

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF DAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's scrutiny review of Day Opportunities for Adults.
- 1.2 Day opportunities for adults has its origins in legislation introduced under the National Assistance Act 1948 and was further developed under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the National Health Service Act 1977 (now superseded in the 2014 Care Act, particularly in relation to the Council's duties around the promotion of wellbeing, developing the market, providing information, personal budgets and direct payments and carers support).
- 1.3 Through Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) duty to provide services to people with eligible and assessed needs, day opportunities services have constantly evolved to meet local requirements and meet national guidelines. This includes services provided by SBC, commissioned through the independent or voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, and those people who choose to purchase their own support through a direct payment (personal budget paid by the Council allowing greater flexibility on how this is spent).
- 1.4 Whilst the number of people directly impacted by this scrutiny topic is relatively low (less than 1,000) and is shared across a wide range of services offering different levels of support and engagement, the individuals affected are generally some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents and very often have families and carers whose own wellbeing is directly impacted. Day services are largely utilised by individuals affected by old age, mental ill health, learning disabilities, dementia and autism, conditions which drive some of the greatest inequalities.
- 1.5 However, the profound and continuing impact of COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way the Council has been able to deliver this service during 2020-2021. In line with Government guidance, building-based day opportunities have been closed for extended periods throughout the pandemic, with building-based offers limited to individuals who have been prioritised by risk. As a result, the Council's day services have developed new remote approaches to support the wellbeing of individuals – this has included offering online groups, wellbeing calls and other initiatives designed to help people stay connected. These changes have caused the Council, people who access its services, and key stakeholders to reflect and review what, who and how day opportunities are offered in Stockton-on-Tees.
- 1.6 The Committee's main aims for this review were threefold. Firstly, it sought to understand the current model used by SBC to deliver day opportunities, including their purpose, accessibility and promotion. Secondly, it wanted to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which, in light of the development of new remote approaches to support the wellbeing of individuals, had prompted an understandable reflection on what and how day opportunities

are offered in the Borough. Finally, the Committee was keen on learning about alternative methods of delivery from a community-based perspective which could potentially herald a move away from traditional building-based 'service-driven' provision.

- 1.7 Evidence received indicated that day opportunities have multiple purposes for individuals and their families / carers – they facilitate social connections, activities which promote wellbeing, skills development and greater independence, as well as respite / breaks for the loved ones of those accessing services. As of March 2020, the Council supported around 900 individuals with a range of needs (principally people with learning disabilities and those requiring personal care assistance and support with memory and cognition) to access both in-house and SBC-commissioned services, in addition to those accessing opportunities using a direct payment.
- 1.8 The Committee heard of several factors impacting upon demand for existing, and potentially future, SBC in-house and commissioned services. These included a larger proportion of younger adults (18-24) accessing alternative opportunities through a direct payment (perhaps reflecting what this demographic wants to experience in the community rather than a traditional building-based environment), and ongoing investigations into access to opportunities as part of a residential placement. The existence of a larger number of educational pathways (as an alternative to day opportunities) for people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan provided young people with further choice. It is therefore important for the Council to think carefully about how many individuals still want to be supported within the present model (which constitutes a significant budgetary pressure for SBC) so the appropriate level of resource is in place.
- 1.9 A key aspect of this review was around transitions (younger people moving into Adult Services), something SBC officers acknowledged required further work when considering day opportunities. To this end, the Committee urge a more joined-up approach between the Council's Adults and Health and Children's Services directorates to identify and support opportunities that are most meaningful to younger people, and to strengthen the dissemination of information about existing services. The level of interest in Vision 25 from younger adults, a service which has fostered links with Abbey Hill and uses its social media presence to market itself, provides food-for-thought in terms of how other providers reach out to those individuals with eligible and assessed needs.
- 1.10 The importance of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in light of the increasing number of people using a direct payment to access a wider range of activities should not be underestimated, and the Committee was encouraged to learn of the 50+ VCSE organisations which already exist to support members of the community who may come under the remit of 'Adult Day Services'. The Committee heard several ideas from the VCSE sector on future service delivery, and SBC should consider how it links those with an eligible / assessed need to these opportunities, and how it can work in partnership with Catalyst and the wider sector to potentially unearth funding streams (e.g. community transformation programme) to build on existing provision within the community, including the promotion of volunteering possibilities.

