

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date of decision – 18 FEBRUARY 2026

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE USE OF VALE LODGE CHILDREN'S HOME

Key Decision: *Yes – Significant service and provision change*

Decision subject to Call-in: *Yes*

Relevant Cabinet Member

Cllr Justin Bowen – CMR for Children and Families

Relevant Chief Officer

Director of Children Services - Adam Johnston

Local Member(s)

Cllr Sam Bastow, Evesham Northwest

Cllr Michelle Hulme, Evesham South

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families is recommended to:**
 - a) Note the outcome of the consultation responses (Appendix 1) in relation to the future use of Vale Lodge, recommended by the previous Cabinet Member in a report dated 11 March 2025,**
 - b) Note the sufficiency duty to secure accommodation to meet the needs of Looked After Children; and**
 - c) Following the consultation responses referred to in recommendation 1), approve the continued use of Vale Lodge as a children's residential Children's Home; and**
 - d) Note that the change to the statement of purpose referred to in paragraph 16 will be notified to OFSTED before implementation.**

Background

- 2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families agreed on 11 March 2025 for the Council to commence a consultation on the future use of Vale Lodge. The consultation ran from 19 March to 30 April 2025.**

3. The Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 (the “sufficiency duty”) to make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for securing accommodation for looked after children, having regard to the need for ensuring the availability of homes of different descriptions suitable for different purposes and needs of children. Before making any decision with respect to a looked after child the Council shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child and parents.

4. If the Council is unable to make arrangements to place looked after children within family, it must make arrangements for what it considers the most appropriate placement available. As far as reasonably practicable this should be within county, near home, and not disrupt education/training, and be suitable for any disabilities. The Council has a general duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children within county and which meets their needs.

5. When considering a change to a Children’s Home, the registered provider, in this case the Local Authority, must take into account the Statutory Guidance from the Guide to Children’s Home Regulations (2015). Closing a children’s home requires careful planning and adherence to regulations to ensure the well-being of the children and compliance with legal requirements. Key aspects include providing sufficient notice, transferring case records, and ensuring suitable alternative placements. A structured approach, consultation with stakeholders, and clear communication are crucial throughout the process.

6. From 19 March 2025 for 6 weeks a structured period of consultation took place in order that key stakeholders including families, professionals and organisations could reflect and provide representation on their views of the future use of the Children’s Home. In accordance with the delegation of authority given by the Leader of the Council on 10 March 2025 to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, the CMR is able to approve changes following the period of Public Notice where objections are received and where it be shown that the decision is still lawful and appropriate.

7. Worcestershire County Council currently operates one Children’s Home and two Short Break Homes for children with disabilities staffed by WCC officers. These are;

- **Kidderminster Short Breaks Home** – 4 bed short break home for children with disabilities aged 5-18 years.
- **Bromsgrove Short Breaks Home** – 6 bed short break home for children with disabilities aged 5-18 years.
- **Vale Lodge** Children’s Home, Evesham - 4 bed residential home for children and young people with disabilities aged 5-18 years.

8. Vale Lodge is a Council owned property, located at Four Pools Lane Evesham, located next to the Vale of Evesham Special School and Nursery. The Home provides 52 week residential care for up to 4 children or young people with Autism and/or a learning disability aged 5-18 years. Vale Lodge is currently rated by Ofsted as a Good home. The Home was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2025.

9. The staff group for Vale Lodge Children’s Home consists of 14.07 full time equivalent members of staff who are managed by the Group Manager for Children

with Disabilities Team in the All Age Disability and SEND Division of Worcestershire County Council's Children's Services.

10. The Council's aim was to utilise Vale Lodge Children's Home for children and young people with associated high needs and complex behaviours where foster placements could not be identified.

11. Due to a combination of both staffing recruitment and retention challenges and the appropriate matching of young people requiring a placement, the provision has not been fully occupied since April 2022. The home had just one young person in placement from September 2023 to January 2024 and then increased to three young people in September 2024. Currently there are two young people who remain resident at the home. Under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, matching considerations must be determined by the Registered Manager of the Home.

