

The Care Forum

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South Glos Health & Social Care Network Meeting With South Glos Learning Difficulties Service on Modernising Day Services 22 January, The Care Forum Meeting Room

Attendees: Jan Davis, Aspects and Milestones Trust; Liz Sheridan, Aspects and Milestones Trust; Ken Thompson, South Gloucestershire Disability Action ; Janet Biggin, South Glos Council - Councillor; Graham Kennedy, Save Cossham Group; Joan Kennedy, Save Cossham Group; Esther Moore, Brandon Day Services; Andy Perkins, South Glos Council; Colleague of Ken Thompson, South Gloucestershire Disability Action ; Kay Tily, Access-Ability; Mike Luff, Access-Ability; Matt Britt, Brandon Trust; David Harwood, Spot On; Bridget Gordon, South Glos Council - Community Care; Gillian Turner, The Care Forum.

Apologies: Gill Kirby, Thornbury & District Club for Disabled People; Margaret Power, Home Farm Trust; Melanie Gibbs, South Gloucestershire PCT; Sandra Grant, South Glos Council - Councillor; Nigel Davis, Four Towns and Vale Link Community Transport; Therese Gillespie, South Glos Council -Children and Young People

Notes of the Meeting

Chaired by Gillian Turner, The Care Forum.

Bridget Gordon, Planning and Partnerships Officer, introduced the discussion paper asking what you think about modernising day services for people with learning difficulties which had been sent out in advance. A copy is attached or you can see it on the Council's website at www.southglos.gov.uk/mcmshosting/ui/sites/council/Applications/Consultations.htm

Bridget explained that this was an engagement process prior to formal consultation. Options for consultation will be out later this year. She said that there will be opportunities for building based services at Turnberries and there is a possibility of another building although no site has been identified. She emphasised that the changes are likely to cost more than current services so it is not a cost cutting exercise.

Notes of the Discussion

Q. Is there any research from other councils which have already moved away from a buildings based service?

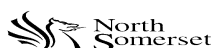
Q If different models are being used by different councils is there any comparative work – do some models give a better response?

A We will check this out over the coming months. Every local authority is doing things in their own way. We are looking at other local authorities and will be organising visits. We have got to do some form of modernization.

Q Could you outline what is so good in North Somerset that you might repeat it.

A At the moment we are looking at what other authorities are doing

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Bristol has drop-in clubs. North Somerset is using local community places. We will visit different schemes. When we get the information we will write a report and feedback all the information and details of the visits.

Q If you are just repeating the same processes you will not give people with learning difficulties options

A If you know of any initiative which seems good do let us know – we want ideas from everybody.

Q You said there could be money for a building. I am concerned that buildings can predetermine activities. We have got a building now what shall we put in it. I would rather think about what people want to do first. The second stage is where will they do it.

Q There is a contradiction in what you aim to provide and having a building.

Q It would be a better use of money to bring a number of buildings up to scratch – to make them accessible.

Q. If you have a building in South Glos the question is where. Some people will have to travel long distances which undermines what the review is about.

Q We should be steering the council away from buildings.

Q I am worried that you are talking about capital investment in a building.

Q We don't provide building-based services we work in communities. Instead of a specialist building you could use a range of buildings and make use of what is already there.

Q The idea of a building can steer things in the wrong direction. You should say 'capital is available for the developing of premises' rather than a building or for development of activities Capital comes out of a particular financial pot you wont be able use that money for something like transport.

A The Council is agreeable to a building but we don't have to have one particular structure in mind. North Somerset is using several buildings in the community.

Q I am concerned that everything should be accessible. You shouldn't need to have a special building for disabled people. All council buildings should be properly accessible

A. We are trying to get away from that separation. A building needs to be suitable for all.

Q. Day centres are closing and what are the people who were using them doing? Some are doing nothing. Services need to be in place before day centres are closed. Learning difficulties is a varied field. We need to look at everyone's requirements. Need specialist workers to work with people with learning difficulties.

Q Have you asked people in day centres what they want?

Q Concern that service users have the right to express their view

Q Are you also asking those who don't use council services?

A We are engaging with service users. We are using speech and language therapists and using videos, mood boards - a range of methods.

Q The key word is inclusion. I have seen the changes in service users with learning difficulties who have moved from dependence to independent living and the difference is startling.

Q Crossways in Downend has 11 self contained flats and a support worker. People with learning difficulties are living independently, accessing transport and shops in the middle of the community . Parents may be concerned because it will be very different from the school- type day centres.

Q Parents don't always see the potential their children have

A Some parents are concerned about the idea of independence. We must get the balance right. Service users views are most important.

