

Replacement Day Care Service – Site Visits

Report of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Members

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to confirmation by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee asks Cabinet to receive and consider this report, and as Adult Social Care transformation takes place, ensure that opportunities in the community are maximised to support people's independence and enable them to do the things that matter to them.
2. That the Committee shares the learning from the visits to inform its future work programme.

Background

It was agreed that members would undertake a series of visits to health and care settings across the County as they had previously before the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillors wanted to get a first-hand account from staff of where the system is working well, how supported they feel and where there may be issues of concern. The visits were about members getting a better understanding of the way in which the model of care in Devon is working operationally and the key issues affecting services from a frontline perspective.

Members were invited to undertake a series of visits to the County Council's learning disability day centres. This was against the backdrop of an impact assessment having been undertaken in June 2022 on reviewing the potential cessation of providing buildings-based day services. The reason for the review was cited as follows:

Across the County the demand for DCC in-house, long-term buildings-based day services has reduced. This was the direction of travel for these services before the pandemic and the pandemic has accelerated these changes as people made and continue to make alternative choices in how they wanted to live their lives. In some circumstances the reduction in people attending is so low that it can be seen as further isolating individuals rather than providing a social experience for them. Work has been ongoing to develop individuals' skills and promote their independence, both with existing service users and as part of the preparation for adulthood work with younger people, which has also reduced the need for such buildings-based provision. This has been achieved on an individual basis by taking into account what is important to the individual and their families. Likewise, where there has been identified need for support to prevent carer breakdown in the form of replacement care, this has been sourced from across the wider market for adult social care as a long-term alternative solution.

Current Situation - Occupied Day Centres

Total (as of July 2022) = 19 people receiving support

RUSHBROOK, TOTNES



7 People

Maximum = 3 per day

NICHOLS, EXETER



5 People

Maximum = 4 per day

ABBEY RISE, TAVISTOCK



5 People

Maximum = 3 per day

ROSALIND, TIVERTON



2 People

Maximum = 2 per day

Coproduction Meeting with Parents / Carers

A coproduction process with carers was held in July 2022 to ascertain the precise scope of any cessation of day care provision at DCC sites. Families identified the following broad issues:

- Significant isolation of individuals in services in current shape
- Unviability of services at current occupancy
- Lack of stimulating activity
- Access to specialist equipment (hoist, disabled accessible/equipped toilets, specialist baths, etc)
- Reaching for Independence (RFI) not appropriate for these individuals
- Need for a break from family members, be out of the house
- Families recognise need to be flexible
- Need for 5 days of activity for some
- Families do not want to manage direct payment

Site Visits

1 November 2022 – Nichols Centre, Exeter

The following councillors undertook the visit to the Nichols Centre, where they met Steve Robinson, Resource Manager – Adult Provision Eastern Devon, Integrated Adult Social Care:

- Cllr Richard Scott
- Cllr Pru Maskell

7 November 2022 – Abbey Rise, Tavistock

The following councillors undertook the visit to Abbey Rise, where they met with Di Combe, Resource Manager, South and West Devon, Integrated Adult Social Care:

- Cllr Richard Scott
- Cllr Linda Hellyer
- Cllr Debo Sellis

10 November 2022 – Rushbrook Centre, Totnes

The following councillors undertook the visit to the Rushbrook Centre, where they met with Di Combe, Resource Manager, South and West Devon, Integrated Adult Social Care:

- Cllr Richard Scott
- Cllr Sara Randall Johnson

Issues Identified

Replacement Day Care

Each of the centres visited were large, well equipped, and appointed facilities. It immediately seemed inefficient to members to have these sizeable buildings with so few people attending the settings. Resources were not being maximised with less than 20 people using 4 day centres across the County factoring in travel costs as well, which were reported to be circa £35,000 a year for Tavistock alone.

Officers advised that day care numbers had shrunk significantly over the years, which had been exacerbated with a changing landscape in terms of buildings-based services since the pandemic. One of the impacts of which was that many of the social benefits from before had now gone. Referrals for long term placements were not coming through. The 5 people using Abbey Rise for instance had been there since leaving education and most were now in their 40s and 50s, some with carers into their 80s.