12. 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' is the government strategy focused on transforming children's social care. One of the aims of this strategy is to create a system where children can thrive with their families, and experience stable, loving homes, both within and outside of care. Where children have complex needs and disabilities it is important that the Local Authority, health and education partners collaborate and take the initiative to support families to care for children and where these children and young people do need the full support of the local authority in their care arrangements, that best endeavours are made for this care to be in a family home environment.

13. The revised Worcestershire Fostering approach has strengthened matching of carers with children and improved the utilisation of foster carers by adopting and fully embedding the Valuing Care approach. This better matches individual children and young people to homes that can support their needs.

Current children and young people cared for at Vale Lodge Children's Home

- Young Person 1 has a care plan of foster care and a there has been an active and sustained search underway to move this young person into a long-term foster placement.
This has unfortunately yielded no tangible foster care offers.
- Young Person 2 has a care plan of foster care that includes specific carer skills and the support of respite or a wider team of support to meet needs. Similarly, despite an active search, no suitable foster placement has been identified.

14. The local authority has parental responsibility for these young people and shares this with their parents. Statutory looked after child reviews are overseen by their Independent Reviewing Officer to check if care plans and arrangements are progressing well for the young person and that they are well and thriving within their respective care placements. As care planning for these children progresses with an aim of securing permanency, the review process is the consultative method that takes the child's wishes and feelings along with their needs into account, planning with them and for them.

15. The original purpose of this report was to consider, given Worcestershire County Council's approach to valuing care and foster care provision, along with the resident children's associated care plans, the challenges in fully utilising Vale Lodge to its capacity and achieving best value. Such considerations would necessarily incorporate the public consultation feedback (**Appendix 1**). It was originally anticipated that once the two children transitioned to foster homes, a recommendation be made to identify alternative use of Vale Lodge and that it cease operating as a Children's Home.

16. Concerted effort to match the two children to suitable foster homes has, however, proved unachievable. The recommendation has consequently been revised to continue operating Vale Lodge as a Children's Home under the auspices that its Statement of Purpose be updated to incorporate the Valuing Care approach and ensure matching considerations be enhanced in order to maximise the use of the Home to its full capacity and achieve best value.

Reasons for decision

Consultation

17. The public consultation period took place from 19 March 2025 to 30 April 2025. The survey was shared with families and professionals involved with the children who are the users of this provision.

18. Staff who work at Vale Lodge Children's Home were informed of this public consultation, including a face to face session held on 20 March 2025 at Vale Lodge Children's Home.

19. The elected local councillors (Cllr Emma Stokes, Worcestershire County Council Councillor and Cllr Mark Goodge, Wychavon District Council Councillor) of the division where Vale Lodge Children's Home is located were consulted via a Teams meeting on 29 April 2025.

20. A consultation survey was used to explore key stakeholder views and feedback in relation to themes:

- Experiences of Vale Lodge Children's Home
- Views on change the use of the Children's Home with a proposal to close the Home
- Views on the Children's Home staying as it is
- Views on closing the provision
- Views on changing the use of the Children's Home

21. 11 respondents took part in the survey including:

- Parents/carers and family members of children who live at the Home
- Health staff; physiotherapist, occupational therapist
- SEND Service staff
- Social Care staff including an Independent Reviewing Officer
- Head teacher of a school attended by a young person who lives at the Home.

22. The responses from this consultation are included in **Appendix 1**.

23. The consultation survey demonstrates the provision, and service is highly valued and that the children who live at Vale Lodge are understood and their needs are well met. It may be considered that the purpose of this report and the decision making is not to judge the quality of the provision of Vale Lodge Children's Home. This assessment is made through the care plans of the individual children, the Independent Reviewing Officers for these children, the Independent Visitor of the Children's Home, the Registered Manager, Nominated Individual of the Home and Ofsted. However, outcomes for the current users of the Home should not be disassociated and must accord fully with their individual care plans.