Q How will this consultation affect decision making - how will you show us that it has had an impact? You could be a good example for other local authorities.

Q Your documents should specifically indicate where they have changed as a result of consultation.

A This engagement will definitely affect decision making – we are actively looking for ideas and views to inform the options. There will then be a report which will map out options.

Q Consultation has to consider current service users and potential users.

Q There is a third group who don't access day centres now – they need to be consulted too -not just people using services.

A Hope we will get it right and pick up people who have fallen through.

Q A lot of focus is on leisure based activities mainly after 5pm. Also need to look at employment.

Q. I am concerned about the word employment – it's wrong to force people into employment

Q People with learning difficulties may not want day centres to change because of their fear of change but can then feel empowered by the independence it brings.

Employment can empower. People don't know until they are offered that opportunity. There have been previous tokenistic attempts at employment. But can build on genuine interests and can lead to employment eg working with cars.

People may need support to work but can get a lot of value from it.

Q I have a problem with the idea that they have to work.

Q I run a helpline and there are fears that people will have to get a job. But with the right support it can be positive.

Q You cannot put people with learning difficulties in a pigeon hole – they are right across the spectrum. People gain control as opportunities are offered. They get support from each other. Service users are paramount and there won't be a single answer

A Options will be people centred. Each individual's menu will include employment, leisure, education but based on individual needs rather than what we've got now.

Q Transport is key

A Transport is a big issue. South Glos is not good for public transport.

Q These are good ideas for those who are more able but what about the less able who have always gone to day centres, met friends there.

A. Pushing boundaries can give people more. If people need support they will get it.

There was a debate about support for people with learning difficulties with some people feeling that too much was being asked of them and others saying that with the right support they could fulfill their genuine potential.

Q Some people can manage but are thrown by specific instances. How can we support people to ask for help? Things change such as shifts in how we use credit cards, how do we support people through these changes?

Q Transport. It is important that people are trained to be able to use public transport. It takes staff time but there is value in it.

Q Freedom can be scary

A Support mechanisms must be there. For example the Brandon Trust is doing these things.

Q As part of your factfinding can you look at Turnberries? Monitor where people are coming from, how far they travel. Also are peoples expectations being met? It was set up as a community centre with part to be used as a day service but it feels like a day centre which the community can access. The focus has flipped.

A We will look at what the benefits of Turnberries are.

Q Have we learned from the experience of people going to Turnberries? Have we followed people's experience from when things first changed for how it is for them now.

A. We do need to know what went wrong as well as what went right.

Q How many people use day centres and for how many days – what are people doing for the rest of the week do you have figures?

A. A quarter are using them for five day days. One third three or four days and the rest are using them once each week or not at all. Instead people are going to college or accessing other services. There is a large range of providers of community based services. There are 34 places at Turnberries reduced from 90 in the previous day centres. We do have statistics which we can put in the public domain.

Q Was this out of choice?

A People are given opportunities to do other things. Assessment gave other options

Q Will people in residential homes have the same opportunities for consultation?

Q Can you also clarify if in residential care people will have access to other providers and be able to purchase services from different providers?

A I will clarify those points.

Q Will there be any independent advocacy for people without carers or parents?

A Facilitators are going in as I described before. I will check that this applies to those in residential care as well.

Q People go to college for years and have done all the courses. It's the same as a day centre - institutionalised. Individual activities can mean a loss of group activities

A We need to look at the individual and see why they haven't progressed. We need to ask people what they want to do. Before, people did not think they had the right to say what they want. It opens service users' minds as well.

Q The way services are commissioned needs to be more flexible. Going to college is a cheap option. People might need support to move away from that. Nobody says why are you going on that course, what will be the outcomes for you. People are put on it because they need something to do on Monday. There is a culture of using colleges in that way.

Q Colleges offer set menus. They ought to tailor courses to meet people needs which first need to be expressed. Colleges also don't cover holidays. If a person is treated like a child it doesn't help.

Q There should also be the choice to stay at home.

Q Are services open to people living in South Glos?

A They are open to all people living in South Glos including people who move in.

Q Does South Glos provide out of county places- which are expensive? Could it look at re-providing locally?

A Out of county placements are high dependency placements which cannot be provided in the community. South Glos has a disproportionate number of people with learning difficulties because of the closure of the long stay hospitals which were based here. Many of their clients came from London. So we are unlike other local authorities. As people age the number in South Glos will fall.

Q How much do current services cost if you looked at each individual?

A We have got to give options for individual budgets and so will have to give each person an assessment.

Q. Will you give people costings which show for example that the day care place costs say £15,000 per annum and ask what could you do with this?