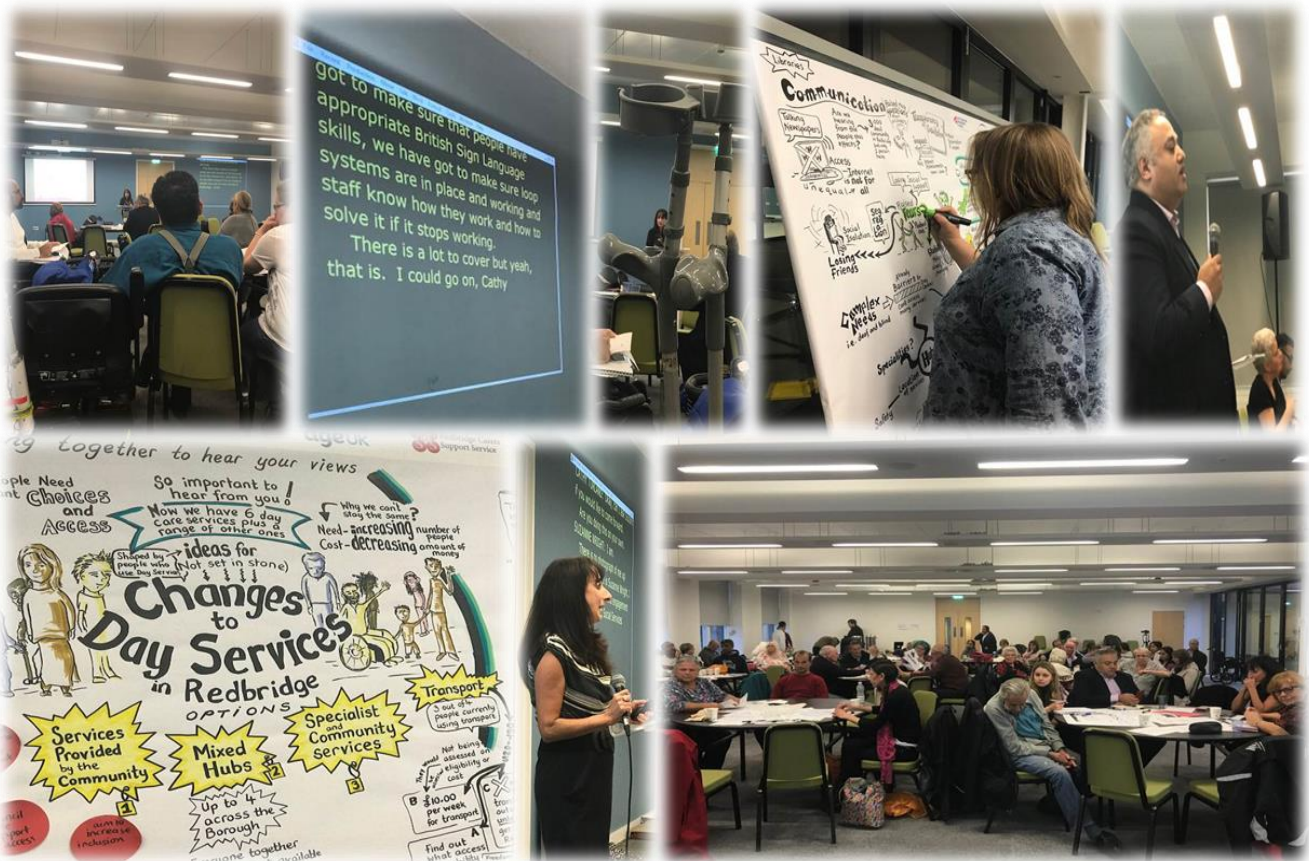


Response to Redbridge Council's Consultation: Reshaping Day Opportunities Services



January 2018

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Introduction

Healthwatch Redbridge held two consultation events on Tuesday 7th November 2017 to discuss the proposal by the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) to change the way Day Services are provided within the borough.

The proposals would also affect the provision of transport for those who attend day services.

We worked with One Place East, Redbridge Carers Support Service, Age UK Redbridge and Action on Hearing Loss to run the events and engage with as many people as possible.

Users of the services along with friends, family and members of the public came together to discuss the proposed changes.

Over **70** people shared their views at the event.

This report details their responses to the proposals.

