

## **Appendix 2 - Day Opportunities Consultation Summary**

### **Introduction and purpose**

As part of the transformation of day opportunities, the council held an initial consultation on the closure of New Millennium Day Centre. Following user and carer feedback and further discussions over the potential use of the site as a Community Wellbeing Hub, the service did not close.

As well as consulting for the proposed closure, the council took the opportunity to engage more widely with service users on the future of day opportunities in Brent. The council has observed that there has been a change in what people want and expect from day services generally. Whilst there is still a high level of support for the current provision, which is much valued, the use of building-based day services has reduced since the COVID-19 pandemic. From the engagement with Brent residents it can be seen that people would like more flexibility and opportunity to do things in their local community, including working and volunteering opportunities.

In response to this, the council is developing a framework of providers who can support the council to modernise its offer and explore opportunities for residents to do more in the community. This will form one part of the wider transformation of day opportunities which includes changes to the council's own Direct Services day offer and culture change to ensure assessments and reviews are strength based, supporting people to build on their own assets and access community provision where possible.

### **Thematic summary**

The following is a summary of the engagement that took place during Autumn 2023 through to January 2024. Service users and carers were invited to participate in an in-person consultation at the New Millennium day centre but also in day services commissioned within the community. This involved visits to services to talk to individuals and groups, as well as opportunities to feedback via questionnaire. An online survey was also conducted to allow for wider participation.

#### **Arts and Crafts**

The consultation revealed arts and crafts sessions, drama, drawing and pottery, are important to people with these activities bring out people's confidence, skills and ability to socialise and make friends. The kiln at the New Millennium centre was seen as a valuable resource.

Sessions and classes not only teach people practical experience but also increase people's patience and time management. Carers fed back that they have seen a real difference in their loved one's ability to communicate and have witnessed their excitement when they get take part. This has created a connection between the activities the service users love to do

and their sense of purpose and the daily or weekly routine they have established, which has become central to their sense of happiness, familiarity and confidence.

### **Making friends**

Service users have expressed that regular attendance at a service allows them a chance to meet people, make friends and maintain those friendships. Seeing the same people every week means that the service users see each other as family, creating a form of routine essential to their continued wellbeing. Carers echoed these views and fed back that their loved ones get excited about their daily or weekly sessions as a chance to socialise. Carers have fed back that they've observed the service users to be more social and positive when they go to a day service and get really sad when they cannot go (e.g. due to illness) and carers have said the service users need the sense of community that a day service can bring and that this, in turn, increases their wellbeing. Services create a sense of community for the service users, which has been invaluable to the health and wellbeing of both the service users and their carers.

### **Safety and Security**

A strong theme that has come out from the consultation is the aspect of the safety and security that a building-based day service offers to the service users. This feedback was most felt by the carers who find that sending their loved ones to a building where they are able to spend time together with their friends and colleagues means that the carers can have peace of mind that the service user are cared for and are therefore safe. One service user with a learning disability explained how going on outings together with his friends was really amazing, and his carer agreed that the service user wouldn't have gotten that opportunity to go had he not been part of a day service because he would have been scared to go out alone. Communal support is really important.

### **Mixed activities between people with learning disabilities and those without support needs**

To enhance the service user's experience of doing more things, they have suggested that activities that involve a mixed circle of people who have different abilities would help. This means that service users are keen to socialise with people with different skills and abilities and want to see more activities involving them. Some of the suggestions received during the consultation include doing mixed activities with schools and socialising more with young people after school hours or activities where younger people could support older people with support needs. There was also a suggestion that day centres could open up to allow the wider community to share the spaces and facilities/activities.

### **IT-based activities**

Service users and carers said having an opportunity to learn and gain new skills is really important given the move to technology being a part of everyday life. The equipment and support to do this would be welcomed.

## **Organised outings**

The feedback received from the attendees of the consultation strongly indicated that organised activities are important and are immensely enjoyed by the service users who would like more of these opportunities. Outings were valued because it meant they did something different, and they got to learn about new things. Related to organised outings, many service users have expressed that they enjoy activities that revolve around sports and music. Organising events like this that the community can attend or being part of events in the community are welcomed.

## **Respite for carers**

Many carers who responded to the consultation appreciated that their loved one attending day services means they can focus on taking the time off to take care of themselves and do other chores or work. This improves their own quality of life as well as improving the quality of life of the service users.

## **Activities to reduce isolation for service users**

The various activities that service users take up have offered an insight into what matters most to people in attending day services. Some of the feedback around this has been:

- *Stability*: a stable and safe place to go to means that the both the service user and their carer feel at ease and can rely on this safety for the time that they are there. Some service users don't have a family, and so the people at the day centres act as a stable force
- *Something to do*: it gives people hope and incentive to be part of something, increasing their mental wellbeing.
- *Socialising*: this is important for people who don't have any family, attending day activities means it stops people from feeling depressed and alone. It can reduce loneliness, mental health problems and meet the need for human interaction.
- *Consistency*: Consistency is key for people with a learning disability or mental health problems. Therefore, having a community that they belong to, whom they see often and do activities with, offers people a sense of belonging.

Respondents listed various things that they would like to do in the community. These include:

- *Sports related activities*: activities where they can be active, such as bowling, basketball or swimming were mentioned often.
- *Activities around education*: service users said they would like to attend college and learn new things and skills.
- *Drama related activities*: service users and some carers confirmed that they enjoy the organised drama activities as it gives them something to do and concentrate on.

- *Work experience:* people said they would like to do more work experience such as volunteering in a charity shop or in schools. They would like to see more opportunities to access paid work, as well as volunteering opportunities.

Many of the suggestions given of what people want to see more in the community revolve around being actively involved in activities and opportunities that are easily accessible outside of a building-based day service. Activities such as going to museums, shopping centres, going for meals with friends, going to concerts or art galleries and trips to the cinema or the theatre were repeated, indicating that service users really enjoy being outside and being more involved in the wider community.

### **Continuity in support**

Carers said that they would like to see their loved ones attend more day opportunities and ensure that the service that the service users receive is continuous and responsive to their needs.

### **Respite**

Although day services are for service users, there is a deep appreciation that the day services offer a chance for respite. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed some mental health issues which some carers shared, saying that having their loved ones supported during the day means they can take time to themselves and not have to constantly worry.

### **Socialising with other carers**

Some carers have reflected that they enjoy speaking with other carers as they can share information and experience. Some carers suggested having coffee mornings and have a chance to get to know each other.