24. At the time of the launch of the consultation on the future use of Vale Lodge Children's Home, a meeting was held with the staff group. This meeting was supported by a WCC Human Resources representative and the Assistant Director for All Age Disability and SEND. The purpose of this meeting was to be clear that no decision had been made, and staff were not at risk of redundancy. Naturally staff were clear at this meeting that they do not want Vale Lodge Children's Home to close and consider the care provided within the Home to be of good quality.

25. There is a concern from professionals in this feedback that the closure of Vale Lodge as a Children's Home may impact on the sufficiency of provision for children with this level of need who require residential care. It is noted that the Children's Home is not at capacity of use (4 beds) and has not been since April 2022.

26. A number of professionals commented on the need for respite provision, also known as Short Break provision. This serves to provide families, including foster carers and the wider family, for example siblings, with a break from caring by the young person having a short break in a residential environment. Were a decision made to cease operation of Vale Lodge as a Children's Home, this may be an alternative use. Alternatively, a hybrid approach could be considered, where Vale Lodge operates two beds as residential provision and two beds as short break provision.

27. The feedback also identified the opportunity to utilise the accommodation for educational purposes by the Vale of Evesham Special School. This would assist in meeting the expansion needs of the school and provide education places for children and young people with complex needs that live in the Evesham area.

Options considered

28. Options should accordingly be considered in light of the fact the provision is not currently operating in a cost-effective manner whilst simultaneously, the two children currently resident at the Home have no identifiable transition plan to transition to suitable foster homes, despite best endeavours.

- Option 1 is for the home to continue operating as it has been, albeit, subject to a revised Statement of Purpose and fully incorporating the Valuing Care matching methodology in order to achieve best value and operate at full capacity.
- Option 2 is to revise the Statement of Purpose and seek re-registration of the Home with Ofsted to operate a hybrid approach of residential care and short

breaks. This however would exacerbate matching difficulties exponentially and likely disenable Vale Lodge from ever operating at full capacity and achieving best value.

- Option 3 is to close Vale Lodge. However, in order to achieve this, the two children would need to transition to externally commissioned residential care. This would be in contravention of their care plans and best outcomes for the children. Further, associated costs (based on average external unit prices) would exceed the operational costs of Vale Lodge, despite it being at half capacity and would continue for a significant number of years given the children's ages.

29. Option 1 is the preferred option. This is because it is the only option that currently meets the children's best interests. Within this context, it is also the most cost-effective option. In revising the Statement of Purpose and embedding the Valuing Care approach (an enhanced matching tool now embedded and successfully utilised within Children's Services), the ability to match additional children will be more achievable and therefore the likelihood of the Home operating at full capacity, far improved. The Registered Manager and Responsible Individual will update the Statement of Purpose and inform Ofsted as per regulatory requirements.

Overview and Scrutiny

30. This has not been heard at a Children's Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Legal implications

31. The Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 to make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for securing accommodation for looked after children, having regard to the need for ensuring the availability of homes of different descriptions suitable for different purposes and needs of children. The Council has a general duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children within county and which meets their needs. Before making any decision with respect to a looked-after child the Council shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child and parents.

32. If the Council is unable to make arrangements to place looked after children within family, it must make arrangements for what it considers the most appropriate placement available. As far as reasonably practicable this should be within county, near home, and not disrupt education/training, and be suitable for any disabilities. The Council has a general duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children within county and which meets their needs. The plans for the two young placed at Vale Lodge do not change under the proposal set out in recommendation 1 c) of this report.

33. When considering a change to a Children's Home, the registered provider, in this case the Local Authority must take into account the Statutory Guidance from the Guide to Children's Home Regulations (2015). The report recommends that Vale Lodge remains open but that the Statement of Purpose is updated. Any proposed significant changes or modifications are to be notified to OFSTED before

implementation The Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015, requires that there is a written statement of purpose for our children’s homes.

