

NORTH DEVON LINK CENTRES

Report of the Locality Director (Care and Health), Devon County Council and NHS Devon CCG

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to agree the following recommendations:

1. Re-open three of the four Link Centre buildings (Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe) as soon as it is deemed safe to do so under Covid-19 guidelines.
2. Holsworthy centre to remain closed and move the once-weekly morning drop-in session to an alternative venue in the town.
3. A local implementation plan and timeframe for redesign of the service to be developed for each centre, including efficiency and management arrangements. Link Centre staff to increasingly focus on outreach support with the mental health social work teams
4. Work with the Link Centre staff, service users, local Councillors and local community and voluntary sector representatives to establish:
 - a. the outreach services to be delivered in the wider community to ensure equity of provision across all of North Devon. This may include using other community facilities
 - b. which of the existing non-specialist services can be delivered by local community providers. These will need to be cost-effective and within the available budget.
5. Each local implementation plan to assess the potential for wider community use of the building in partnership with local stakeholders
6. Progress on each of the four local implementation plans is reported to Adult Care and Health Scrutiny Committee at its meeting scheduled for 21 March 2023

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## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report sets out the recommended future model for the North Devon Link Centre Service (NDLS) based on findings from a service review, the impact of Covid-19, and feedback received in the engagement and consultation process.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The North Devon Link Service is unique to North Devon, established in 1992 as a Devon County Council (DCC) in-house service.
- 2.2 The service supports people with a wide range of mild mental health needs, is open to all and is free to access. In addition to mental health concerns, people using the service may also have autism, a learning disability, be homeless or receiving support for substance misuse.
- 2.3 The Link Service is part of the health and care system supporting mental health needs across Northern Devon. Other services include: Community Mental Health Teams, Mental Health Social Work Teams, crisis services such as The Moorings Crisis Café, a 24-hour support phone line from Mental Health Matters and Devon Partnership Trust's First Response Service. The Link Service does not provide urgent or crisis support.
- 2.4 Approximately 50% of people who are currently supported by the Link Service are also in receipt of other health and social care community services delivered by Devon Partnership Trust.
- 2.5 There are four centres across North Devon (Barnstaple, Bideford, Holsworthy and Ilfracombe) supporting 264 registered service users. The service provides a traditional drop-in day service together with some outreach and group sessions. The outreach sessions aim to build confidence to encourage people to attend the centres, and the group sessions focus on wellbeing.
- 2.6 The service is the responsibility of the Council but is managed by Devon Partnership Trust (DPT) under a Section 75 Agreement. The service costs £480k per year to run (mostly staff costs), funded by the Council, which also owns the buildings.
- 2.7 Like many day centres, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the service has moved from face to face to virtual support, mostly by telephone.
- 2.8 Since December 2020, alongside virtual support, staff have been working with the DPT North Devon Mental Health Social Work Teams to provide

short-term support for people in addition to those registered with the Link Service.

2.9 A 2019 review of the Link Service found that many of the services offered were not specialist and were also offered by the local community and voluntary sector: for example, access to IT, classes, support for loneliness and isolation, and help with form-filling.

2.10 A further review was undertaken in May 2021 to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the service.

2.11 In line with local guidance and whilst Covid rates remain high in Devon, the buildings remain closed.

### 3. PROPOSAL TO REDESIGN THE SERVICE

3.1 There is a national focus on improving and developing the way we deliver community mental health services, including national investment and the introduction of the Community Mental Health Framework.

3.2 Following the review findings that many of the Link Centre services could be delivered by the community and voluntary sector, an outline proposal to redesign the service was developed.

3.3 An engagement process with service users, stakeholders and staff took place between 9 August and 13 September 2021 on that original proposal.

3.4 Feedback from the engagement was heeded and a revised proposal was developed to take to public consultation:

‘Redesign the North Devon Link Service to become a community offer that continues to meet the needs of people with varying levels of support, in a wider variety of accessible community settings across Northern Devon. We will continue to run the current service whilst those other services are set up, to ensure no one is left without the support they currently receive’.

