in order to upgrade buildings which they do not own. Furthermore Quarriers also stated that the funding model would require to shift from spot funding to block funding. Inverclyde, as the largest council, would then be expected undertake the role of guarantor. This would involve underwriting £1.9m (£1.25m current costs and £640,000 of new costs). It seems unlikely that any of the seven councils, not least Inverclyde which is one of the smallest, would agree to take on this scale of liabilities.

It is clear to us that earlier engagement with UNISON and local authorities may have been much more productive. Especially as councils had already set their budgets in February and March. Of course there is no way of knowing whether earlier engagement would have produced a favourable outcome but it would at least have given all parties involved a foundation to work with.

UNISON Proposal

UNISON believe that these services have a future and with the right strategy and commitment are absolutely salvageable. There are a number of factors which inform this view. Firstly, there are currently twenty people being supported across these three services which collectively have a capacity of twenty seven places. Secondly, the issues around financial performance vary from service to service. Parklands for instance was in a surplus position as recently as 2017 and have existing levels of deficit which are much smaller than the other two services. Thirdly, no-one associated with these services wants to see them close. UNISON would therefore propose the development of a six point strategy which aims to deliver an achievable way forward.

- 1) Whilst our absolute preferred position would be to see all three services remain open, we recognise that there is a pragmatic basis for a compromised position. In choosing to put forward a compromised position we take the view that protecting some of the service is fundamentally better than all of the services closing.
- 2) A compromised position would be to retain two of the homes. This would mean the vast majority of people supported in these services would not have to be re-housed. Some of those who would have to be re-housed would remain in the upper part of the village rather than be moved to another area in the village or out with the village completely.
- 3) A compromised position would equally mean the majority of staff not having to be redeployed. Critically this would allow staff to continue to support these vulnerable people. Strong bonds and relationships between staff and people they support have developed over a

long number of years. One of the most damaging aspects of these proposed closures would be this potential disconnection.

- 4) This plan would require meaningful and constructive engagement with all local authorities who commission these services. This would be done over a proper period of time and these discussions and negotiations should be facilitated by Quarriers in a mutually agreed forum. A key part of this engagement would be to examine the funding model and seek ways to make the funding arrangements more robust and durable. Whether that would be through a process of full or even partial block funding would be one of the key matters on this forum's agenda. The additional investment would also significantly reduce.
- 5) Quarriers and UNISON would work in partnership to develop a strategy for reducing agency costs. Both parties recognise that excessive use of agency staff is not cost effective. It is also not preferable from a care management perspective either.
- 6) A plan to raise funds to invest in the upgrade of the two buildings would be developed. This could include fundraising and/or other marketing initiatives. This could be done over a period of time as the building upgrades are not critical to the continued day to day operation of the services.

UNISON understand that a rescue strategy requires significant effort as well as a commitment from all concerned parties. If Quarriers were agreeable to this plan then we would do all we can to encourage local authorities to play an active part in the formulation of this solution. We would do this directly and by using our network of branches across Scotland.

Conclusion

As part of your mission and values Quarriers attest to being a charity with a long track record and inspiring history. A charity that offers families resilience to deal with the challenges that life brings. Quarriers say that they transform lives. There is no doubt that these are very challenging times. Withdrawing in times of difficulty does seem incongruous with Quarriers' values and ideologies. This is why UNISON is seeking a positive outcome to the consultation period. This can only be achieved if Quarries undertake to continue to provide these important services.

Yours Sincerely

Robin Taggart

Robin Taggart
Branch Secretary