

Detailed Pre-Consultation Engagement Feedback

Resource Centres

1. The main findings and areas of discussion during pre-consultation engagement with family carers and staff in relation to the Resource Centres are summarised below.
 - a) The Resource Centres provide a **quality service**; carers feel that everyone is well looked after in a very positive way; carers often compared the Council-provided services favourably to other services; the services enable people to engage with their peer group and they are "one big family"; there is **effective partnership working** between the Resource Centres and other services.
 - b) The **experience and quality of the staff** in the services is highly valued by carers and there is a relationship of trust; people feel safe and secure in the services and **stability** of the service, including the **continuity** of staff, is highly valued; structure and routine are particularly important to the client group using the Resource Centres; the potential negative impact on vulnerable individuals of any changes to services should not be underestimated.
 - c) The "Growing Old with a Learning Disability" ("GOLD") service is highly valued by carers, and staff felt that this service could **expand** to meet the needs of increasing numbers of people growing older with a learning disability.
 - d) The services offer a wide **variety of activities**, although some carers felt that activities could be developed even further with the addition of new types of activities.
 - e) The quality of a service is often considered more important than the location or the distance to a service, although it was also recognised that the distance to a service could be an important factor for some people in deciding which service to attend.
 - f) Some carers felt that there would be benefits to joining up Resource Centre and Connect offers more closely, particularly where these are already co-located; it was felt that some Resource Centres would benefit from more activities in the community. However, staff also talked about the need to differentiate the two very different service offers and carers of people in Connect services had different views (see below).
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- g) It was widely felt that Council-provided **services need to be marketed and publicised** more effectively, including making better links with schools and colleges, using social media more effectively and using Your Life Your Choice; more informal events for carers were also suggested as well as options around stands at school and college open days and offering trials of the service during college holidays; a **rebranding and relaunch** of the services would be beneficial.
- h) It was felt that Social Work teams should make people more aware of the Resource Centre option and promote Council-provided services more effectively. It was particularly felt that the services should be **promoted to younger people** transitioning to adulthood. Staff reported that the Resource Centre offer is not widely understood, particularly the fact that there is a wide range of activities including activities out in the community, not just building-based activities. This was also a theme from engagement with young people currently in school. A follow-up survey of social workers indicated that knowledge of the in-house day service offer is inconsistent and improved marketing and awareness raising would be helpful.
- i) Council-provided day services should be **promoted to people using Direct Payments**.
- j) It was suggested that the **service offer could be expanded** to generate more income for the services, for example by offering places at activities to residential providers and/or by offering additional "paid for" places on courses and activities to external individuals; this would also be beneficial in **increasing socialisation opportunities** for those already attending.
- k) The best use should be made of the space and facilities available; business cases for expansion were discussed, ensuring that staff vacancies are filled to **maximise capacity**. Making the best use of the **specialisms and expertise** of the staff in the services was discussed; the use of existing facilities such as sensory rooms could be increased. However, some carers also felt that the core "Resource Centre" offer should not be diluted or lose focus due to expansion of other services.
- l) The **ratios of staffing** required by people using the services, based on their assessed needs, should be revisited to ensure the service is operating as **effectively and flexibly** as possible.
- m) Options for generating income by **making better use of the buildings** and facilities should be considered, for example expanding the hiring out of facilities when they are not being used; fundraising should also be considered as an option for income generation.
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- n) Rates for charging out services need to be updated and refreshed to ensure **full cost recovery**; options for expanding the offer for clients funded by Continuing Health Care were discussed.
- o) There are some **modernisations** needed to make the services more attractive, for example not all the facilities have wireless internet access and up to date IT for people using services (e.g. tablet computers).
- p) While there are some specialist services offered by the external market similar to the Resource Centre offer, these do not currently cover all geographical areas of Worcestershire and capacity is relatively limited.
- q) Staff want the Council-provided services to be able to **operate on a level playing field** with the external sector in relation to marketing and contractual terms e.g. cancellation/non-attendance terms.