### 4. CONSULTATION

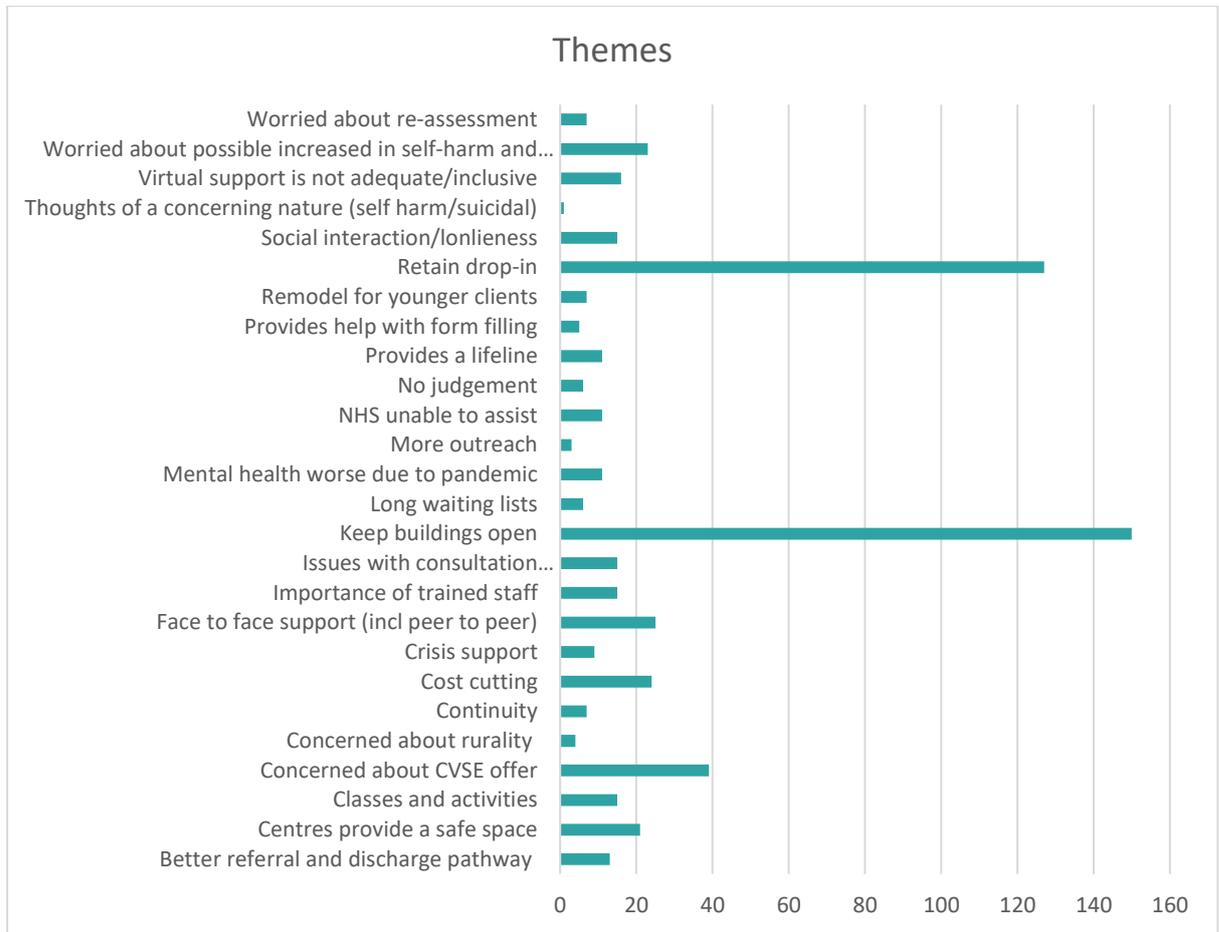
4.1 The four-week public consultation took place between 23 September and 22 October 2021, alongside a staff consultation supported by HR.

4.2 Recognising that people who use the North Devon Link Services may be unable to access IT, a copy of the questionnaire with a pre-paid envelope was posted to all service users.

- 4.3 Link Centre staff, all referrers to the service, and the community mental health teams were consulted and they also encouraged and supported service users to respond.
- 4.4 The Cabinet member for care and health met with local MPs, and he and the Locality Director for North and East Devon met with county councillors representing each of the four towns during the engagement period.
- 4.5 All North Devon GP practices and practice managers were contacted direct. DCC and DPT officers attended the Northern Integrated Delivery Group and a public stakeholder meeting with practice managers, patient representatives and other stakeholders.
- 4.6 Three online public events were held, including one in the evening following public feedback, and three staff consultation events.

