

Report of the Strategic Director of Health and Wellbeing to the meeting of Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 9th December 2020

P

Subject: Re-opening buildings-based services for people with Learning Disabilities (LD) during the Covid-19 pandemic

Summary statement: The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the progression of plans to reopen building based, commissioned Day Services for people with a Learning Disability.

Portfolio:
Healthy People and Places

Report Contact: Gareth Flemyng
Commissioning Lead (Interim)
Phone: (01274) 434790
E-mail: gareth.flemyng@bradford.gov.uk

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Health and Social Care

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the progression of plans to reopen building based, commissioned Day Services for people with a Learning Disability.

2. BACKGROUND

Prior to the onset of Covid 19, sixteen providers delivered a range of daytime services commissioned by the Council to around 1,030 people with Learning Disabilities (LD). In response to the global pandemic, CBMDC worked with these providers to temporarily close all building-based services for people with LD. This exercise took place over an extremely short timeframe in March 2020 with all relevant services closed by the 23rd of that month.

On reflection, although we were operating in completely uncharted territory both locally and nationally, there may have been an advantage to keeping a limited building based program open at the point of first national lockdown. However, the priority at the time was complying with the lockdown and ensuring the wellbeing of service users. Social work conversations in relation to 'staying safe and well' were held with the majority of service users with a learning disability at the point of the first national lockdown.

During the suspension of services, providers were asked to explore ways in which staffing resources could be re-allocated to provide alternative methods of supporting individuals in their own home and outdoors where safe and appropriate. A number of providers (including the largest provider, HFT) have offered this support and have also offered remote support to a wider number of service users and their families and carers via telephone and social media. This continuation of some form of contact and support recognises that building-based day time activities play an important role in delivering social, participation and inclusion outcomes for people with LD, and can also play a role in providing a break from caring for families, allowing them to maintain employment and good quality family life.

3. REPORT ISSUES

Staying Connected

Commissioners worked with VCS providers in Bradford, to contribute to funding 300 state-of-the-art tablets and scores of internet dongles distributed across the Bradford district to locked-down people who otherwise would have no way of communicating with the outside world.

Benefits included; increasing people's opportunities to engage with their peers. enabling a quick and easy messaging system in this rapidly changing environment, reducing isolation and loneliness.

Bradford Talking Media led the project with volunteers from Community Action Bradford & District preloading the tablets and organising the delivery of a percentage of the tablets through the utility provider SSE and the Fire Service.

Other tablets were distributed by social workers. Donna, one of the recipients, said "This couldn't have come at a better time. It's my birthday soon so will be so great to see people."

Activity to Support the Re-Opening of Building Based Day Opportunities

Following the beginning of the first lockdown period, the Council's Community Team for Learning Disabilities (CTLD) undertook a survey of 1,027 individuals with LD who attended commissioned* day services to find out about their experiences of lockdown and to provide information on the demand for services and the types of activities required as we move towards the 'new normal'. (*There are also people who use their Direct Payment to micro-commission day services directly.)

The Council's Commissioning Team also conducted a survey of area-based providers about their preparations for the resumption of Covid-safe services and all providers have been asked to submit building risk assessments. These risk assessments are then reviewed by a panel comprising representatives from Commissioning, CTLD and Infection Prevention Control (IPC).

Social Workers, CCG colleagues and Providers have worked together to identify those service users at greatest need in relation to a return to building based services. The proposal for each individual included into this *first cohort* of around sixty-five individuals, have been endorsed by social work managers.

Once identified as within the *first cohort* to return to building based provision, each individual has been subject to a social work review covering any additional support required to manage the impact of returning to a building within the context of new Covid restrictions

Reopening of day services

Social distancing measures mean that services can only offer a limited number of places compared to the pre-Covid situation.

The Commissioning Unit with support from the Infection Control Team has approved as 'Covid secure' the building based Risk Assessments relating to twelve units, delivered by seven different providers. These buildings are now all currently open.

Four other building based services are currently subject to review in relation to their Building Covid Risk Assessments and planned to reopening.

The majority of those identified in the *first cohort* have now returned to the above open buildings alongside a small additional cohort of those who are in receipt of direct payments.

Plans to re-open building-based day services also involve consideration of an individual's transport options which have been disrupted by current restrictions. CTLD and Commissioning have liaised with Passenger Transport Service (PTS) and other relevant Council teams about how we might use the commissioned mini-bus and taxi services to support individuals accessing building based services. This has resulted in PTS supporting circa forty service users returning to building based provision.

Impact of the Second National Lockdown.

During the current national lockdown (5 November – 2 December) we are continuing with getting the *first cohort* of individuals back into their day services and making the relevant preparations with the *second cohort* to ensure they can return as soon as possible after the national lockdown is lifted.

We have also continued to ensure that any individual where we become aware of an acute need in the community we will continue to 'fast tracked' into the *first cohort*.

Communications.

The project team is currently working on communications about the re-opening of a limited buildings-based day time offer and a letter from the Council explaining the rationale for allocating placements. It is proposed this will be sent to all Service Users and families/carers (including those who use a Direct Payment to arrange their day service) via each provider.

A council media release will also be required to explain the plans around re-opening buildings and remind families how to contact their Social Worker if they have concerns or more pressing needs.

The above communications will go out in line with the progression of plans for the second cohort to return to buildings following the end of the current lockdown.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

In response to the pandemic the department has honored the financial commitment to day service providers that were in place at the end of March. We have asked providers to explore flexible and creative ways of offering support to individuals in their homes, and the majority of providers have responded constructively to this request.

In relation to transport providers (Taxis) from the start of Quarter 3 the department has realised saving this has supported us meeting the savings targets set by Corporate Transport Board in 2019.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

It is becoming clear that the outcomes in relation to the impact of this pandemic are significantly worse for individuals (and communities) who experience oppression and discrimination, this includes people with a learning disability.

In August representatives of the community leaning disability service meet with Professor Chris Hatton to consider the 'heightened risks' for individuals with a Learning Disability. At that point the research suggested that individuals with a learning disability may be up to five times more likely to die of Covid 19 once they reach the point of being critically unwell.

However, the latest research published by Public Health England on 12 November 2020 paints an even more problematic picture. The report looking at the national picture suggests that the rate of COVID-19 deaths for people with learning disability

is 692 per 100,000 or 6.3 times the general population rate.
The COVID-19 death rate for Bradford District based on ONS weekly Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board is 127 deaths per 100,000 population to the 13th of November

As we attempt to understand the approaches that might mitigate against these tragic outcomes we have, as a Department been cautious. Social Workers have explored with each individual returning to a building what additional adjustments they may require to keep themselves safe.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

The department has been operating within the context of Coronavirus (Covid-19) Care Act easements, (updated 1 September 2020). However, we have continued to be committed to meeting all of our obligations and responsibilities under the Care Act 2014

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

See section 5 above

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

See reference to transport above.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Social work reviews are delivered with specific reference to the Human Rights Act and Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

7.6 TRADE UNION

N/A

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Moving forward within the context of our 'Re-imagining Day Opportunities program there is a commitment to delivering services wherever possibly to a locality

footprint to strengthen the sense of community and to minimise transport which will also address concerns in relation to infection control and greenhouse gas emissions.

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

None

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

N/A

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

As detailed in the summary at Point 1. The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the progression of plans to reopen building based, commissioned Day Services for people with a Learning Disability.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That Members consider and comment on the contents of the report

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None