Finance Implications

34. As part of the Council’s 2025/26 budget setting process, a saving of £0.763m in relation to the review of Vale Lodge Children’s Home was approved by Full Council and the amount removed from the Children’s Services budget was equal to the full 2024/25 budget assigned to Vale Lodge Children’s Home. The breakdown of this budget is detailed below:

Table 1: breakdown of the Vale Lodge 2025/26 budget saving by spend category

Spend Category	Budget Value (£)
Employees	710,800
Premises	23,100
Transport	4,300
Supplies and Services	25,200
Total	763,400

35. When the 2025/26 saving was approved, the risk of associated redundancy costs were estimated to total £0.190m exclusive of actuarial strain. Updated redundancy costs would need to be calculated as a result of any outcome that resulted in risk and or subsequent redundancy costs. It is however planned to look at all available suitable alternative opportunities for existing staff to avoid any potential redundancy situation.

36. The continued operation of Vale Lodge is resulting in a 2025/26 forecasted overspend of £0.803m, as at the P8 (November) position as there is no budget to fund the continued operations. The overspend is included within the overall overspend predicted for Children’s Services.

37. Based on the current occupancy of Vale Lodge, and the calculation based on current modelling of expected average agency residential costs for 2026/27 (as at November 2025), the cost comparison table below indicates year on year the expected financial implications of two agency residential placements compared to continuing to operate from Vale Lodge. These calculations assume a steady 3% inflationary increase of Vale Lodge costs, but a higher inflationary rate of 10.39% of Agency Residential costs based on recent average price increases. As can be seen the medium to long term assessment is that Vale Lodge will be more financially advantageous than accommodating children in agency residential placements. If approved, the budget for Vale Lodge will be reinstated, offset by a decrease in the budget for agency residential placements. This will not have any impact on the overall overspend predicted in 2025/26.

38. The Summary of the analysis is shown in **Table 2** and although there is a cost to operating Vale Lodge in 2026/27 compared with the independent sector, this is only short term due to the inflationary pressures which are being seen in the external market.

Table 2 – Cost Comparisons

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34
Cost of 2 x Agency Residential Placements	772,693	852,950	941,542	1,039,337	1,147,289	1,266,453	1,397,995	1,543,199
Cost of running Vale Lodge	827,341	852,162	877,726	904,058	931,180	959,115	987,889	1,017,525
Net Cost Impact of Vale Lodge by Year	54,648	-788	-63,816	- 135,279	- 216,109	- 307,338	- 410,106	- 525,674

39. Dependent on the future anticipated use of Vale Lodge, there may be capital financial implications. If a change of use recommendation is approved, capital investment would be required to make the necessary adaptations for either education or short breaks purposes. Funding for these changes would be allocated from the High Needs Capital Grant or allocated from the Children’s Services capital programme. The cost of these changes is currently unknown and would require feasibility studies to ascertain. However, these capital costs would be limited to refurbishment and adaptations. If the decision to close the accommodation, the building would not be recommended for disposal as alternative uses for children with disabilities have been identified and the building is integral to an education and care campus.

Human Resources

40. There are no specific Human Resources implications arising from this report.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

41. A joint impact assessment (JIA) screening # 945 has been undertaken

42. 45. All elements of the Council's relevant Public Sector Equality Duty have been taken into account in the original assessment, and due to the decision to not make a change or amends to provision, there is no noted impact or need for further assessment with regards to equality legislation.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 - Feedback from Consultation
- Appendix 2 – Joint Impact assessment

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Name, Adam Johnston, Strategic Director for Children's Services

Tel: 01905 845660

Email: ajohnston@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[Cabinet Member Report - proposal to commence a consultation on the options for future use of Vale Lodge, including possible closure](#)

[Vale Lodge cabinet member decision notice 11 March 2025](#)

Officer Clearance

Report Author
Strategic Director
On behalf of the Chief Finance Officer
On behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Sarah Wilkins.
Adam Johnston
Steph Simcox
Hazel Best