## 5 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- 5.1 256 responses were received: 41 by post, 49 by e-mail, 144 via the Council Have your Say webpage and 22 by social media. In some instances, duplicate responses were made through more than one route. The webinars were less well-attended, with 9 attendees in total.
- 5.2 Two on-line petitions against the closure of the Link Centres were established on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org). As of 27 October, there were 357 signatures on the petition relating to the four centres, and 17 signatures on the petition specific to Barnstaple.
- 5.3 69% of respondents did not agree with the proposal but offered no alternative. 29% did not agree and suggested alternatives, and 2% of responders agreed with the consultation proposal. Themes of the responses are shown below:



- 5.4 A consistent message in the feedback was that any significant change in the services offered at the Link Centres would have a detrimental impact on the mental wellbeing of attendees.
- 5.5 Respondents overwhelmingly advocated for the drop-in sessions to remain, citing them as a way to reduce loneliness and isolation, and considered a 'safe space' where individuals did not feel judged.
- 5.6 Alternative options suggested through the public and staff consultations were considered alongside the analysis of wider feedback and are shown in the table below:

|   | <b>Options considered</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Care Act eligible service delivered by specialist staff</b>                     | <b>Accessible local services delivered by VCS</b>           | <b>Good use of resource</b>                                                                                                                                    | <b>Promoting Independence</b> | <b>Listening to consultation feedback</b>                                                          | <b>Total</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | <p>Consultation proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Buildings remain closed</b></li> <li>• continue to support existing service users remotely</li> <li>• remainder of the staff to the short-term enabling work with the ND MH Social Work Teams.</li> <li>• Investment in CVS for the provision of services to others across a wider areas of Northern Devon.</li> <li>• Reviews/assessment undertaken to ensure people are receiving the right support.</li> </ul> | <p>4</p> <p>This will be 5 in the longer term when CVS services are developed.</p> | <p>3</p> <p>CVS support will take some time to develop.</p> | <p>3.5</p> <p>DCC buildings will be empty whilst using other facilities.</p> <p>Specialist staff will eventually be delivering solely a statutory service.</p> | 5                             | <p>0</p> <p>The buildings will remain closed with no drop in.</p>                                  | 15.5         |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Buildings remain closed</b></li> <li>• NDLS staff delivering the short-term enabling work with the MH Social Work Teams.</li> <li>• Investment in CVS for the provision of services to others across a wider area of Northern Devon.</li> <li>• Quickly instigate reduced drop-in services in each town in alternative buildings delivered by CVS whilst further development is carried out.</li> </ul>                                        | 5                                                                                  | <p>3</p> <p>CVS support will take some time to develop.</p> | <p>3</p> <p>DCC buildings will be empty whilst using other facilities.</p> <p>Specialist staff will eventually be delivering solely a statutory service.</p>   | 4                             | <p>2</p> <p>The buildings will remain closed but there will be some drop delivered by the CVS.</p> | 17           |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |   |                                                                    |   |                                             |   |                             |     |     |                                                                                                               |                       |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews/assessment undertaken to ensure people are receiving the right support.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |   |                                                                    |   |                                             |   |                             |     |     |                                                                                                               |                       |
| 3 | <p><b>To allow time to understand what alternatives are required and model resource required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Buildings re-open</b></li> <li>• NDLS staff delivering the Care Act 2014 service with the Mental Health Social Care Team.</li> <li>• NDLS staff will also deliver a reduced drop-in service in current NDLS buildings as a temporary measure</li> <li>• Reviews/assessment undertaken to ensure existing NDLS service users are receiving the right support.</li> <li>• Introduce referral criteria for new referrals to the drop in.</li> <li>• Investment in CVS for the provision of services across a wider area of Northern Devon to include drop in, outreach, classes and groups.</li> <li>• Change the model of service delivery to include volunteering and job opportunities and more offers for young people and more community use of the buildings.</li> <li>• As CVS alternative services develop, NDLS staff to eventually solely deliver Care Act 2014 eligible enabling services</li> </ul> | 4 | This will be 5 in the longer term when CVS services are developed. | 3 | CVS support will take some time to develop. | 4 | DCC buildings will be used. | 3.5 | 3.5 | The buildings will open, a limited drop in will be delivered whilst developing services delivered by the CVS. | 18 – preferred option |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                              |   |   |            |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|------------|
|   | with the mental health social work teams.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                              |   |   |            |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Re-open the centres for at least as much time as previously open and preferably more often.</b></li> <li>• Add, or increase, opportunities for one-to-one counselling as much as staff availability allows.</li> <li>• <b>Open similar centres in the rest of Devon towns, building on the experience and success of the centres in North Devon.</b></li> <li>• Provide individual counselling in addition to, not instead of, attendance at the centres.</li> <li>• Consult the clients to see what more they would like.</li> </ul> | 0<br><br>There will be no delivery of a Care Act 2014 eligible services. | 1<br><br>The services would still only be available in the current towns not delivered by the CVS.<br><br>2<br><br>Services delivered over a wider area but not by CVS. | 1<br><br>Staff would not be delivery a statutory service.                    | 1 | 5 | 8<br><br>9 |
| 5 | <p><b>Staff proposal</b></p> <p><b>Mental Health surgery/hub held in community settings</b> signposting and proactive support working alongside the voluntary sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include support for younger people.</li> <li>• A clear referral and discharge process.</li> <li>• Peer support to be developed so that it can eventually run itself.</li> <li>• Signpost to other services.</li> <li>• At the same time support the Mental Health Social work team.</li> </ul>                                                                 | 3<br><br>There will be less staff to deliver the Care Act 2014 service.  | 3<br><br>Services will be delivered across a wider geographical area.<br><br>Not delivered by the CVS.                                                                  | 3<br><br>Staff will only partly be running a Care Act 2014 eligible service. | 3 | 2 | 14         |

