

Appendix 1

Mencap Advocacy Report of Whitehall Street Consultation

Resident A

Permanent resident at Whitehall St.(WHS). 22-02-11 one on one meeting with MH.

Resident A likes having his own room at WHS and he likes having a lock on his door, he tells me that he gets on very well with staff members M and C and he likes that fact that they or other members of staff take him to church on a Sunday when he wants to go.

He told me that he does not like the way Whitehall street is decorated and that he does not feel it is well maintained. He points to where paint has been scratched away on the wall of the front room door.

He also tells me that at WHS there are set meal times and he does not like this, he would like to eat when he wants to and not when he is told to.

The thought of WHS closing and Resident A having to move does worry him a little bit, he says that he gets on well with two other permanent residents called G and J and Resident G said it would be a shame if he never saw them again once he moved. He has no real attachment to the building, it is more the relationships that he has formed whilst there.

Not knowing where he might go causes him concern though, if he would have a chance to look at re-housing options than this might make him and others feel less unsure and anxious. Responses such as " I don't want to be by myself ", "Will there be staff I can trust." Come really from not knowing what the next step looks like and could be easily resolved. This I would suggest needs to be addressed asap.

He talks to me about banners reading "save Whitehall street", I was not sure whether this was an incident in the past or whether this was something being planned for the future, but Resident A said he was not interested in getting involved. I get the feeling that he not that upset about WHS closing at all but as previously said what happens next.

He ends by saying that if he had the choice he would move to Buckinghamshire where he has friends or family or family friends, I could not quite get this out of him as he has told me that he has had enough of talking to me now and has gone outside for a smoke.

Resident B

Permanent resident at Whitehall street. 02-02-11 one on one meeting with MH.

Resident B was pleased to see me and was fine for me to sit down with her and have a chat. I told her that I was here to talk about the possibility of Whitehall street closing and that she with support might have to find another home to live. Before even having the chance to ask her how she felt she immediately said that she liked Whitehall street and did not want to move. It seemed a little bit rehearsed initially so I diverted from this topic for a bit before then coming back to it.

I asked her what she like about Whitehall street and she told me that she liked colouring in and listening to music, this she does in her room at the moment because the Hi Fi in the main socialising area on the first floors Hi Fi is broken, she went on to tell me that she really likes talking with other residents also and especially she likes playing cards with another resident.

Much like my discussions with Resident A, it seems there is quite a bond between the residents at Whitehall, Resident B goes on to say that she would not like to be separated from Resident C or Resident D if they moved from Whitehall street.

Resident B likes the staff at Whitehall street, especially staff X and Y.

When I ask her if there is anything that she does not like about Whitehall street, she tells me that she keeps on telling the staff that they are giving the residents too much for dinner and that they do not listen, she tells me about the hi fi that has been broken for a long time, but apart from that, she has nothing but good words to say about the staff and the building. She tells me she likes her room and she thinks that resident C has a nice room also.

I ask her if the thought of moving from Whitehall street is something which is worrying her to which she initially replies no, but then she quickly says that she would miss playing cards with Resident C, this is a topic which she mentions several more times whilst I am with her. The bond is something which I think would be clearly missed if she had to move to a separate environment.

Given the choice if Resident B had to move, what would make it manageable for her was if she could basically relocate the Whitehall street environment somewhere else.

Resident C

Permanent resident at Whitehall Street, meeting with MH and brother on the 08-03-11.

When I ask Resident C how she feels about the possibility of moving from Whitehall Street, she tells me sad, and then she tells me happy and then she tells me sad again. Too inconclusive to get a definite feeling from her. I ask her what she likes about Whitehall street to which she replies that she likes W (staff member) and she also really likes Residents B and D (other residents). She also really like Father ...who is a clergyman who comes to visit the residents at Whitehall street and they sometimes go to his church.

When I ask her what she does not like about Whitehall Street she replies that she does not like her room, details of why it is hard to ascertain as Resident C does not give any clearer answers than this.

Resident C has been living at Whitehall Street for over 5 years and it is clear that the constantly appearing theme of friend and staff being in a homelike family environment keeps cropping up, it is important that staff of the high quality that there is at Whitehall Street are sourced in any future accommodations that are looked for, once again, whilst there is no real love for Whitehall home as a building it is clear that the residents have built up really strong relationships and this is something which should be attempted to keep together in any future possible moves.

I ask Resident C if the thought of moving worry's her to which she replies "what is Whitehall Street going to do, where am I going to live, will I move to L" Resident C starts to show signs of getting emotional and anxious, once again, the idea of uncertainty over the future is causing an increase in negative emotions. I ask her what help to make her feel less worried about moving, to which she says again "what is Whitehall Street going to do".

R (her brother) tells me that this is part of the problem, there is no what is going to happen next information, there are multiple questions that are not being answered and so how you not expect people to be worried, anxious and unsure. Resident C is clearly getting a bit stressed with my presence so I asked her permission to talk to her brother R about Whitehall Street to which she says that I can. In circumstances like this where you cannot be sure the client fully understands your questions, as in a best interest meeting you speak to those closely involved with the client, I ask R for his thoughts.