There was a need to properly understand what 'good' looks like in terms of replacement care and what is a quality service for those people using it. There appeared to be difficulty in providing adequate stimulation as a result of the low numbers and staff have to be very imaginative given budgetary limitations. In one of the day centres members noted that people were just sat watching television.

There is also a need to continue to work hard with staff to try to realise more independence for people. The families of long-term service users are also not always exploring the other options available such as direct payments and personal assistants which are options to help people access community facilities. It was evident to members that parents and carers remain invested in the day care centre and there was some distrust of the County Council.

If changes to day care have to be made, families had suggested condensing the day service offer and then opening out the building to the community for the rest of the week. The buildings were already being partly used by a mix of other Adult Social Care, other County Council staff and outside organisations.

Reaching For Independence

Reaching for Independence Service

- The Reaching for Independence service (RFI) is available to everyone over 17 with eligible needs, at all levels of complexity.
- The service is currently supporting 530 (as of July 2022) people to achieve their goals of progressing independence in the community.
- RFI is a short-term service usually for up to 6 to 12 weeks and is goal focussed in its approach to upskilling people.
- RFI is focussed on supporting people to achieve independence reducing dependence on paid, long-term support.
- Achieving financial savings due to strengths-based approach.
- 33 people (as of July 2022) have achieved paid employment.
- Planned expansion of RFI through transfer of resources.

RFI is about working with people to reduce reliance and enable independence. Some people with greater needs will require ongoing additional support. It is about understanding what every person wants. The strength-based approach of RFI, along with the fundamental aim of doing the right thing for people, should also help to achieve financial savings as people become more independent.

Social care have always worked with families in terms of their caring role but have not always been having those difficult conversations about the future. Co-dependence between the parents/carer and the cared for person can be a barrier at times. Where parents for instance get into their 70s and 80s it brings real challenges, where some of whom may feel their carer role is their duty and it is difficult to release them from that role as they become less able to cope.

Officers questioned the suitability of having day care and RFI under one management group. It was felt that the focus should be on RFI, which has a real benefit in terms of people's lives through identifying and working to achieve goals. This can include supporting people to access mainstream activities, opening out the community and including people within that. For those with very complex needs this may necessitate the need for 2 carers at times.

Employment Opportunities

There are people now in work who would have been in day centres previously. Aspirations have changed, where parents want their children to have their independence at 18. People can have real lives in the community rather than a more institutionalised existence. Devon currently has approximately 7% of people with disabilities in paid employment with 52 people in the last 6 months (as of December 2022). The County Council as an employer still can do much more. Change is happening and the number of people with a disability working at the County Council has gone up significantly in recent years but it is still not where it should be. Members felt that commissioners need to word contracts to ensure the inclusion and employment of people with disabilities.

Infrastructure

Concern was raised about the lack of consideration in district Local Plans about assisted living, such as front doors on new homes not being able to fit wheelchairs through as standard. Members noted that there is a role for other departments within the County Council in terms of supporting RFI such as the Highways Department putting in the correct infrastructure and adaptations for wheelchair users for instance.

Supported Living

Most people now at aged 18 go into supported living for their independence rather than residential care and that more institutionalised pathway. There is a shortage of supported living currently in the County

due to staffing availability and issues with housing stock sufficiency, which results in people subsequently living with their parents into their 20s and beyond.

Smart Technology and IT

The County Council was described to members as being forward thinking in terms of the use of IT and technology. Technology has made life much easier for disabled people and is an important part of RFI, where the team will promote the use of Alexa type smart device, automatic hoovers and lawn mowers etc.

Respite

A much bigger cohort of people is using respite care as opposed to day care. Children's Services offers a huge amount of respite, which can be problematic in terms of when young people transition to adult services and there is not the same level of availability. There is a need to assess the strategic approach of both children's and adult services to ensure both departments are aiming to achieve the same outcome of independence for adults.

Direct Payments

Concern was raised by members as to how appropriately direct payments were being used. Officers were not aware of any issue in Adult Social Care, where there are regular audits of direct payment cards. Quite often people are not spending all their direct payment and when there is over a certain amount on the card the funds are returned centrally. There is a concern that the County Council is directly funding family members as 'employees' paid per hour for care.