## 7. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of running the centres is currently £480k per year. There are no plans to reduce investment.

## 8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The lawful implications of the proposal have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report on the proposal set out above. The legal considerations include Devon County Council's statutory responsibility to provide a service to people who are eligible for services under the Care Act 2014, a legal responsibility to carry out consultation with staff lasting 30 days and a full and meaningful engagement and consultation process with service users and stakeholders.

## 9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS (INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE)

- 9.1 We want people to lead meaningful lives within their communities. There are clear social and economic benefits in supporting all adults to live as independently as possible. Environmental impact considerations will be looked at as part of the impact assessment.

## 10. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 We want people with health and care needs to have the same opportunities as everyone else and to lead meaningful lives in their communities. An impact assessment has been completed.

## 11. RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken to safeguard the Council's position. In addition, work is underway with the Community Mental Health Teams to support discharge options, alongside the development of support within the community and voluntary sector. The project risk register has been updated as appropriate.

## 12. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

- 12.1 Public Health are taking forward actions developed across the wider Council to support people to live as independently as possible within their communities and to reduce health inequalities. Our proposal aligns with *Healthy and Happy Communities*, Devon's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 to 2025.

Tim Golby

Locality Director (North and East), Devon County Council and Devon Clinical Commissioning Group

Electoral Divisions: North Devon and Torridge

Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Services:

Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Adult Care and Health: Jennie Stephens

**Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers**

Contact for Enquiries: Sarah Dent, Commissioning Development Officer

Tel No: 07970285320

**Background Paper**

**Date**

**File Reference**

Equality Impact Assessment

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/published/>

Public Consultation Document

[\*\*North Devon Link MH Service Public Consultation document - final 22.9.21\*\*](#)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Key findings from July 2019 review**

Centre staff are committed and passionate about what they do.

The service is provided to people from across the mental health spectrum from little need to those who meet the secondary mental health threshold.

Some people had been attending the service for up to 20 years, some on and off as they needed support, but others continuously as a place to socialise and receive support.

Most people who used the service were between 41 and 65, suggesting that the service provision is not the support that younger people require.

There was no admission or discharge criteria.

At the time of the review only 11% of service users had been identified as being potentially eligible under the Care Act 2014 and 43.25% of service users in receipt of another DPT service. The Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) were the main referrers, using the NDLS for monitoring people discharged from their caseload.