Appendix 1 – Feedback from consultation

Role	What has your experience of Vale Lodge been?	What are your views on the consultation?	What are your thoughts on Option 1 - for the home to continue operating as it has been.? Pros and Cons?	What are your thoughts on Option 2 - to close the provision following the transition of the 3 resident children? Pros and Cons?	What are your thoughts on Option 3 - to consider revised/alternate use of provision? Pros and Cons?	Any further feedback.
grandmother of resident	my grandson has lived there some time now, he is due to move soon due to his age. It is the best home any child can go to, care is second to none. staff are great and communicate with me well. its homely and they do their best for all the children.	I think this is an excellent home and would not want to see it go. it could be used as a home and offer respite. it should not close	I agree with this. children like my grandson need a place like this., it is important to have this. i would not want to see vale Lodge change. the manager has done a really good job	I would not like to see it close; it is very important to stay open	It could possibly be split and have some children for respite as I know that is needed.	Vale Lodge has always supported me to see my grandson and helped his brother.
(Parent & partner)	We have been thoroughly impressed with the service provided at vale lodge to X. The staff have really worked hard to make her experience enriching. She has really thrived and we have felt very much supported to build a meaningful relationship with X	We understand there needs to be a consultation and that cost savings where possible need to be made under the current climate	This would be best case scenario for X and her continued care in our view. It offers continuity and a calm environment for children in care where their needs can be catered for in small setting more akin to a family home.	We would be very concerned if this occurred. Vale is a fantastic facility which is offering a bespoke care package in a small family focused environment. The children within vale all appear settled and content and certainly X has really developed and thrived in that setting.	It is hard to provide feedback in relation to this option as we don't know what that would look like. I'm sure cost saving options could be considered although not sure what these might look like.	We are really concerned about the outcome of this and the impact it might have on X. To lose this facility would be a really disappointing outcome. I know Costs need saving as budgets are tight in public sectors but the impact on the children would be hard to reconcile in our view.
Social Worker	Positive	I worry that if there are less residential homes for children with disabilities	The children living there will be supported by a safe and caring home that has	The children will have to have another move which will disrupt their daily living	I think the home should stay as it is. It is a struggle to find suitable	-

		<p>than there already is, it will be harder to accommodate the children we are supporting.</p>	<p>stability and meets their needs well and knows the children very well.</p> <p>The children know their environment and staff well.</p> <p>The children have built a familiar routine and know their environment and expectations of the home.</p> <p>The staff go above and beyond for the children living in the home.</p>	<p>and could impact their wellbeing and behaviours due to struggling with transitions.</p> <p>The children will need to get to know new staff or carers if they move, which they may struggle with.</p>	<p>accommodation for children that have been removed from their parents, but Vale Lodge is able to meet the children's needs very well. However, there is also a lack of provision for children with disabilities that I think needs to be explored, but not to replace Vale Lodge.</p>	
Social Worker	<p>Vale Lodge provides a safe and caring home for children with disabilities and additional needs. I have had nothing but positive interactions with staff, the young person I work with is happy and settled there and has developed trust in the staff to meet their needs. The hard work and high level of care staff provide has been reflected in their recent Ofsted report, and the recognition of this is thoroughly deserved.</p>	<p>I am concerned that it is even being contemplated to close this invaluable children's home. I appreciate that there are tough decisions to be made in terms of funding, but Vale Lodge is an invaluable asset, and we need more specialist provision not less.</p>	<p>Staff provide a safe and caring environment for children who cannot be cared for within their families. The staff are invested in good outcomes for the children and will do whatever possible to achieve this. I The operating cost may seem high, which I understand may be considered a Con, however when considering the costs of other settings and how this enables local children to stay near their families and continue attending their schools Vale Lodge is good value for money being cheaper than other residential settings.</p> <p>Staff at Vale Lodge have a good knowledge of how to meet the complex needs of the children who live there and have good working relationships with other</p>	<p>In my professional opinion this would be a short-sighted decision, when there is already difficulties in finding local homes for children with complex needs. The short-term costs are negligible when looking at long term gains for children with complex needs who need specialist care. We need more good specialist children's homes not less, living within families is not always what is best for some of our children due to life experiences. We already struggle to find suitable settings for young people with complex needs, closing Vale Lodge could lead to more children being housed out of county. If there is the threat of staff losing their jobs once the resident children have moved this is likely to result</p>	<p>The provision at Vale Lodge is needed, and I don't believe that if there are 4 children living there then there should be any change to what is currently being provided. When considering the cost of children's care being met in unregulated or out of county settings.</p> <p>Although looking at other options could help alleviate pressure in areas such as overnight respite this still would result in losing a children's home that is needed. It shouldn't be an either /or situation.</p>	<p>I hope that real consideration is given to the children who live at Vale Lodge it is their home, where they receive expectational care and support. Professionals have good working relationships with staff and the children are happy there.</p>

