

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 1199341

Position Statement: Consultation on the proposal to close the Harpenden Bethesda Home

Introduction

At the beginning of 2025, the Lord hedged up the way of the trustees so that in February 2025, with heaviness of heart they began, following the decision, **subject to consultation**, to close the Harpenden Bethesda Home, to make the necessary preparations so this process could start in the working week beginning Monday 3rd March 2025.

This decision followed a long period of prayerful consideration and was not taken lightly due to concern for the impact that this would have on the residents, their loved ones and the staff of the Home.

The consultation, which started on Tuesday 4th March (2025) and is currently on-going, follows two parallel strands, involving on the one hand the staff of the Home and on the other the residents and their representatives. In addition, when these initial consultations and discussions were completed, on Monday 10th March (2025), the information was shared with our supporters. They, in turn, were invited to provide feedback on the proposals together with any thoughts on other viable options for the future of the Home that the Trustees could consider.

Consultation with Staff

The staff consultation is governed by the statutory requirements set out in the “Employment Rights Act 1996”, began on the Tuesday 4th March (2025) and is on-going. It was explained to the staff that the Employment Rights Act requires Bethesda to consult on the worst-case scenario, namely, full closure of the service. However, it was additionally explained that should feedback arising during the staff consultation period result in a different course of action, the statutory process would then have to be restarted to allow sufficient time for consideration of the new circumstances.

Consultation with Residents and their representatives

The views of the residents and their representatives, on future care options should there be a change in the service provision at Harpenden, are central to this parallel consultation.

Given the residents’ wide range of physical capabilities and mental capacity, it was considered that the best approach was to speak to them on a one-to-one basis in a calm and quiet atmosphere where dignity and respect was uppermost. Each resident was encouraged to invite a family member or friend to attend the meeting with them, which all did. Where the residents did not have the capacity to attend the meeting themselves their Powers of Attorney were consulted on their behalf. Feedback from these meetings indicated that this was an appropriate approach.

At these meetings the Trustees explained why they felt that the time had come to seriously consider closing the Home and requested feedback on the following points:

- a) If the decision is taken to close the Home, what would be the preferred option(s) concerning future care and support? These are to:
 - i. Move to the Brighton Home.
 - ii. Move to a new Bethesda facility nearby.
 - iii. Make other arrangements.

- b) Having explained the situation, the Trustees are seeking ideas on any alternative approaches to closing the Home that may not have already been considered.

The residents' feedback on these options is an important part of guiding the Trustees on the way forward. Especially the second option, as proceeding with this would require considerable investment of Charitable funds and, as was explained, a reasonable degree of certainty was needed to confirm there would, before proceeding, be sufficient demand.

In conclusion, the decision to consult on the proposal to close the Harpenden Bethesda Home has been approached with due care and consideration for all parties involved. The ongoing consultation has been carried out to ensure that the voices of staff, residents, and their representatives and our wider supporters are heard and valued. The Trustees remain committed to exploring all viable options and making decisions that centre on the well-being and dignity of the residents. As we move forward, we will continue to seek and discern the Lord's will in this matter and strive for the best possible outcomes for all those affected.

GSBF Trustees
March 2025