A survey of people who use the service said they used the centres as a place to meet other people and feel safe, supported and listened to. Their friends go there, and they don't need to pay for it. Some people identified other groups outside of the Link Centre that they would like to see developed and other wanted more activities to be provided in the Centre.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Key findings from Impact of Covid-19 review**

Feedback on the revised service model operating during the Covid-19 pandemic was sought from people who use the NDLS service (October '20 survey) and from staff working in and/or connected to the centres (Summer '20, April '21). The response to the survey from service users was very low, with feedback mostly from people who access the service to combat loneliness or social isolation.

The number of people who are supported by the service has significantly reduced during the pandemic. Whilst services moved to a virtual delivery during the pandemic this has been predominately by telephone with very limited progress around virtual groups. A review of three open access voluntary organisations that support people with similar needs has shown some excellent virtual activities and ongoing support that could be developed.

NDLS staff have attended training and the opportunity to trial new ways of working, but wish to reopen the centres and operate as before.

Based on the analysis undertaken, maintaining the previous model of support will not meet DCC's strategic aim of promoting independence and the service will continue to support people who do not have a Care Act eligible need.

## Appendix 3

### Engagement responses

A total of 147 responses were received with 43 of those responses via the Devon County Council Have Your Say webpage. The feedback was reviewed, considered and themes gathered to inform the revised proposal for consultation.

Service users told us that the overwhelming reason for attending the North Devon Link Service was to receive support and guidance around mental health and as a place to meet people and combat loneliness – for many it was both reasons. Most people attended the drop-in part of the service, closely followed by classes and groups. Some people attended both. Three quarters of responses told us that they received virtual support by phone during the pandemic. It is acknowledged that most people said they would like to see the buildings stay open but some responses included seeing more services in the community.

Around 45 responses were received from stakeholders with 30 of those from Ilfracombe. The majority of stakeholders told us that they refer to/use or recommend the North Devon Link Service for support and guidance around mental health and as a place to meet people and combat loneliness. They mainly referred to/used or made people aware of drop-in, Community Support and classes and groups fairly equally. Whilst the main response was to keep the NDLS buildings stay open with a continued drop-in, they have also suggested services that they would like to see in the community such as services for younger people, outdoor activities, holistic treatments and support and more mental health support group to help people gain self-esteem and confidence.

This document represents the view of NDLS users gathered through the reviews, engagement and consultation. We have not gained views from people for whom this service isn't suitable and who would require an alternative service.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Staff Consultation**

19 out of the 20 staff took part in the staff consultation meetings and feedback was received from 14 staff.

Staff voiced concerns about how the changes would affect service users and strongly felt the Link Centre service was essential. There was also a strong feeling of accountability to the community of North Devon and the mental health needs of people who have been supported by the service.

Concerns were raised about travel with not all staff having access to vehicles, and staff on part-time contracts concerned they would spend more time driving than providing a service.

Some concerns were raised around working within the community and lone working.

Some constructive feedback was received from the staff in terms of potential alternative models, and these are included in the options table.

## Appendix 5 Public Frequently Asked Questions

### North Devon Link Service Stakeholder and Service User Consultation Frequently Asked Questions UPDATED: 27/10/21 (consultation closing date)

Below are frequently asked questions and statements received during the consultation, which ran from 23 September until Friday 22 October 2021.

- 1. It is wrong to try and replace specialist and highly trained staff with volunteers and community groups. There is no capacity left in voluntary sector and volunteers are burnt out. Voluntary support should not be a replacement for professional support. MH is complicated and getting it wrong can make things worse.**

This proposal is not suggesting extra support is required from unpaid volunteers. The **community and voluntary sector (sometimes known as the third sector)** is huge and incredibly diverse and covers everything from neighbourhood watch groups to social enterprises to national and international charities and everything in between. There is a Manager for each North Devon Link Service and the rest of the team are Support Workers. Many Community and Voluntary Sector organisations employ specialist and skilled staff of this level and this kind of support could be enhanced by commissioning additional support from this sector.

Many of the people who use North Devon Link Services also access to DPT services for specialist support.

