

People & Health Overview Committee

23 July 2024

Towards a New Model for Day Opportunities in Dorset

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This report sets out the proposals for reshaping the provision of day opportunities for people in Dorset, in line with the ambitions set out in *Commissioning for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset*, the Council's adult social care commissioning strategy. "Day opportunity" is a broader term that encompasses all of the activities, both formal and informal, that may be accessed by people who may have additional care and support needs, whether self-selected or commissioned for them. Traditionally, the focus is on day services, which are building-based, often specialist activities. Our model seeks to respond to a significant body of consultation evidence that shows people want more diversity, as well as experience in the social care sector that emphasises the importance of people remaining connected to local community activity and opportunities.

The report sets out a new model for commissioning these services, and a way forward for implementing the model, together with people who draw on support, the wider community, and with Care Dorset and other independent sector providers.

Recommendation:

People & Health Overview Committee are recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the consultation activity that has been undertaken;
2. Review and comment on the proposed model for the future commissioning and reshaping of day opportunities provision in Dorset; and
3. Resolve to recommend to Cabinet that they adopt the model described and the approach to implementation.

Reason for Recommendation:

Day services are a vitally important part of the Dorset support offer for a few hundred local residents, providing meaningful activities during the day for those who need support. Our research has shown that people are increasingly wanting flexibility, variety and social connection, which points to a need to modernise the offer around day opportunities. Our commissioning strategies have previously committed the council to this direction of travel, and the additional insight gained from consultation has now confirmed and firmed up the next steps.

1. Background

- 1.1 In February 2022, Cabinet adopted the set of commissioning strategies for adult social care under the title *Commissioning for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset 2023-28*. Within that suite of documents was the intention to reform day services in Dorset. This built upon feedback obtained over many weeks in summer 2021 under the banner of *Better Days*.
- 1.2 Broadly, the intentions that were set out in the strategy were to:
 - Develop a hub-and-spoke model of day opportunities, with specialist and outreach services embedded in local communities;
 - Increase the uptake of direct payments and individual service funds;
 - Reduce reliance on building-based support services, as part of increasing the connections of people with their local communities.
- 1.3 Reviewing the responses to the 2021 engagement activity, it was noted that the engagement had taken place in the latter days of the Covid pandemic, and that it would be more representative to conduct a repeat survey and confirm (or nuance) the feedback. The initial exercise was also strongly weighted towards people with learning disability, and it was felt important to hear other voices alongside those. A further engagement exercise was undertaken in autumn 2023.
- 1.4 In 2023, the People & Health Overview Committee appointed a subgroup to look at the future of day services. 16 recommendations were made, which have shaped the proposals which are presented here. In particular, further consultation and discussion was recommended, and this has shaped the approach to consultation in autumn 2023. Appendix 2 summarises the recommendations and notes where they link to the work. The proposals support all recommendations in some form.
- 1.5 This ran alongside the work of Care Dorset, since their foundation in late 2022, to understand in greater depth who was accessing their services, how they operated, and how they made use of the buildings that they occupied. There has been considerable dialogue between Care Dorset and commissioners on this insight, and it has also informed the proposed model.

1.6 Some of this insight is outlined in more detail in the attached slide deck (Appendix 1), which provides an overview of the engagement process and feedback, the proposed model, and the steps to be taken if approved from the late summer onwards.

2. **The proposed model of day opportunities**

2.1 More detail is contained in Appendix 1, but below is a brief overview of the model and its elements. In terms of definitions, a day opportunity is anything that someone wants to do to spend their time meaningfully, possibly during the day but also evenings and weekends. We generally think in terms of day opportunities where people have a need of care and support which might mean that they need additional help to access activities, but we should not be too rigid in this definition, and in the new model we want to prioritise the seamless interface with community activity in local towns, villages and neighbourhoods across the county.

2.2 **A Hub.** This would be a focus for local community activity around day opportunities for people with support needs, sitting at the heart of a network of activity, and supporting it through providing space, access, specific activities, transport support and a range of other enabling activity. Hubs would also be likely to directly provide a more highly specialist day service offer, although we remain open to the two activities (hub and specialist provision) being separate.

