

27 July 2023

## NI Children's Respite Care

I am writing to request the following information:

**1. Statement of purpose for both Somerton Road Children's Home and Barnardos Home Links**

Please see attached Statement of Purpose in respect of Somerton Road Children's Home.

As regards Barnardos Home Links, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Children with Disabilities Services have a Service Level Agreement with this provider to deliver care in a child's family home. The provider employs the carers. They provide care on an overnight or day care basis. In this regard, they are not a unit / facility comparable with the other facilities referenced in this Freedom of Information (FOI) request. You may wish to contact the provider directly for information pertaining to the service they deliver.

**2. Have Somerton Road Children's Home, Willow Lodge, Forest Lodge and Barnardos Home Links operated as Respite Units? If so, please provide dates from and to, and provide current operational status.**

In the absence of a specific timeline linked to this enquiry, Belfast Trust have provided the following information from 2020 to date.

Somerton Road – is a long-term Children's Home and does not provide short break care (respite).

Willow Lodge – Willow Lodge was a registered short breaks home. Due to the withdrawal of its registration, this home has not been in operation since May 2022.

Forest Lodge – is a short break Nursing Home for children with a learning disability and complex health care needs that require nursing support.

Barnardos Home Links – N/A

**3. Has Somerton Road Children's Home, Willow Lodge, Forest Lodge and Barnardos Home Links ever been closed and, if so, can dates be provided when Somerton Road Children's Home, Willow Lodge, Forest Lodge and Barnardos Home Links have been closed and please state the reason why.**

Please note we have provided the information below from 2020 to date:

Somerton Road Children's Home– has not been closed.

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Willow Lodge Short-breaks Home– Willow Lodge was closed for short breaks on 18 March 2020, as part of the Trust’s COVID Management Plan. In May 2020, it was reopened for day short breaks only. The Home then reinstated short-breaks on an overnight basis from September 2020, alongside accommodating one child full-time. In April 2021, the Home was closed to short breaks due to a second child needing full-time accommodation. The Home has not reopened since May 2022, following the withdrawal of its registration.

Forest Lodge – Forest Lodge was closed on 23 March 2020, as part of the Trust’s COVID Management Plan. The Home remained closed until 14 July 2020 when it was opened at a reduced capacity, 3 days per week, to enable the Home to comply with the Trust and Government COVID restrictions. The Home closed again at the end of September 2020 for 4 weeks to support the Trust to accommodate children who were looked after and required isolation, as per COVID regulations. The Home reopened in October 2020 and increased to 5 nights per week. The reduced capacity remains in place due to the complexity of need presented by the children who access the service.

**Barnardos Home Links – N/A**

- 4. Has Somerton Road Children’s Home, Willow Lodge, Forest Lodge and Barnardos Home Links ever been used for another purpose, other than respite?**

Somerton Road – is a long-term home and does not provide short break care (respite).

Willow Lodge – see response to question 3.

Forest Lodge – see response to question 3.

Barnardos Home Links – N/A

- 5. Is Somerton Road Children’s Home a general residential or special residential unit?**

Somerton Road is registered as a children’s home for children with learning disabilities and behavioural difficulties.

- 6. Is Willow Lodge a general residential or special residential unit?**

Willow Lodge is not currently registered.

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**7. Is Forest Lodge a general residential or special residential unit?**

Forest Lodge is registered as a short breaks nursing home for children with a learning disability and complex health care needs that require nursing support.

**8. Is Barnardos Home Links a general residential or special residential unit?**

Neither

**9. What has been the capacity of Somerton Road Children's Home, Willow Lodge, Forest Lodge and Barnardos Home Links for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023?**

Somerton Road – is registered as a 5 bedded home.

Willow Lodge – was previously registered as a 2 bedded home.

Forest Lodge – is registered as a 5 bedded home, but complexity of needs determine if a child is occupying 1 or 2 beds, hence reducing overall capacity.

Barnardos Home Links – N/A

**10. Has the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust put forward any business cases to the Department of Health for the construction of either new respite or residential units from January 2020 to present? If so, please provide copies of details such as when they were filed and progress in relation to completion of said business case.**

In March 2023, the Trust Children with Disabilities Service submitted two Business Cases to the Strategic Planning and Performance Group of the Department of Health for funding to increase residential bed capacity for children with a disability in the Trust area.

The Trust is currently awaiting a response from Strategic Planning and Performance Group.

The Trust is unable to share these Business Cases, as they have not yet been approved.