Methodology

The meetings were widely publicised on social media and through various community and statutory organisations' websites prior to the events.

Both events were presented in a similar way, with the support of representatives from the council (LBR). Councillor Mark Santos, the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care attended and provided an introduction at both events and a presentation of the proposals was given by Suzanne Wright, Development and Engagement Manager at Redbridge Council.

The aim of each meeting was to provide attendees with information about the proposals and an opportunity to discuss the options on their tables and to provide feedback to the group at the end of the meeting. An opportunity was provided for attendees to ask further questions.

Facilitators were on hand at each table to collect people's views and a graphic illustrator captured both events in illustrations as the meetings unfolded.

A hearing loop and speech to text writer were provided, and BSL Interpreters were on hand to support people with sensory impairments. Support was also provided for people with learning disabilities.

The event encouraged lively discussion and was attended by a mixture of service users, carers, day services staff and community organisations from Redbridge.

Executive Summary & Recommendations

There needs to be more ‘fleshing out’ of the proposals:

- Service users and carers continue to engage with the process and ask difficult questions. But they want to understand the drivers in terms of funding and want to have as much information as possible in order to make informed decisions.

Weak case studies:

- Many attendees felt the case studies were a bit weak and did not seem to reflect the broad and complex needs of service users and carers.

Lack of Information:

- There was very little information about current community provision; what was currently available and where the gaps were.
 - It is very difficult for people to choose an option where no clarity exists in regards to service provision.

More detail regarding existing and future community service provision:

- Charities in Redbridge are already facing reductions in their funding.
 - How can the Council be sure such community services (described in Options 1 and 3) will be provided in the future?
- Community services should be detailed in Options 1 and 3.
- Confirmation is required that there will be enough community provision to meet demand from all service users if Council day services stop.
- Existing services must confirm they are suitable and accessible for older and disabled people (wheelchair friendly, accessible toilets, enough space to cater for more people).
 - If community services need to make adaptations, where will the money come from?

More detail regarding existing day service provision was required:

- Can Redbridge Council confirm whether they will be closing any of the day service centres listed in order to save money?

Better support for people using Direct Payments:

- We heard a lot from attendees who were concerned with the possible increase in the use of direct payments provision.
- Many attendees had experience of using direct payments and felt the service would not be able to support the potential increase in users

Implementation timescales need to be clearly stated and realistic:

- We would like to see an outline of the timescales once options have been discussed and agreed by Cabinet; clearly some options will take longer than others to scope out and implement.

A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) should be completed prior to any proposals being confirmed:

- Many attendees were concerned that a full EIA was not published with the consultation proposals.

The impact of different consultations needs to be taken into account; these proposals should not be approved in isolation:

- A number of consultations are currently taking place across Redbridge such as the proposed changes to the Councils' charging policy - are service users going to be able to realistically afford to use community services?

Users having access to other transport services should not be penalised:

- Some forms of transport are not suitable for some users. Further clarity around transport provision needs to be given.
- If people have existing services such as a Freedom Pass or taxi card, they may not be eligible for day service transport.
 - Taxi card users are limited to the number of trips they can take during the year, their trip usage would be decimated if they were made to use those journeys to access day services.
 - Users were unable to assess whether they could use their Freedom Pass to attend day services as there was no clarity on where the hubs would be situated, and whether they would be on an appropriate bus route.
- The Council should clarify whether the Redbridge Mobility Scheme is to be scrapped or have its charges increased (this wasn't clear from the proposals and will impact on some service users).
- A comprehensive review of Dial-a-Ride service needs to be made by the Council given the level of concerns raised by attendees'. Many had raised a number of concerns over many years and felt the service had not improved.

Proposals and Responses

Attendees were provided with information on a range of options for the provision of day opportunities within Redbridge. They were given the opportunity to respond to each option. This is a summary of the discussions and feedback notes.

Notes:

- *Direct quotes from attendees are shown in bold italics.*
- *Responses given by LBR representatives are shown in dark blue.*

Option 1 - Community Based Services only

What is currently available?

At the moment, people who have eligible needs are able to attend a day service either provided by the Council or another organisation if they wish to.

Services are paid for by the person and the amount that they pay is based on their financial assessment. They can use their direct payments, if they receive them, to pay for the service provided by other organisations but not by the Council.

What would be different?

Under this option, the Council would not provide any day services either directly or through another organisation.