2.3 **Spokes.** These are the vast range of different organisations, projects and activities that take place across the county already, and of which we want more. They would be supported by the work of hubs in connecting them, and providing support and advice to strengthen their offer. Increasingly we want to see more projects, organisations and services offering the option to 'buy' sessions and activities through direct payments or individual service funds.

2.4 **Specialist service offer.** It is critical that we strengthen and invest in specialist days services for those with complex needs. Currently we spread our resource broadly across a wide range of different provisions, and we would like to see more of the commissioning resource invested in meeting the needs of those with the greatest requirement for supported access to day activities. It is likely that the core of our offer will remain with Care Dorset, and we will want to work with them to develop this provision to be 'best in class' for its type – as well as continuing to work

with, and strengthen, the independent specialist day service providers that are working across Dorset. Specialist services also provide a vital respite for carers.

- 2.5 **Flexible commissioning model.** We want more people to have the flexibility and freedom to choose their activities and support, and to pay for it through a direct payment or individual service fund (ISF). An ISF is an arrangement whereby the personal budget for care and support is managed by an organisation on behalf of the person who draws on support. In our model, we are open to the idea that Hubs might also be ISF providers, helping people to use their budget for the greatest flexibility and variety.
- 2.6 **Services not buildings.** The current 13 day services, operated under block contract by Care Dorset, are acknowledged not to be efficient in their use of buildings for the delivery of care and support. We are clear that we want in future to commission services, not buildings. Where we have hubs, we are open to commissioning the core costs of providing a physical location; in other cases we want to shift to a greater emphasis on commissioning services, which may or may not be from specialist buildings, but may also be co-located and peripatetic, hosted by other agencies.
- 2.7 **Partnership delivery.** Supporting the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to design, develop and deliver new service offerings is a key part of our model for the future. These may require commissioning and contracting, but we are confident that in the main they will be supported by open access, self-funders, direct payment recipients and other flexible forms of commissioning and funding.

3. **Proposed delivery plan**

- 3.1 Appendix 1 also contains an overview of the delivery plan for implementing the recommended model. In the remainder of 2024/25, decisions will be made and consulted upon by Care Dorset in line with the model we are proposing. Changes to services will be made after this process of formal consultation.
- 3.2 Alongside this, we will make changes to the contracting and commissioning arrangements to reflect the service changes for the 2025/26 financial year.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposals require no additional investment, and it is intended that they will be a more efficient way of meeting the needs of people for day opportunity support. There will be less of an emphasis on buildings for the delivery of formal day services, which will change the cost base for the provision of day services. This has potential to allow use of some of these assets to support our community development and information and advice ambitions, which are part of helping to contain the cost of social care into the future.
- 4.2 No savings are currently planned from the work. Identification of any savings will be clearer in the latter months of 2024/25, when the implementation of the model is more fully scoped.

5. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 5.1 Reduction in travel is intended to be an outcome of a more localised and flexible model of day services delivery. This, together with more efficient use of buildings (which often have a significant amount of unused space at present), will support reduction in carbon emissions.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

- 6.1 Day services are a valued part of the social care support offer, maintaining daily activity and social connection for people with care and support needs. By improving the connectedness of these services with local community offers, and widening the engagement of organisations and groups with the needs of people with disabilities, mental health challenges, and frailty, we are supporting them to stay active and well, and improving health and wellbeing.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 None identified.

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

- 8.2 Current Risk: A *moderate impact* (3) from continued provision that does not meet the needs of the full range of people who require support to access day opportunities, with a *high likelihood* (4) of occurrence. Risk rating: 12
- 8.3 Residual Risk: Once implemented, this risk is anticipated to reduce to *low impact* (2) due to improved connections, information and advice and community support, with a *low likelihood* (2) of occurrence. Risk rating: 4.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposals in this report. In summary, neutral impacts were expected across the majority of protected characteristics, with positive impacts assessed for those with disabilities, with caring responsibilities or in rural isolation. These benefits flow from the more responsive and flexible provision expected, and the better connections between day services, day opportunities and wider community activity.

10. Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1: A model of day opportunities
- 10.2 Appendix 2: Recommendation of the People & Health Overview Committee Task & Finish Group on Day Opportunities, linked to the proposed model.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 [Commissioning for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset 2023 to 2028 - Dorset Council](#)