His thoughts are that he feels there has been no choice given to the clients about whether they want to move from WHS, there has been no information on what might accommodation and services will be available when WHS closes, he thinks it has been handled very badly. The lack of information is extremely frustrating for him and he does not live at WHS, so how frustrating must it be for the residents.

R thinks that WHS is Brilliant, he tells me that Resident C was formerly at Linden Rd and Talbot Rd and that out of the three places she has lived WHS in his opinion was clearly the best provider, he thinks that WHS has a brilliant staff team and that the WHS environment has improved greatly since the redevelopment it had.

He thinks that the nature of the local area means that the service users do not go out much in the evening and that they tend not to use local shops which he feels is a shame, but understands that Tottenham is not the greatest environment in which one would feel safe. He is worried about where Resident C might move to, he would like it if at all possible that an environment that looks nice should be considered. R is a council driver and picks clients up from multiple care homes in the borough and he does not see anything that makes him think that yes, I would be happy if Resident C moved to that home. He says that in an ideal world, Resident C has holidays with a company called Break before in Norfolk, to which she really liked he says. A beautiful environment like that would be ideal.

He also tells me that he believes that Resident C's needs should be reassessed at this moment in time and that any move should be grounded in the conclusions found in that assessment so that any move can be up to date and correct for her needs.

Respite user E

Respite user at Whitehall street. Meeting with MH and brother F on evening of second consultation, 10-03-11

Respite user E says that he likes WHS, but in all honesty it would not bother him that much were he went for respite, he is not worried about WHS closing down, he just wants there to be a respite option. Respite user E does look forward to his breaks, it is a chance to get away and have a change of scenery, it is very good for him family to have a little break as well.

F tells me that since his mum died in 2009 he suffers from depression, he feels that Respite user E could benefit from having a holiday somewhere peaceful and nice rather than having his respite in a residential home.

Resident F

Permanent resident at WHS. Meeting with MH and Ermine road support worker 15-03-11

I start by explaining why I am there, Resident F is going through a period of being non verbal at the moment so I use my yes and no and good and bad cards for Resident F to point at. Resident F also has paper and a pencil with her and has decided that she can use this to give answers as well.

I ask her how she feels about the possible idea that WHS will close and that she might have to move, I ask her this 3 times in total throughout the whole meeting to which she answers twice that she is happy about the thought of

moving from WHS and once she say that she is unhappy about the idea of moving from WHS. I would gauge this to be inconclusive.

I ask her what she likes about WHS to which she writes down that she likes the food, I ask her what she thinks about the staff to which she says she likes them. I ask her what else she likes to which she does not expend on.

I then start to talk to her about what she does not like about WHS, she writes that she does not like the building and that she does not like her room. A, her support worker who is also present tell me that she has seen Residents F's room and that it is extremely bare, A says that this is because Resident F very often breaks things, she tells me that she believes there are not enough residents that are on the same communication levels as Resident F and feels that this is a negative thing for her, she can obviously communicate quite well and I am impressed by the quality of her writing skills, I can see how A's opinion could very well be true having met with quite a few of the residents myself.

Others have told me that it is not the most stimulating environment in the world and this could very well be something which is stifling Resident F's own personal development. I ask her whether she is worried about moving, she gives me both yes and no answers. I ask her if she would like to know more about other places to live which she writes yes to.

I ask her what she would like to do more of to which she writes she would like to do more stuff at home, like reading joke books, table tennis and swimming and going outside more. This has been something which I have picked up upon before during this consultation that people feel that the residents do not go outside of the building a great deal.

Resident F then makes it clear that she has had enough of me and we decide to end the meeting there.

Resident G

Permanent resident at WHS. One on one discussion with her on the 2nd consultation evening and then a discussion with her mother at Ermine Rd on the 16-03-11.

I tried to talk to Resident G about WHS on the evening of the second consultation but she was unable to display to me that she could understand the questions that I was asking her, she very much wanted to talk to me about cups of tea and she kept on asking me who I was but it seemed highly unlikely to me that I would be able to get her to focus on the issue of WHS without a considerable period of time. As is common in these cases and in best interest meetings I arranged to speak to her mother who is still active in Resident G's life.

Mother's comments are as follows:

"They should not move Resident G. Resident G is someone that likes to have a settled routine, if her routine is broken or changed this is very stressful for her and will make her very unhappy, I think it is evil to move her from her calm situation, from her home. As usual, the council are thinking about the financial consequences of WHS and not the emotional side of how this will affect human beings."

"It is Tottenham people and their council tax money that pay for these services, they should let Tottenham people decide what happens to their council tax money."

"I think WHS should be kept open, they should also tell people what the options and alternatives are, stop talking to us about money and start talking to us about how peoples lives are going to be effected. This is their home, I think it would be unfair to break people up from their friendship groups and unfair to break up their routine."

"WHS has been Resident G's home for a good few years and this will be a major distraction to her, I am really worried as are a lot of other people as to what might happen to her and where she will go, I hope that it is not L road, I am too old to look after her now, I wish I could, I am too old for all of this worry, I thought that WHS would be somewhere that Resident G could settle for life and now I am really worried."

"Change is extremely disruptive – they have not chosen to have a disability and the only comfort they have is their home. "

Mark Heath
Mencap Advocacy