Connect Learning Disability Day Services

2. The main findings and areas of discussion during pre-consultation engagement with family carers and staff in relation to the Connects Day Services are summarised below:

- a) Carers reported that adults were very happy in the services and that staff are providing a **high quality service**; the **stability and reliability** of the services are highly valued by carers; people using the services have **long-established friendship groups**; carers feel that their family members are **safe** in the services and have a high degree of **trust** for the staff. The staff are solution-focussed and very supportive of carers.
 - b) **Continuity of service** and maintaining friendship groups are very important to people using services and to their carers.
 - c) The **variety of activities** and amount of individual **choice** on a day-to-day basis are valued by carers; the services are **person-centred** and staff successfully meet everyone's needs and individual choices; the **community-based activities** are plentiful and varied and enable people to contribute to their communities. The location of Connects in town centre locations is important to enable people to access the community.
 - d) Carers feel that the Connects services successfully **increase people's independence**; the separation of Connects from Resource Centres as part of the previous reorganisation has enabled people in Connects to increase their independence and confidence; the Connects services encourage independence, for example through independent travel training and voluntary
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work opportunities; there was a feeling that people using the service have "blossomed" and "come on leaps and bounds" under the new model.

- e) There are opportunities to explore how the links could be further developed between the Connect services and the Supported Employment Service, to continue to promote **voluntary and paid work opportunities** for individuals attending. Very positive feedback was received from organisations working with Connect to provide volunteering and work experience opportunities to individuals. Whereas some other day services focus on hobbies, Connects provides a more varied and focussed service with an emphasis on voluntary and paid work and promoting independence.
 - f) The service is of **value to carers** to help them maintain their caring role. Some carers rely on the services and feel that they would not be able to continue in their caring role without these services being in place.
 - g) It was widely felt that Council-provided **services need to be marketed and publicised** more effectively, including making better links with schools and colleges, using social media more effectively and using Your Life Your Choice; a **rebranding and relaunch** of the services would be beneficial, including promotion to social work teams.
 - h) While there are a variety of day services and opportunities offered by the external market, the **amount of external market provision varies from area to area** and some geographical areas of Worcestershire do not have a significant availability of external places.
 - i) Lots of people attending Connect also attend other externally-provided day services; however, Connect is a valued part of the day service offer and it was felt that **Connect offers a service which is different** from most other day service offers, with the opportunities to access varied activities out in the community. There was discussion around the need for a balanced offer between activities in the community and in the centre.
 - j) The **ratios of staffing** required by people using the services, based on their assessed needs, should be revisited to ensure the service is operating as **effectively and flexibly** as possible.
 - k) In relation to possible **income generation**, fundraising and sponsorship were discussed; the promotion of services to people using direct payments was put forward as an option, and the possibility of selling services externally with people paying for additional days or sessions. Options of adults in the services being involved in income generation were also discussed.
 - l) It would be beneficial to build up **links with the local communities** by holding open sessions; these could be linked to activities for people using the
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services and potentially charged for e.g. coffee mornings, café, market stall etc. Some Connects are already working closely with local partners e.g. colleges and this could be built on.

- m) Options to **reduce costs** by looking for example at building costs and how these might be reduced were discussed.
- n) Some Connects services would like to explore the option of developing a **"Growing Old with a Learning Disability" (GOLD) service** in Connects rather than just in Resource Centres, as people in Connects are also growing older and would appreciate continuity of service.
- o) There are some Connects which have very small numbers of individuals using the service and it was discussed how this has a negative impact on the **sustainability** of the services. In particular, **Wyre Forest Connect** only has seven regular attendees, attending for a total of 12 days each week. This means that Wyre Forest Connect is very unlikely to be able to achieve financial sustainability. There are also a number of alternative day service providers in the Wyre Forest area.
- p) Carers and staff gave positive feedback about the temporary move that has taken place of **Connect Droitwich relocating to the Wendron Centre in Bromsgrove**; the move had gone well and people had made new friendships; it has also given the service more resilience and economies of scale; however, it was strongly felt that any further or additional move would be detrimental to service users' wellbeing.
- q) The Connect weekly drop-ins operate differently across the county, in some cases operating across both the Short-term and the Learning Disability Day Service or in other cases being just part of the Short-term Service, or a separate service. Some carers fed back about how important the weekly drop-in is to them and the people they care for. Staff in Connects also emphasised what an important part of the service the drop-in is.