People will be able to choose and pay for the service they want from those available in the community, provided by charities, specialist organisations or mainstream activities.

The Council will provide information and advice about the activities and services available in their area.

Response

Most people were concerned that very little information had been provided to enable this option to be considered adequately.

Many attendees were concerned that the proposal to move all users into the community would have an impact on existing community based services.

'It is really hard to make a decision about community based services when we do not know where all those are.'

'You are saying that we would be able to find services, where are we going to find them from?'

'It says here that everyone else will be directed to services provided by the community. What does that mean? What sort of services are you talking about?'

‘So directed; that is purely signposting, yeah?’

LBR response: ‘The council’s responsibility will be signposting to services that are available. And working with the charities and local community organisations, to offer services to a range of different people. There are a lot of services already out there, that may be being used.’

‘It raises a lot of questions in itself. I mean, if there is going to be no infrastructure or pump priming support for those voluntary organisations to develop services then it does leave a big gap.’

LBR response: ‘We have the Redbridge ‘MyLife’ website (www.mylife.redbridge.gov.uk), but we will develop other ways of helping people find the services that are already existing in the borough, and we would work with the organisations to help deliver more services’

The proposal to offer Direct Payments to individuals was also called into question:

‘A general point around direct payments, I think the point has already been made, number one, they are too low, number two even if the direct payments were at a reasonable level, the workforce is not out there to deliver the sort of extra services that somehow seem to be imagined and where are those services is the question.’

People were also concerned as to how or who will regulate or monitor the provisions if not the local council.



People with sensory impairments raised issues regarding the current website. They felt it was not accessible.

‘(As a Deaf person) the website is not accessible to me..... I have told the council this before..... no-one seems to be taking responsible for this....please stop ignoring us!’

Other attendees raised concerns regarding how people living on their own would know about the services, if they have no family or were not connected to the internet. They wanted to know how the Council would contact these people and make sure they don't slip through the net.

LBR response: 'The website is one way, but we are going to look at our advice and information across lots of different ways and how we provide that so it will not just be available on our website, it will be available in lots of different formats.'

It was also felt that community based services may be unsuitable for some people with high support needs.

Some attendees were concerned that a lot of community services are unregulated and could lead to safeguarding issues being raised. They wanted more information on how services were monitored and assessed for quality by the Local Authority.

Overall, attendees were not in favour of this option.



Option 2: Mixed hubs

What is currently available?

At the moment, LBR provide specialist day opportunity services with each venue providing support and care for a specific group of people.

For example, Woodbine is for people with a learning disability, Elderberries for older people with dementia and Manford Lodge for older people.

What would be different?

Instead of specialist day opportunity services like Woodbine and Elderberries, there would be a Council health and wellbeing hub.

The hub would be a place for people with learning disabilities, older people, people with dementia and those with physical or sensory disorders to come together and be supported to access a range of activities. If people have specific needs, these would still be supported and met by skilled staff as they are currently.

The Council also stated that each hub would be designed to allow people to have time on their own when they need it and to mix with others when they want to.

Activities at the hub will help people to develop skills, engage with the local community and be a place where they can meet up with their friends.

Although services would be subsidised; people would pay for them through Direct Payments or other means. People's needs would be assessed and the assessment would determine eligibility.

Response

Once again, most people were concerned that very little information had been provided to enable this option to be considered adequately. Although the hub model was explained, there was little information to support the development of the premises, which had still to be identified.



Some attendees were concerned that the HUBS would not be big enough for everyone and that it was a costly option.

Redbridge response: 'What we need to look at is that the buildings we have at the moment can offer the services or do we need to look at new buildings. It is likely that we will not have six hubs because we are going from six to four but we need to look at space and the facilities within our existing buildings and determine whether we need to look at new buildings.'

'I am a bit confused, does it mean that the hubs will actually be the six services that Redbridge provides, would one be Woodbine, one Mulberry Lodge or the Health and Social Care hubs and the services that are provided already will be closed down?'

Redbridge response: 'I cannot say for definite at this stage whether it will be a hub in Wanstead in Woodford or whether it will be Elderberries'.

'In order for the mixed Hubs to be a success, firstly, it is presumed there are buildings available because if there are not it will take a long time to build them, a lot of staff training for staff to be able to manage all the different types of disabilities and support needs.'