- 2. Will services continue to be delivered virtually?**

The intention with this proposal is to provide face to face support but more locally. Services would only be provided virtually where there is a particular request. However, we have learnt through Covid-19, some people have been able to access services virtually who wouldn't be able to if they had to attend physically. For example, people who are unwilling or unable to leave their house. Many services want to continue to deliver some aspects of virtual support alongside face to face.

- 3. Could there be a more creative use of the spaces available or use other buildings in the town for the delivery of a service to be a real community asset, meeting needs such as digital exclusion by providing workspaces, a resource space etc?**

Proposals such as these will be considered as part of the final decision together with ideas about how any such facilities might be run.

**4. Are people collected from home and taken/bused to the centres?**

In most situations this isn't the case. The purpose of outreach for many people is to encourage attendance at the centre. People in receipt of outreach may be collected and walked to the centre but the numbers were very low.

**5. Are Social Prescribers allowed to refer to the North Devon Link Service?**

Social Prescribers have always been able to refer to the North Devon Link Service. However, since November 2020, nobody has been able to refer to the service due to the change of service delivery because of Covid-19.

**6. Mental Health Professionals should be designing this service.**

This consultation is run jointly with Devon Partnership NHS Trust who are the mental health trust for Devon. We are working together to review the consultation responses to inform any redesign.

**7. Why has there been no face-to-face meetings as part of this consultation?**

It is recognised that service user and stakeholder face to face meetings would be most appropriate for this consultation process. However, Public Health Devon and Devon County Council Corporate and Legal Services have advised that with cases of Covid-19 expected to remain high and with Devon being classified as an Enhance Response Area, face-to-face public meetings should not take place. We have taken reasonable measures to make the consultation as accessible as possible:

A copy of the consultation document was sent to all North Devon Link Service users with a stamped addressed envelope to provide the opportunity for written feedback either by post or e-mail.

The consultation document and accompanying questionnaire was published on the Devon County Council Have Your Say webpage with the opportunity to provide feedback.

Three virtual events being hosted by Teams Live Events.

**8. Will classes and groups like those accessed through the Link Centres still be available?**

We have heard feedback from the engagement process about how important the groups and classes are to the people who use the centres. It is the aim of this proposal to have those groups and classes running more widely than just the four towns where the centres are based.

Devon Recovery Learning Community provide a wide range of free, open access opportunities to learn about mental health and Recovery – many are still running virtually at present. [Devon Recovery Learning Community - supporting you to learn to live well - Devon Recovery Learning Community \(devonrlc.co.uk\)](https://www.devonrlc.co.uk)

**9. The proposal is vague a present. How will people be able to access the new service and the service that will be provided by the community and voluntary sector?**

We appreciate that you would like more information, but we haven't done any of the detail work yet because we don't know if this proposal will go ahead – it will depend on the outcome of the consultation and it is important not to pre-empt that.

**10. Is this the right time to be closing mental health services when we hear on the news all the time about the impact of Covid-19 on people's mental health?**

It is important to note that we are not closing a service, rather we are proposing that it is delivered differently. We know that public transport is poor in North Devon and some people do not have transport or other means to get to the current centres. We want to ensure that the service is delivered more flexibly and widely across Northern Devon so more people can access support.

**11. It is important that people with poor mental health have a safe space to go to where they don't feel judged. The drop in provides this.**

We will consider all the feedback that is received, and we have received feedback that people value the drop-in element. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, we would look at what services are offered in each town and how they can best be delivered, and other ways to provide a drop in could be investigated.

**12. Are Devon County Council making this change because they want to sell the buildings and get more money?**

That consideration hasn't been discussed as part of this proposal as it is about service redesign, not making cuts or saving money.

**13. How much do the buildings cost to run?**

We are confirming that information and will share it as soon as we can. This year and last year were not typical years because of Covid-19.

**14. Where will people go in crisis if this service closes?**

This service should not be used as a crisis service, it has never been for people in crisis and the staff are not trained or qualified to provide that support. DPTs crisis services are for those incidences, through their 24/7 urgent mental health helpline 0808 196 8708.

