

<b>Title of policy / procedure / function / project / decision:</b>	Learning Disability Day Services in Northwich and Winsford – Firdale
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### **Evidence based equality analysis**

*Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:*

#### **Overview**

Following a comprehensive review of learning disability day services and extensive co-production and co-design work with people with learning disabilities, the Council is moving towards a more flexible, community-based model of support. This means helping individuals achieve their personal goals and take part in activities that matter most to them within their local communities.

We've already started piloting an Enablement Service in Northwich and Winsford. This innovative approach helps people build skills, confidence, and independence - opening doors to new experiences beyond traditional building-based services.

This transformation is progressing well, and we are now at a point where we can consolidate our building-based offer across Northwich and Winsford. This means we can now plan the full closure of Firdale Day Centre in Northwich from April 2026. This will see Meadowbank Lodge Winsford become our specialist building based day service offer for people with complex needs across the Northwich / Winsford area.

This change reflects our commitment to empowering people and creating services that truly meet their needs and aspirations and ensuring we have a high-quality specialist service for those who need it. During this transition period our priority will be to support both our staff and the people who currently use Firdale Day Centre.

The decision to sell Firdale is expected to be made by officers in early 2026, with the sale completed and the site vacated by June 2026.

An equality analysis has been undertaken to ensure that any adverse impacts on people based on their protected characteristics are removed or mitigated as far as practicable.

## **Background**

In recent years, the Council has engaged in extensive co-production work to review and reshape Day Services for people with learning disabilities, as part of the Day Opportunities Review.

Feedback consistently shows that people want greater choice and control over their support and accommodation. They wish to develop new skills, connect with friends and family, and participate in community life beyond the traditional day service model—during evenings, weekends, and in more flexible ways.

A co-designed set of principles now guides service delivery, forming the basis of recommendations being implemented through the Learning Disability Provider Services Major Programme.

This new approach marks a shift away from traditional, building-based services. Consequently, fewer day centre locations will be needed across Northwich and Winsford, with a consolidated offer for those with complex needs centred at Meadowbank Lodge, a large, fully accessible facility with sensory rooms, specialist equipment, changing places and easy access to local facilities.

## **What's Happening**

Our priority will be to support both our staff and the people who currently use Firdale Day Centre.

- **Day Service Users:** Every individual currently using Firdale services is being fully supported through personalised reviews and transition plans. Our teams are working closely with families to ensure continuity of care and positive outcomes.
- **Staff:** We deeply value the dedication and expertise of our colleagues at Firdale. We are supporting staff every step of the way, helping them explore new opportunities within the wider Adult Social Care teams and offering guidance and wellbeing resources throughout the process.

We will support some people to move to Meadowbank Lodge, our in-house specialist day centre for providing complex needs care for people who need a building-based service. It offers specialist equipment, sensory rooms, changing places facilities, and is fully accessible. Located in Winsford town centre, Meadowbank Lodge has the capacity to support everyone who needs this offer across Northwich and Winsford. In contrast, Firdale lacks this specialist provision, is much smaller, and is not ideally located for public transport or easy access by foot or wheelchair, nor for accessing Northwich town centre.

There will also be a positive use for the vacated Firdale building and a positive future for the community. A partner organisation is keen to purchase the building to deliver enhanced health and community services for local residents. This means the Firdale site will continue to serve the community - creating exciting opportunities for integrated care and improved local health support, whilst also generating a capital receipt for the council.

The Council is looking to progress with vacating Firdale Day Centre in Spring 2026 to facilitate the sale by June 2026.

We remain committed to co-producing our services with the people we support and their families. Their insights will be central to shaping a more personalised, community-focused model that reflects individual aspirations.

### **Next Steps**

From January 2026 we will begin to engage with stakeholders regarding the sale and closure of Firdale. This will involve individuals accessing services, their families and carers, staff and wider stakeholders. At that point the Social Work teams will carry out a series of further assessments to facilitate the new ways of working co-produced as part of the Day Opportunities review.

A dedicated programme subgroup is responsible for coordinating and progressing the sale and vacating of the building. Current analysis shows that many individuals who attend Firdale already access alternative locations in the area. Plans will be in place for all individuals to continue receiving services, ensuring they are able to achieve the best outcomes and promote independence. This may be through existing Vivo services in the local area or via alternative community-based provision.

The recommended changes align to the following priorities of the Council:

- **Resilient people living their best lives:** Local people are enabled to flourish, be healthy, happy and independent for longer in supportive communities.
- **Opportunity in a fair local economy:** Local people and businesses contribute to and benefit from a strong and fair local economy.

Lead officer: **Alistair Jeffs**

Stakeholders: CW&C ASC and Vivo staff, Individuals drawing on support, their carers and families, CW&C Members, Partners and Community Organisations, External Care Providers, Suppliers / Partners.