Some attendees were concerned that mixed hubs could have safety implications:

'Having mixed ability hubs may not be suitable as they may not meet some people's needs. Furthermore, others said 'Each carer has their own expertise so not every carer can deal with every disability'

'I think there are question marks around that, whether it would be a safe option, it would actually need quite a lot of careful management and investment to ensure that if you were mixing client groups to the extent that seems to be suggested that would be safe and if it was going to work well.'

Although one attendee had a positive experience of a hub in Barkingside in terms of multi-disciplinary teams there were concerns regarding those with complex needs, whether they would miss out on any services.

'It's necessarily a money saving idea, because to put a person centred programme in that mode of service it would actually require investment in workforce and the buildings as well.'

Most attendees were not in favour of this option.

Option 3: Specialist hub and community services

What is currently available?

At the moment, some of our day opportunity services support people with complex needs like Mulberry Lodge and others support those with less complex needs like at Woodbine. Other places support both.

What would be different?

Under this option, the Council would provide day opportunity services for those who require intensive support such as those with complex or multiple disabilities or those with behaviours that challenge.

Everyone else would be directed to services provided by the community. Like options one and two, people's needs would be assessed and the assessment would determine eligibility.

Activities would be provided in one hub for people with complex needs. This would also include access to supported community activities. All other people would access community services in the same way as described in Option One.

This model combines the community services in option 1 and the hub model in option 2. The difference in this model is that the hub would only be for those with the most complex needs. The people attending the hub would be supported by skilled and specialist staff as they are at the moment.

Response

Attendees felt this was the preferred option out of those being discussed, however many commented that they felt there should have been a lot more information provided and an option to remain with the current day services provision.

Some people said they thought the idea of 1:1 support would meet the needs of some individuals.

There were concerns as to where the single hub would be based and therefore how accessible this would be.

'What's the criteria for complex needs? Will it be harder for people to choose to access the service?'

'One HUB fits all scenario? Where would this HUB be located? Even if they haven't chosen they should give everyone an idea of the choices.'

'Have the community services been consulted about whether they can handle the influx of people?'

'Will it cost more for the specialist staff, how many will they recruit?'

'This option is the one that would suit our particular relatives and would be acceptable in view of the support that would be needed. Also the most important thing is the structure, because one thing people with

learning disabilities need is structure and they need consistent structure and that would certainly not apply in option 1 or 2.'

'People with a learning disability that have a higher need; number three is the only option.'

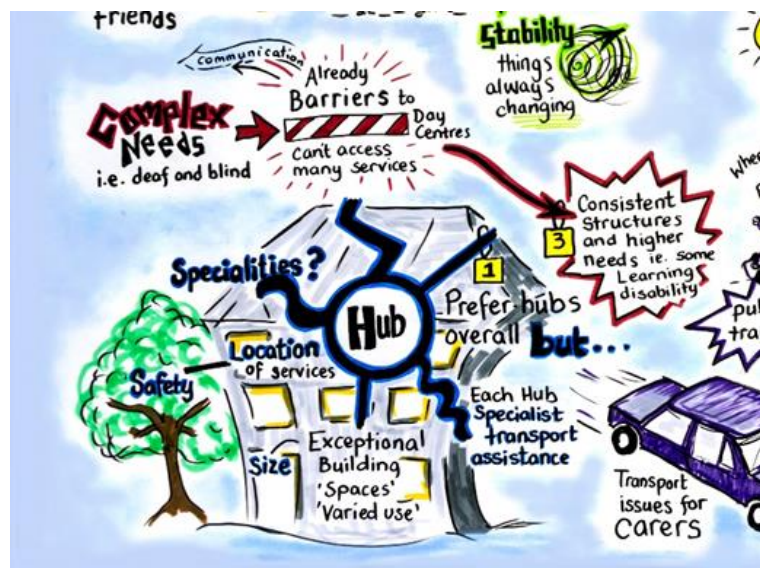
'The impact of closing the present day services, the impact on existing services at the moment. We have younger people that use the services at present, how are you going to incorporate older, different disability groups into these existing groups. Do they have the capability of taking on more people?'

'Option 3 has its benefits, I think it is the hearing impaired and the British Sign Language (BSL) user community that thought it would meet their needs but only in part when there are specialists.'

However some people did not like the option because they felt it may lead to the discrimination and segregation of some individuals with complex needs.