Leisure Link

3. The main findings and areas of discussion during pre-consultation engagement with family carers and staff in relation to the Leisure Link service are summarised below:

- a) Although Leisure Link is not a statutory service, carers emphasised how **valued** the service, particularly the social club, is to those who attend and expressed their concerns if the service was not to continue. Many attendees
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have been **attending for many years**; people feel that the club **increases independence** and enables them to be themselves.

- b) Although the service operates in Wyre Forest, it is accessed by people from across the county and has a membership of over 100 people.
- c) An option for Leisure Link was discussed around exploring how the service could **become self-sustaining** and run external to the Council; some carers would be interested in this but there was some concern about the responsibility which would be involved in taking over the management of the service. Potentially **increasing the cost of attendance** to make the service more sustainable was considered a reasonable option when discussed; the potential for **reducing the cost of running the service** was also discussed and considered to be a realistic option to explore.

Connect Short-term Service

4. The main findings and areas of discussion during pre-consultation engagement with staff and stakeholders in relation to the Connect Short-term Service are set out below.

- a) The core purpose of the Connect Short-term Service is to **promote the health and well-being of individuals** using the service, and be a **preventative service**, preventing those being supported from requiring other, higher cost services in the future. For example, the service aims to enable individuals to stay healthy, active and independent and remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
 - b) Where other agencies have reduced their services, it was felt that the Connect Short-term Service is often stepping in and **filling the gaps**, particularly for lower and medium level support. The service is often being seen/used as a "service of last resort". Feedback has stated that reductions in service would lead to gaps in support and a significant impact on people who the vulnerable people who currently rely on this type of service.
 - c) The service is seen as **responsive** and staff are described as knowledgeable and supportive, providing an excellent service and making a difference to people's lives.
 - d) A key strength of the Connect Short-term Service is seen to lie in its co-ordinating role, particularly when an individual is **in crisis**, for example through ill physical or mental health. These individuals are increasingly
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falling through the net and either not being picked up by other services or unable to navigate other services, and Connect is stepping in. Staff working in the services and stakeholder professionals who use the service have argued strongly for the service's **preventative impact**, working with people in crisis to enable and **promote independence** and reducing the need for more intensive adult social care intervention.

- e) In relation to the potential duplication between Connect and other preventative services, Connect is often **providing the co-ordinating role** and signposting people to other services as required, or in other cases is referred to by other services as an enhancement to what the other services can offer.
 - f) Staff have proposed a number of options for **increasing the efficiency** of the short-term service, for example by making more effective use of technology, reducing travel costs, working more closely with partners such as Health etc.
 - g) **Synergies between the Connect Short-term Service and the Three Conversation Model** were discussed in detail with staff and partners; staff noted that they often fulfil "social work" roles in their activity in the short-term service; the ethos of promoting independence runs through both service areas. Connect is felt to play an important **safeguarding role**, being a Council-provided service and therefore more able to take certain referrals without potential conflicts of interest. Connect workers use an asset-based/ **strengths-based** approach, fitting with the Three Conversation Model ethos. It was felt that the service would benefit from being further integrated into local communities and services.
 - h) **Referrals to Connect from the Three Conversation Model** sites are high and have been increasing since the introduction of the Three Conversation Model. There is evidence that the Short-term Service is being accessed instead of a package of care. Workers in the new Three Conversation sites have reported that the availability of Connect services has been an important factor in the success of their work to date.
 - i) The Connect Wyre Forest front-desk service is viewed locally as a very responsive service and has a high level of activity from people dropping in to use the service, for example for help and advice in relation to housing, benefits, employment issues etc.
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