

PRESS RELEASE

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DEVON CHARITY ANNOUNCES ITS CHILDREN'S SERVICES ARE TO STOP

The Dame Hannah Rogers Trust has announced it is to stop the provision of children's services by the end of July.

The charity, which provides services for children and adults with profound physical and learning difficulties, has taken the "difficult decision" to stop its children's services offering.

The move will affect staff, pupils and residents at the Dame Hannah Rogers School and the Dame Hannah Rogers Children's Home. The charity's adult services will continue as normal and its charity shops will also be unaffected.

The Chair of Trustees David Coslett said: "This has been a difficult decision for the Trust. It's a huge regret to lose a service that has been so important to people in the community. The current situation with Covid-19 (Coronavirus) creates even further uncertainty in already challenging circumstances."

He explained: "There has been a growing shift in education as mainstream schools and special schools up and down the country have broadened their intake and expanded services for children with profound learning needs. This has led to a decrease in children's placements at Dame Hannah Rogers, which has been a concern for some time; but despite efforts to change our recruitment, this, combined with pressure on care and education budgets has placed enormous financial strain on the Trust. Sadly, we have been unable to secure new placements in sufficient numbers to maintain our children's services in the longer term."

Over a long period of time, numbers at the school have dropped from an average of 40-45 pupils to less than ten. By the end of this school year, several of the children will have completed their placements at the Home and will transfer to the charity's adult provision. A number of other children have found successful placements within the community.

In addition, Dame Hannah's has provided seven children's respite placements, which will also stop. Its respite services and its well supported Charity shops have also been suspended because of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak.

Due to the high staff ratio needed to care for the pupils and residents, the loss of the children's services means 103 staff will now enter a consultation period with 50 expected redundancies, but it is anticipated more than half will be offered employment within the Trust, particularly in adult care services, in order to mitigate redundancies.

The Registered Manager of the Dame Hannah Rogers School Children's Home, Emma Lyall said: "I am extremely proud of our highly skilled members of staff who do their utmost to create a stimulating and caring environment for the children, but in common with other providers, we have faced increasingly tough operating conditions in recent years and it simply isn't possible to continue."

"I will do everything I can to ensure the children involved are provided with

alternative care in a sensitive and timely manner, and throughout the consultation period, I will do everything to support our families and our staff.”

Headteacher of Dame Hannah Rogers School, Jason Ryder added: “This is very upsetting news for everyone involved. Since its foundation in the 1950s, the school has provided an enriching education provision for children with the most profound disabilities.”

“Sadly, the financial context of the Trust combined with the costs of providing complex care have lead, to an unsustainable position.”

In line with Government advice, both the school and the home were closed last Friday (March 20) due to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. The Trust stressed that during the outbreak, its focus would remain on providing safe, high quality care and support for the people at the heart of its organisation.