



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Graham Gibbens
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health
Kent County Council
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent E14 1XQ

HW/HW

1 December 2015

Dear Graham,

Consultation on closure of Dorothy Lucy Centre, Maidstone and Kiln Court, Faversham

Kent County Council is consulting on the potential closure of four care homes in Kent, including Dorothy Lucy Centre in Maidstone and Kiln Court in Faversham.

As MPs with constituents who use these valuable services, we are writing to express our serious concerns about the proposals.

We recognise that KCC is aiming to update care services to cope with the changing needs of the population, especially the growing number of people with dementia, and also faces significant financial pressures. You rightly want to use limited resources effectively, and we welcome your pledge to keep services local. We would also welcome the provision of more modern facilities such as Extra Care Housing and greater support for people in their own homes. However, we are not reassured by the alternatives offered in your consultation materials. The Dorothy Lucy Centre is a vibrant, well-used and loved facility, providing day care to people with substantial care needs, residential respite care and rehabilitation. We have been told that there is no alternative local provision of day care for people with this level of need, and that the closure of this service would likely mean many of the users would need to go into residential care. The rehabilitation care provides a vital step down facility for people leaving hospital, taking several patients most weeks from local hospitals.

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-2-

Similarly, Kiln Court offers valuable services to people from Faversham and the surrounding area, although without the day centre. Though Kiln Court is not so well utilised, there is the question of whether Kiln Court has been run down in recent months, and to the extent that it is not equipped or staffed to meet the increasing need for nursing care, there is an opportunity to upgrade it to do so. We are not convinced that third sector or private sector providers in the area are ready to offer these services in the event of closure. Although we are not against commissioning from private sector providers in principle, the consultation document does not provide reassurance that there is capacity, capability or enthusiasm among private sector providers to do so. The consultation also lacks any forecasts of future demand, and the means by which this will be met in the event of closure.

We therefore call on KCC to:

1. Fully explore the option of upgrading the two centres. As part of this work, we would urge KCC to consider partnership options, for instance, working together with the NHS (recognising there is a shortage of community beds in the area), with a third sector organisation, or with the private sector, as well as continuing with the current KCC-operated model.
2. Develop much more specific details of what alternative services would be provided in the event of closure, including where they will be provided, by whom, and at what scale, before returning to consult residents.
3. Make a firm commitment, in the event of a decision to close one or both care homes, that there will be no closure until satisfactory alternative provision is available in the local area. There should also be consultation with residents on the future use of the site(s).

Helen Grant MP
Member of Parliament for
Maidstone and the Weald

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for
Faversham and Mid Kent

Tracy Crouch MP
Member of Parliament for
Chatham and Aylesford