'Not sure the 'intensive support' requirement to access Option 3 is acceptable, morally or otherwise! Also who determines 'intensive support' or criteria for accessing the HUB if it is down to assessments there is likely to be a long waiting list.'

'I do believe that health and social care go hand in hand. I know you need to make these cuts but by isolating people and not meeting their needs and them not being able to go out then you have an impact on the NHS. Has that been considered?'



Although not without some concerns; most attendees thought this option might have potential but wanted more involvement in its design.

General Comments

Direct Payments

Attendees raised a number of concerns about the potential increased use of direct payments.

Many people were sceptical that LBR could deal with the possibility that the proposals would lead to a sudden increase in people being assessed for and using direct payments.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential increase in administration and support required in order to provide direct payments. Many attendees had lived experience of using direct payments either for themselves or a family member and were unconvinced that the existing service could cope with the demand that may be placed on it.



An additional concern related to whether the financial amount of the direct payment would reflect the true costs of the service.

‘The current scheme especially brokerage and choice, has many faults at present; if Council provision ends there seems to be an implication that you will have a DP to access community provision - but what if you don’t want a DP or if you can’t agree an appropriate cost for the service?’

‘We don’t expect LBR to devote a whole section of the consultation to DPs but at least acknowledge that they are not suitable for everyone and offer an alternative.’

Financial Eligibility

Attendees raised the issue of financial assessments and whether eligibility criteria might change. Some people at the event pointed out this happened to them during the previous round of cuts.

If new criteria is implemented there may be legal issues in terms of the Care Act 2014 for LBR.

‘One more important issue. Will eligibility criteria be raised and some people pushed out of services to save money?’

Mental Health

The consensus on one table was that the consultation really didn’t address mental health so there was quite a bit of confusion about how the proposals actually would impact on people with lived experience of mental health.

People with lived experience of mental health problems felt examples and options didn’t address their experiences.

Proposed Changes to Transport Services

What is currently available?

Currently, some people who access day services use transport arranged by the Council. Others use public transport or arrange their own transport, either on their own or in smaller groups.

Those who use transport arranged by the Council are not individually assessed for this and there is no charge related to provision. Some people who purchase day opportunity services using a direct payment have a transport cost incorporated into their direct payment.

What would be different?

Option A - access to mobility resources

When someone asks for the Council to arrange transport to a day opportunity service, they would find out if the person has access to other mobility resources such as a taxi card or a freedom pass.

This would help the Council to decide whether there is any other transport resource needed from them.

If someone does have a freedom pass or something similar, the Council would take these into account when deciding whether any transport provided by the Council is needed.

If they do not have these, the Council would then consider providing transport for them, free of charge.

Option B - charge of £10 per week

The Council would charge people £10 per week for any Council transport costs that are part of the overall cost of the day opportunity being provided.

Both the day opportunity provision and transport cost will be subject to a financial assessment.

Option C - stop providing transport to services outside of the borough

The Council would stop providing transport to day services located outside the borough, unless the service cannot be provided within Redbridge.

If someone chooses to use a service outside of Redbridge, even though a similar service could be provided within the borough, the Council we would not provide the transport.

If a similar service does not exist within Redbridge and the person has no choice but to go to another borough, the Council would still provide transport free of charge.

Responses

Many attendees were concerned that the transport charges were the 'tip of the iceberg'. Along with the potential charge of up to £10 per week for transport, further financial assessments may see individuals being charged for other services.



'£10 is too expensive and a lot of people may find this unaffordable.'

'When assessing for transport, carers must be taken into account.'

'The centres need to be near public transport so that they can be accessed if people are expected to use public transport.'

'The transport options are complicated and HUBS should provide dedicated transport.'

'Taking away transport could mean taking away independence.'

Travelling to new hubs may impact on a users' ability to attend. People using public transport must be able to do so safely.

Some service users said that wheelchair users are often unable to get on a bus as there are already too many prams and pushchairs on them and drivers are unable or unwilling to ask them to move.

However some service users felt it was better to pay for transport to enable people to access services.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Redbridge would like to thank attendees for their valuable contributions on the day; representatives from our partner organisations (One Place East, Redbridge Carers Support Service, Age UK Redbridge and Action on Hearing Loss) who helped us to facilitate both events; and our colleagues from LBR for their support and contributions in order to ensure all access needs were supported.

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