Carers

It is common where carers do not want a carers assessment and admit to their caring role.

Case Studies

At each of the Replacement Day Care Centres members met with parents, carers and service users. The following anonymised case studies were taken:

Case Study - John

Members met with Sheila, a parent of John, who is in his 40s and attends the Nichols Centre.

- John is profoundly disabled. They live in a rural area where it was difficult going for a walk with John in a wheelchair.
- John was previously using Rosalind House in Tiverton but since its closure he gets transport to Exeter to avoid isolation in winter months.
- Sheila advised that she was unsure whether she would want a carer at the house.
- John could not live on his own. John is non-verbal and Sheila said she has to do everything for him.
- Sheila initially commented that if all the remaining day centres were closed she would 'commit suicide'. She would not put John into residential care but find a way to cope, with him at home with carers.
- Sheila advised that she was also a carer for her elderly mother and aunt.
- Sheila would like the provision at the Centre to stay the same and is happy with it in Exeter if there cannot be something in Tiverton.
- Swimming has stopped which is a shame as John used to do many more activities. John does not do much at the Centre now beyond walking to the supermarket, some mixing with others and sitting in a chair.
- In response to a question from members, Sheila commented that she had not made plans for the future in terms of John's care.

Case Study - James

Members met with Jan and Helen who are full time carers of Jan's brother James, who's in his 50s, who attends Abbey Rise. During discussion reference was made to the following:

- James had a stroke at birth. When James and Jan's mum died in 2017 Jan and Helen took over the full-time care role. It was a huge learning curve for them.
- Jan and Helen do not currently have transport for their brother. They need a £10,000 deposit to get a suitable vehicle which can transport James in his wheelchair and they cannot afford this at the moment.
- They receive 10 hours of carer support a week.
- Jan has reduced her work hours to 15 per week, and she is now paid 20 hours a week at £14.52 an hour to care for James.
- James really looks forward to attending the day centre and is much more settled afterwards.
- Jan and Helen described the Abbey Rise Centre as being 'everything' to them. They feel that James 'gets sick' of seeing just them. They recognise the centre has been underutilised since Covid. The building should be used by more people in the town.
- Lockdown was extremely challenging, and it had a huge impact on all the people who would have attended the Centre but were unable to.
- Another day centre in Yelverton closed during Covid, and it seems the amount of provision is shrinking.
- Unsure why there is a waiting list at Abbey Rise. They cannot understand why the centre is not used by more people.
- RFI is feasible for some, but the model does not work for everyone. It was described as 'patronising for some more complex people' such as James who is incontinent and virtually non-verbal. Jan and Helen advised that they were not stuck in their ways and quite open to change but felt that they were already at the limit of James's independence in terms of his attending Abbey Rise.
- Staff at Abbey Rise are brilliant.
- Social care determine that James has 2 to 1 care which they view as unnecessary. It is baffling the barriers that social care put in place.
- Other than when Jan's mum was in hospital and James was in residential care for a month, they have not had any respite care for James.
- James was at Abbey Rise 5 days a week until Covid.
- The primary worry if the centre closed would be the impact on James. Jan and Helen felt that they would somehow cope, but other families would not be able to and would struggle massively, especially if they had less understanding of the complex system or financial means. Jan's family have always taken responsibility for James and not relied on the state.
- Question marks about the safeguarding of people who are cared for solely at home.
- It is difficult in rurality's accessing services.
- Residential home drop-ins were offered pre-Covid, but DCC are no longer facilitating this but homes could potentially organise independently.

Case Study - Eve

Members met with Eve and Fay. Fay advised that she was the sister of Eve, who had been injured at birth, and since her parents died had been her full-time carer.