- 1.11 In terms of bolstering the day opportunities offer across the Borough, the Committee welcomed Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust's (TEWV) desire to expand on its current Middlesbrough provision. Both TEWV and SBC should initiate work to identify how this could look given the views of people who access services (existing and potentially future) and their families / carers, including those currently placed outside the Borough – possibly as part of a wider Forum involving VCSE / Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group input which could further reflect on the Trust's experiences of the Amsterdam model which the Committee was informed about.
- 1.12 Like many aspects of life, the COVID-19 pandemic had significant repercussions for day service providers. Social restrictions led to the need to adapt the way services were offered, and the Committee commends providers for the demonstrable efforts to maintain contact / support using innovative practices over the last two years. As evident in other aspects of health and social care provision, the pandemic has necessitated the implementation of alternative means of delivery, and the Committee welcome the intention to continue with those elements which have been embraced by people who access services and their families / carers, as well as the staff themselves.
- 1.13 The terms 'day centres' and 'day opportunities' are often used interchangeably and indistinguishably, and although the former had traditionally been central to the delivery of the latter, this review heard of several alternative community-based day opportunities delivery methods which enabled individuals to access activities that are meaningful to them, support them to be active and valued members of the community, develop confidence, skills and relationships, and empowers them to be equal partners in the design and delivery of local opportunities. However, whilst enabling a wider range of choice is to be embraced, there was also much evidence of the satisfaction of, and indeed reliance on, existing building-based provision from people who access services and their families / carers (as demonstrated in views expressed via pre-review and review consultation).
- 1.14 Critical for any service design / development, ensuring the views of users / families / carers are sought, collated and reflected upon was key, something the Committee remains a very strong advocate for. In addition to the submission of previous consultation summaries, this review actively engaged with several providers as part of its wish to hear directly from those involved in existing services. One of the most striking messages was the feeling that day opportunities should not just be about habit and routine, but should involve a focus on individual growth and development (building confidence and skills) – as one individual who was accessing a service stated, rather than a provider merely being a destination, 'it's about seeing it as a journey'. From a family / carer perspective, the development of their loved one's social (friendships / networks) and personal growth (independence and skills development) within a comfortable, safe environment which treats them with respect and meets all their needs was the principal requirement.
- 1.15 The last two pandemic-impacted years have undoubtedly focused minds when it comes to how services are delivered by SBC and its partners. In reflecting on previous models of provision, required changes due to COVID-19, and considerations around future demand and preferences, the Committee support the Council's ambition to establish co-production groups (with those who use Adult Social Care) that can aid in the future development of day opportunities, and would also urge the creation of a day opportunities peer group to enable

the sharing of ideas / resources. The potential for building-based providers to develop a new / existing community-based programme as part of its offer to foster a wider range of activity and increased integration within the Borough should also be considered, as should further possibilities for the Council and VCSE partners to assist with identified transportation needs.

1.16 As part of initial discussions around this scrutiny topic, several key elements of a good day opportunities for adults offer were identified, including:

- Supports people to do the things that are meaningful to them and helps individuals to live the life they want to live.
- Enables people to establish and grow relationships in their communities, and supports people to be active and valued members of their communities.
- Is developed based upon the needs and views of the people it supports (and their families and carers), and provides people who access services with choice over how they want to meet their assessed needs.
- Supports people to develop the confidence, skills, relationships and abilities that can maximise their control over their lives and access to opportunities.
- Makes full use of existing community facilities and resources as well as opportunities that technology can offer.
- Promotes collaborative working across communities and sectors to deliver outcomes that individuals have identified as important and can act as a signposting mechanism to other services.
- Enables early intervention and preventative services and reduce levels of isolation.
- Is mindful and responsive to national best practice.

The Committee widely supports all the above, though is also conscious that identifying and facilitating individual preferences is not an insignificant task and may have possible resource implications. There is likely to be a wide range of views regarding what people want to do / experience, and whilst some of these may be possible using existing services (whether building or community-based), others may require the identification of new contacts (individuals / organisations) within public / private / voluntary sectors to potentially support a greater range of activity. That said, any attempt to develop more meaningful experiences for people who access services (also benefitting their families / carers) is to be commended, and the Committee welcome the clear intent of all review contributors to progress this very important area of Borough life.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) **SBC and its relevant partners continue working with people accessing services and their families / carers to understand demand for both traditional building-based day service provision and community-based activities. This should include:**
 - a) **The creation of co-production groups that can support the future development of day opportunities.**

(continued overleaf...)

Recommendations (continued)

- b) Specific work with those who remain reluctant to return to building-based provision as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (engagement to learn of obstacles / changes in support requirements).**
 - c) Considerations around preferences of those with particular needs (including potential for mixing between those with differing needs) and differing demographics (e.g. younger adults).**
 - d) Continuing investigations into access to meaningful opportunities as part of a residential placement.**
 - e) Considerations around the potential for assisting with identified transportation needs (e.g. ensuring public / private transport options are accessible and respond to the needs of people who use day opportunities).**
 - f) Changes to the existing budget for SBC in-house and commissioned services.**
- 2) There is an assessment of the information provided around personal budgets and the options available to people, ensuring this is disseminated in a variety of formats (not just online).**
 - 3) SBC Adults and Health and Children's Services directorates reinforce joint-working to identify and support opportunities that are most meaningful to younger people (including a reflection on any updated results from the Disabled Children's Team online survey), and strengthen the dissemination of information about existing services.**
 - 4) SBC to follow-up with Catalyst regarding the views of the wider VCSE sector around future day opportunities involvement (e.g. promotion of / access to existing VCSE activity, potential funding streams, volunteering).**
 - 5) SBC and its relevant health, social care and VCSE partners share and work towards an agreed vision for day opportunities across the Borough through the most appropriate mechanism (existing or new).**
 - 6) All existing SBC in-house and commissioned day service providers ensure they have a mechanism for enabling the families / carers of people accessing services to regularly share their views with the provider, and each other, on existing and future service delivery.**
 - 7) SBC ensures, as far as possible, that work experience undertaken by those individuals accessing day services is appropriately recognised.**
 - 8) SBC strengthens links between existing day service providers through the creation of a new peer group to share good practice / resources (inc. volunteering opportunities as a gateway to employment).**