

PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF 50 SPA ROAD, MELKSHAM AS A DEDICATED SUPPORT CENTRE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

The 'Aspire' Centre

It is proposed that Children and Families Services develops a dedicated support/resource centre "Aspire" specifically and solely for the use of children in the care of Wiltshire Council.

Children and Families Services, has in its portfolio a 5 bedded detached property with an annexe at 50 Spa Road Melksham.

This property was purchased following Cabinet approval in June 2010. At that time there were 27 young people placed in residential children's home provision and there was a projected need to provide further residential places. However, the Children and Families "Change Agenda" has produced more robust case assessment, management planning and review. Improved gate keeping processes and development of a range of creative and innovative placement options have put the service in a far stronger position than could ever be anticipated last year.

Since the Cabinet report of June 2010, there have been significant improvements in the way services are developed and delivered and a positive outcome has been achieved which has reduced the need for a children's home.

The proposed change of use for the property enables Children and Families to now focus more robustly on improvement in two key areas:

- The increase in young people who are in or have been in the care system, to engage in education, employment or training and sustain a high level of engagement. This facility will also enable a higher proportion of Care Leavers to graduate from university due to the support programmes that will be put in place.
- The centre will facilitate support for children who are estranged from their families and for whom, without specific intervention, reunification will not be an option.

The centre will operate in 52 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday 8.00am up to 8.00pm, Saturday 9.00am to 3.00pm with only occasional Sunday opening for specific events. The centre will be managed by the Virtual School Headteacher, working in close partnership with the Head of Children in Care.

Programmes will range from one-to one support in literacy, numeracy and IT, to group activities such as homework club; life-skills workshops including cooking, budgeting and promoting healthy living; gardening; CV writing, performing and creative arts sessions, peer mentoring, and so on.

This is an exciting opportunity to improve the life chances of Wiltshire' children in care.