- Eve loves Rushbrook and attends 3 days a week. Fay cannot praise the Centre and its staff highly enough. Staff, some of whom they have known for years, are friends with Eve and provide a community of people for her. It is a fantastic resource, with second to none care.
- Without Rushbrook, Fay is not sure what other care Eve would have. Fay's experience of private sector care has not been good. Covid 19 had a hugely negative impact on Eve's wellbeing.
- RFI will not help Eve and the other people who use Rushbrook. These are amongst the most vulnerable people in the County, and it does not always seem as though people understand what is in the best interests of the individuals concerned. Eve cannot stand or do anything unaided.
- The co-production exercise revealed the need for some space between loved ones (the carer and the cared for) in order to be able to sustain the relationship.
- Fay has had issues with direct payments. It is difficult finding carers to support Eve at home. Fay provides the gaps in all Eve's care. Not all parent/carers are able to advocate as Fay can, and this is a worry.
- Fay is not inflexible and understands that adjustments may need to be made to services.
- Community projects could be undertaken to help support people.

Fay also presented members with a letter from Eve:

Hello, my name is Eve,

Thank you for coming to meet us today. Welcome to our wonderful day centre. Let me make you welcome – grab a cuppa, pull up a chair and come and have a chinwag with me.

*I sustained brain damage when I was born so I cannot communicate with you in a conventional way. My sister Fay who (we joke) sometimes knows me better than I know me, will tell you what I want to say. My sister (who knows a bit about these things) says that I lack legal capacity for the purposes of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, as I understand do many people who attend the day centres. This means that, in addition to any other statutory duties, you guys have a legal obligation to act in our best interests. I have told her not to worry as I am sure that you are good people who will do right by us. I know that you are very busy people so I will get straight to the point - **PLEASE DON'T CLOSE OUR DAY CENTRES**. They are a lifeline to me, my friends, and our families - so vital to our physical and mental health and wellbeing.*

Let me tell you a little bit about me. I live at home with my sister Fay – I know she loves me lots and we do exciting things together, but I also need my own space. I am the ultimate GO FOR IT GIRL and although I love my sister and our home together, I also need to be out and about. It is also important for my relationship with my sister that (as much as we love each other) we have time apart. Because of my disabilities I cannot make friends in the usual way – my carers and colleagues at Rushbrook are my friends and their love and laughter lights my day. Rushbrook is a dream location as it enables me to engage in the activities which I enjoy - walking in Totnes, baking, music and art and crafts as well as the very important, social chit chat.

I have complex care needs and I need support with every aspect of my daily life including with eating, using the toilet and mobility I require 24-hour support from people who know me well to keep me safe and happy. The opportunity to walk is vital to my health and wellbeing and the staff who support me at Rushbrook have been trained to help me to retain my mobility. Also, I still have to be careful to minimise the risks of contracting covid which could be very serious for me.

My sister and I do not believe that the complex care and support which I receive from the wonderful guys at Rushbrook could be replicated by a private provider/ that any such change would be in my best interests. Covid was a terrible time for me, having to stay at home in isolation with my family (much as I love them) had a serious adverse effect on my physical and mental health and wellbeing. I feel like I have returned to the sunlight again at Rushbrook – please do not take that away from me and my friends. Thank you for listening.

Love from Eve xx

Conclusion

It was clear that the day centres members visited appeared to be operating below the critical mass. Members recognised the viability of the day centres had to be in question given the numbers of people using the service and that the direction of travel for Adult Social Care was very much to focus on developing the RFI service. Members recognised that expectations have changed in terms of day care provision, and it is about meaningful outcomes for the service user. However, members were also minded that RFI was not necessarily designed for the people who were currently using the day care settings that were visited, so while the ethos of RFI seemed admirable it was not a panacea for all. Appropriate provision must be available for those people like John, James and Eve whose complex needs require significant support and whose quality of care must never be compromised.

The Committee should continue to consider further visits in line with the work programme to broaden members understanding on complex topics.

Members also wished to place on record their thanks to the officers involved in leading the visits, along with the staff who supported the various tours of the different centres. Foremost, members wish to thank the service users, along with their parents and carers for their time and understanding during these visits.

**Councillor Richard Scott,
Chair, Replacement Day Car Service – Site Visits,
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee**

Electoral Divisions: All
Local Government Act 1972
List of Background Papers
Contact for Enquiries: Dan Looker
Tel No: (01392) 382232

There are no equality issues associated with this report

Bibliography

[Learning Disability Day Service Review June 2022 – Impact Assessment \(Devon County Council\)](#)