**15. It appears that in the new format, people will need to be assessed as having a need. This takes time and often people with MH issues do not**

**have time to hang around and wait. Can you clarify this? How will this work?**

It's really important to ensure that existing service users have continuity of care and support. Each person will have an assessment by their local service, so we can understand their current needs to ensure it is meeting their need, and signpost if necessary or assess under the care act to establish ongoing support. It will be done in a timely way and staff will be trained to undertake these assessments. People will be able to access support services while waiting for an assessment.

**16. Cases and issues of MH conditions have been increasing. I do not believe that people have been able to access MH services easily. I am concerned that things are going to get more difficult, also with the assessments.**

Access to services hasn't changed. The first response service is open for self-referrals or you can ask your GP to refer you in. This won't change with the consultation.

**17. How will the £3.65M be spent?**

That money is part of the investment for the Community Mental Health Framework and is not part of this consultation. However, for those interested, more detail can be found here: <https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/resources/community-mental-health-framework/what-is-the-community-mental-health-framework>

**18. Could you define what 'Support' means?**

By support we mean helping people – this could include everything from professional assessment to helping prevent loneliness and isolation.

**19. Who will be doing the assessments? How soon do these take place?**

Part of the proposal is for the link centre staff to conduct these assessments. Existing service users will have assessments with staff they already know. We aim for them to be completed in the standard 28 days assessment time.

**20. Have we sought the views of practice managers?**

We have been linking with the practice managers through the Northern Integrated Delivery Group (IDG), and we have also contacted all North Devon GP surgeries with details of the consultation process.

**21. The waits to access mental health services in North Devon are long, 2 years or more. The Link Service is all that is available whilst waiting to be seen. What will happen if the Link Service closes?**

The proposal is to redesign the service rather than close them - and people will not be left without a service.

**22. What will be available for people who are classed as too risky for mainstream community services? All that is currently available to them is the North Devon Link Service.**

We will ensure that nobody is left without a service. The purpose of the assessment and review process is to ensure that everyone gets the right support for their needs. There will be a wide range of services available that will meet a wide range of needs.

**23. The current Link Centre service should be extended and run more often.**

Our proposal would mean that a wider range of options would be available to provide support to more people, and that could mean offering services at different times and / or longer hours than some of the current centres. This consultation is about listening to feedback on our proposal as well as any alternative suggestions, and we will consider requests like this as part of that process.

**24. What are the cost comparisons for the Link Centre as it remains and how much the alternative will cost if it provides the same level of support?**

We cannot make this comparison at the moment. We know how much it costs to run the Link Service when operating fully, and we know how that figure is made. Because we don't know if this proposal will go ahead, we haven't approached community and voluntary sector groups for any costings.

**25. Are you able to provide a rough estimate of what it would cost to expand services from the Link Centre so as to offer more to a greater number of people (including outreach) as compared to what it will cost to provide a similar level of service to the same number of people using the voluntary sector and community groups?**

We have received ideas through the consultation about how services from the Link Centre could be expanded to offer more to a greater number of people and will work with people with lived experience to develop any changes to the service. This has not been costed during this proposal stage.

**26. Please provide details of the voluntary sector organisations that you will be commissioning.**

We haven't started this work yet as we are still in proposal stage.

**27. What evidence is there that mental health services are met by community and voluntary sector organisations?**

Services are delivered differently all over the county. If the proposal were to go ahead, we would like to work with staff, service users and local people to design what would work well for North Devon. We are not proposing that specific and specialist mental health support is met by the voluntary and community sector, but that they can provide some of the other services such as help with form-filling, access to IT, and services to help prevent loneliness and social isolation.

**28. How is performance of mental health services measured?**

It is standard practice that services that are delivered directly or commissioned to be delivered by other organisations are managed and monitored through a variety of performance reporting mechanisms including performance against an agreed set of measures and looking at how the service benchmarks against other comparable services and national outcomes frameworks.

**29. Is there a further consultation process once you have designed a different service?**

There would not be a formal consultation. If the proposal were to go ahead, we would like to work with staff, service users and local people to design what would work well for North Devon.

**30. What will happen to the buildings if you decide to pursue the closure of a buildings-based service?**

This consultation is about the service redesign and not the physical buildings. If the buildings were to close, then any decision as to their future use would fall to Devon County Council which owns them. Those conversations have not taken place as it would not be appropriate to pre-empt the outcome of the consultation.