			agencies. Vale Lodge continuing to operate will allow the young people who live there (who have not had foster carers found for them) to have consistency and their high care needs met by experienced and dedicated staff.	in them looking for employment elsewhere which would have a negative impact on the staff and the children, due to the uncertainty. Having 4 children living at Vale Lodge would make		
Social worker	allocated CLA child who has lived there for 6 years	Poor timing and unnecessary. The Vale lodge team have worked hard to get it to the home children with disabilities need. This is reflected in the recent Ofsted report too. The home has a lovely feel to it with caring and dedicated staff. It makes my job as a social worker much easier too as I can see documents and key pieces of information I need because this home is run by the LA, we are all using the same system.	This is my preferred option	I would be 100% against this	if option 1 was not considered, then a respite facility in the area would be beneficial for our children	The staff have worked hard to get the home to where it is now, and the timing of the consultation will no doubt affect staff morale.
Team Manager	Positive. Manager and support staff really care and know their young people really well. Family have shared positive feedback also.	The young person open to YAT is due to turn 18 and transition onto an adults provision. No real impact	There is a lack of respite provision for 16–25-year-olds can it be utilised for this	There is a lack of respite provision for 16–25-year-olds can it be utilised for this	There is a lack of respite provision for 16–25-year-olds can it be utilised for this	N/A
Team Manager CWD	I have been involved with placing a child at Vale Lodge. They have supported her over the last 16 months to thrive and develop far beyond her expected outcomes. They have engaged with other agencies, trained staff in her specific needs, sought additional training	I understand the need to consider whether the unit is financially viable- I feel frustrated that all the beds are not filled as I have to look for many placements for children out of county costing much more money, so would prefer to see children with disabilities placed in care in county, in	This would be my first choice, but with all beds being filled with Worcestershire CWD children. I would want staff to continue with specialist skills and knowledge and supporting children in this expert way. I would not want beds to remain empty and would consider short	I think that this would be a huge loss to the CWD team in particular and increase our spending and costs exponentially in looking for other placements.	If it were not viable as a residential unit, I would want it to be considered as another short breaks unit. We are oversubscribed on all our short breaks units, have a two year wait for service provision and another unit that could meet children's needs	no