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a positive, negative or neutral impact, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a high, medium or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Target group / area			
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	Translation services are available and incorporated into care package arrangements		

(including Gypsies and Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers etc.)	for individuals that require the support.		
<p><b>Disability</b></p> <p>(as defined by the Equality Act - a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)</p>	Consideration of physical access requirements will be made as for all council buildings when there is public access.	The new approach to support should see a positive impact on individuals receiving LD Day Services Support as it aligns with the co-produced principles and strength-based support. Support will be tailored to meet the individuals needs based on the outcomes of their care review.	Medium – There will be changes to the long-term support arrangements for some individuals, with moves to different locations. Individuals with complex needs will continue to be supported in a building-based setting at Meadowbank Lodge. Transport arrangements and impacts on individuals will be considered and factored into the individual client reviews.
<b>Sex</b> (male or female)	The impact is neutral as the services are used by people of both sexes		
<b>Gender identity</b> (gender reassignment)	The impact is neutral as the service is used by people of all genders		

<b>Religion and belief</b> (including lack of belief)	Neutral impact for this area		
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and others)	Neutral impact for this area		
<b>Age</b> (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults 25 – 50, younger older people 51 – 75/80; older people 81+. Age bands are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs)	Support for people aged 18+ will continue	The impact is positive as the new approach to LD Day Services should ensure more personalised services that are more flexible to the needs of diverse groups – specifically for our more elderly service users’ alternative provision can be put in place that better	Medium – There will be changes to the long-term support arrangements for some individuals, with moves to different locations. Some individuals in the older people cohort will transfer to older peoples provision, Transport arrangements and impacts on individuals

		meets their needs and in a more suitable environment. This is response to the feedback received from individuals.	will be considered and factored into the individual client reviews.
<b>Care Experienced</b> (all young people and adults who have been in the care of Cheshire West and Chester Council - for a period of 13 weeks or more - from the age of 14 years. This includes those children/young people for whom the Council currently or have previously held corporate parenting responsibilities)	Neutral Impact - new approach to LD Day Services should ensure more personalised services that are more flexible to the needs of diverse groups		
<b>Carers</b> (people who care for others, informally or formally)			Medium - This project will cause some disruption for the carers of people using the current service. To help mitigate negative effects all carers of people using the service will be offered the opportunity to have their needs as a carer assessed or reviewed to ensure they

			have adequate support in their caring role
<b>Rural communities</b>	Neutral Impact - new approach to LD Day Services should ensure more personalised services that are more flexible to the needs of diverse groups		
<b>Areas of deprivation</b> (include any impact on people living in poverty who may not live in areas identified as deprived)	Neutral Impact - new approach to LD Day Services should ensure more personalised services that are more flexible to the needs of diverse group.		
<b>Human rights</b> (see guidance note for key areas to consider)	There are no negative or positive impacts upon individual Human Rights		
<b>Health and wellbeing and Health Inequalities</b> (consider the wider determinants of health such as education, housing,		The impact is positive as the new approach to LD Day Services should ensure more personalised	

<p>employment, environment, crime and transport, plus impacts on lifestyles and effects on health and care services)</p>		<p>services that are more flexible to the needs of diverse groups – the new approach will include a focus on enablement that will lead to increased opportunities, i.e. employment, independent travel.</p>	
<p><b>Procurement/partnership</b> (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)</p>		<p>LD Day Services are already provided by a mixture of in-house and external providers. Some people will see their ongoing support delivered by community or external provision. In addition we will see a diversification of service offers across the wider provider market as we move to the new LD Approach.</p>	

**Evidence (see guidance note for details of what to include here):**

The Council has engaged in extensive co-production work to review and reshape Day Services for people with learning disabilities, as part of the Day Opportunities Review.

Feedback consistently shows that people want greater choice and control over their support and accommodation. They wish to develop new skills, connect with friends and family, and participate in community life beyond the traditional day service model—during evenings, weekends, and in more flexible ways.

A co-designed set of principles now guides service delivery, forming the basis of recommendations being implemented through the Learning Disability Provider Services Major Programme.

**Action plan:**

<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outcomes required</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>	<b>Review date</b>
<p>Detailed communications plan for all Service Users, staff and Council Members, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member Brief to be issued and Ward Member briefing session</li> <li>• Letters to impacted cohorts of service users / carers / families – to be handed over in person wherever possible</li> <li>• Letters to staff</li> </ul>	High	<p>To manage the anxiety and expectations of those affected. To ensure Council Members are able to respond appropriately to members of the public</p>	Alistair Jeffs, Denise Whiteland	09 Jan 2026
Assessment of all affected service users to determine support plans	High	To ensure all support plans are up to date and include alternative provision as people	Leah Gilbert	28 Feb 2026

		move away from Firdale Day centre		
Scoping of alternative community services for the individuals affected	High	To ensure alternative community provision is in place where required, as part of wider redesign of LD Provider services	Michelle Taylor	31 Mar 2026

<b>Sign off</b>	
Lead officer:	
Approved by Tier 4 Manager:	<b>Alistair Jeffs</b>
<b>Moderation and/or Scrutiny</b>	
Date: 4 February 2026	Virtual moderation
<b>Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating</b> (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	