

REPLACEMENT DAY CARE SERVICE SITE VISITS

HEALTH AND ADULT CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 2023

BACKGROUND

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. Members wanted to get 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.

CURRENT SITUATION

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. 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 longterm alternative solution.

RUSHBROOK, TOTNES



NICHOLS, EXETER



ABBEY RISE, TAVISTOCK



ROSALIND, TIVERTON



PEOPLE RECEIVING
SUPPORT (JULY
2022)

7 PEOPLE

5 PEOPLE

5 PEOPLE

2 PEOPLE

MAXIMUM NUMBER
OF PEOPLE
SUPPORTED PER DAY

3 PEOPLE

4 PEOPLE

3 PEOPLE

2 PEOPLE

MEMBER VISITS

Members were invited to undertake a series of visits to the County Council's learning disability day centres:

1. Nichols Centre, Exeter (1st November 2022) - Councillors Richard Scott and Pru Maskell.
2. Abbey Rise, Tavistock (7th November 2022) - Councillors Richard Scott, Linda Hellyer and Debo Sellis.
3. Rushbrook Centre, Totnes (10th November 2022) - Councillors Richard Scott and Sara Randall Johnson.

FINDINGS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED



Replacement Day Care

The centres immediately seemed inefficient to Members to have sizeable buildings with so few people attending the settings. Resources were not being maximised with less than 20 people using the 4 day centres.

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. 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 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.

Reaching for Independence Service (RFI)

RFI work with people to reduce reliance and enable independence. 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. 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 Council as an employer still can do much more. Change is happening and the number of people with a disability working at the 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. 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.

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..

Respite

More people are 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.



Smart Technology and IT

The Council was described 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.

CONCLUSIONS

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 whose complex needs require significant support and whose quality of care must never be compromised.

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.