	and information, supporting challenging contact with family members, supported the child in building a relationship with her paternal family. They have offered a high level of support to the child and considered her complex needs.	our own specialist provision.	term placements along settled children for periods of crisis if the bed could not be guaranteed for a longer period- such as an assessment bed where we have concerns about children in the care of their parent and need a period of intervention and assessment.		for short breaks overnights would be fantastic. It would also reduce the likelihood of family breakdown and children coming into care in the first place.	
Independent Reviewing Officer	I am the Independent Reviewing Officer for two children aged 10 & 12 who are placed at Vale Lodge and who are both clearly thriving. They are safe, settled, and making meaningful progress in key areas such as emotional regulation, independence, education, and maintaining family contact. The home offers a calm, nurturing environment where children with autism and learning disabilities feel secure, valued, and understood. During recent visits, the children appeared relaxed and genuinely "at home", which is a testament to the care and consistency provided by the staff.	The children's needs and wellbeing must remain the central focus. Any decision must consider how deeply settled these children are and how far they have come in their journeys. A disruption at this stage could be damaging and set them back significantly. The consultation must prioritise maintaining stability and protecting children from the trauma and unsettlement of a move when they both feel safe, cared for and have all their needs met by staff at Vale Lodge	Vale Lodge maintains stability and continuity of care for the children they care for. Preserves established therapeutic relationships and routines. Recently retained an Ofsted-rated Good provision with Outstanding leadership. Staff team is experienced and trained in meeting complex needs of the children. Avoids disruption and potential regression for children currently placed. Vale lodge Supports in-county placement sufficiency and reduces reliance on external providers.	Cons Loss of stability and secure attachments for the three resident children, who are currently settled and thriving. Emotional distress and trauma caused by transitioning children away from the home where they feel safe, understood, and "at home". Risk of regression in emotional regulation, behaviour, and developmental progress due to disruption. Breakdown of therapeutic relationships with skilled staff who have built trust and provided tailored support. Interruptions to carefully coordinated multi-agency work, such as therapeutic input, education plans, and family contact arrangements. Increased risk of placement breakdowns and future instability if alternative placements lack the same	Risk of disrupting the children's lived experience, especially if the alternate use requires them to move or adapt to a different type / place of care. Loss of the current specialist residential model, which is working very well for these children with autism and learning disabilities. Transition would create uncertainty and anxiety for the children (and staff). May dilute the therapeutic culture and environment built specifically as these children have high and complex needs.	I strongly object to any plans to close Vale Lodge. Two of my allocated children placed at Vale Lodge since moving there in July 2024 and September 2024 are thriving in their home which for them is a safe, nurturing environment that meets their complex needs. The home has a Good Ofsted rating with Outstanding leadership and delivers consistent, therapeutic care that cannot easily be replicated. Closing it would seriously disrupt the children's emotional stability and progress. While financial pressures are acknowledged, the

				<p>specialist expertise. Undermines the children's sense of belonging and permanence, which is especially harmful for those with histories of trauma and loss.</p> <p>Greater likelihood of needing high-cost or out-of-county placements, which may lack the same level of individualised support and further isolate children from their communities.</p>		<p>long-term human cost of closure is too great. Vale Lodge should be protected as a vital part of Worcestershire's specialist care offer.</p>
Occupational Therapy Team Lead	<p>I am currently working as an OT for a child who has moved there after being removed from parents care. The team working there have been very clear with communication, expectations, work with professionals very well, responsive and understand the needs of the child. The child seems happy and well cared for at the lodge.</p>	<p>I would be disappointed to see the Lodge close.</p>	<p>This sounds sensible to continue a provision that's working well for the children and consider other cost saving measures.</p>	<p>I'm not sure what other options there would be similar to this set up</p>	<p>Unsure on options for alternative use.</p>	.
Headteacher	<p>We have had a pupil at Vale Lodge and continue to do so.</p>	<p>It is very challenging to meet the needs of our ever-changing cohort - especially when it is not cost effective.</p>	<p>Can it meet the needs of the existing children? If not, why not and can this be rectified? If it can't be rectified, we cannot have a provision that is not meeting need - cost effective or not.</p>	<p>Having a child at Vale Lodge my concern would obviously be where would they go? Would the next provision meet need and allow them to remain in their existing school? The child at Vale Lodge we have would transition well to another setting.</p>	<p>If the main issue is meeting needs of more complex learners - how can specialist settings and specialist residential units support this and help keep it open and able to cope with more complex learners? Develop it into a more bespoke unit - however this would cost.</p>	<p>Selfishly I am thinking about the child we have at Vale Lodge - but the ever-increasing complexity of learners is a challenge and one we need to address both in schools and residential if we want to keep our children local. Sorry, I don't think I have been much</p>

						help with the feedback but happy to help if I can.
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