

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2007**

**Report of the Director Of Adult, Community And Housing Services**

**Day Opportunities For People With A Learning Disability**

**PURPOSE**

1. To set out a five-year Plan for the further modernisation of the Services which deliver day opportunities for people with a learning disability, in order to achieve:
  - Better outcomes for people – social inclusion; promoting independence; access to employment; enhanced support for carers
  - A specialist day centre service delivered from buildings which are modern accessible and fit for purpose and focused on those people with a learning disability living in the community who have the highest levels of dependency.
  - A community based service for other people with a learning disability delivered by a range of providers in a number of different settings.

**BACKGROUND**

**Achievements**

2. The Council provides day opportunities for an average of 330 people with a learning disability per day, in one of the Council's three centres at Stourbridge, Amblecote and Lower Gornal, and in a range of community based activities delivered by the PULSE (People using local services elsewhere) team. Every day about 175 people attend employment; education; sport, leisure and arts; and volunteering facilitated by both PULSE and Centre staff.
3. There has been significant progress since 2003 in modernising day services in line with the White Paper 'Valuing People' (2001). The Council now offers a much wider choice of activities and many more opportunities for people with a learning disability to participate in their local communities. These opportunities have already transformed the lives of some of our clients.

## **Service Improvement Issues**

4. The overall number of people using the Service has not however reduced significantly during this period. It has become increasingly difficult to arrange an extensive range of activities in the community, which require a higher staff ratio, while at the same time maintaining a service from the centres for people with increasing dependency needs.
5. The 330 people receiving day opportunities include 123, who live in residential care homes. 108 of these live in independent sector homes and 15 live in the Council's own homes. Many of them are receiving five-days-per week day care. The Council is thus providing a day care service for these residents as well as paying for their residential care.
6. The Council's aim is to deliver services, which meet people's needs for day-time activities and respite through the most efficient use of resources and without creating unnecessary dependency. As far as possible, our aim is to enable people to lead ordinary lives and maximise their potential with minimal external support.
7. Some reduction in the number of attendances at day centres may be necessary to allow for an improvement in staffing to service user ratios for the most dependent people. An accelerated programme of reviews and person-centred planning would be required as well as negotiation with private providers about developing alternative services. For some people who attend college courses during term-time, it may not be appropriate for us to continue to offer care during holidays.
8. A programme of reviews would include the re-assessment of all clients already in residential care who attend day services, on the basis that a community based approach to day opportunities should mean that day services for people living in residential care homes should not normally exceed three days per week.
9. Care homes that wish to provide their own day care and can demonstrate that they can provide a quality innovative service which clients and the Council will wish to purchase would receive financial support to set up this service, thus stimulating the independent sector day care/support market we want to develop and improving value for money.
10. The PULSE team would review the range of activities it provides in order to improve its effectiveness and ensure that clients are able to move on to alternative, universal services where appropriate.

## **The Five Year Plan**

11. This report sets out a vision for a five-year Plan to complete the modernisation of Day Services. The long-term aim should be to provide a smaller buildings-based service, located in two centres run directly by the Council, which focuses more resources on delivering services for people with high dependency, who are living at home with family carers or in supported housing. This group includes people with challenging behaviour and those with multiple and profound disabilities.
12. The remaining clients would increasingly access day opportunities through a mix of individual budgets, services delivered by the independent sector and by colleges. A further key objective would be to increase the number of people in paid work. For example, many of the clients who use PULSE now are relatively able and are capable of moving on to work or to services offered by alternative providers.
13. The Council would promote the development of social enterprises for people with a learning disability in order to increase the number in employment in line with the Local Area Agreement target we have agreed with central Government.
14. The vision is in line with Department of Health thinking on the next stages with Valuing People and the work being undertaken by the In Control Project, in which Dudley is taking part, on self-directed support.

## **Infrastructure**

15. The Council's three centres date back to the mid 1970s and we are moving into a period when they would require significant repairs / modernisation.
16. None of these buildings is ideally suited to deliver modern day opportunities, so the Council should look to re-providing at least one of them.
17. Stourbridge Centre should be retained, because it is the most suitable of the three buildings being smaller than the others and with access to gardens. Also, improvements have recently been carried out at the centre to create an office base for the PULSE team.
18. Lower Gornal is the least suitable building and location, being situated in a rather isolated position on a trading estate on the side of a steep hill. Access to the grounds is therefore limited and six fire exit routes are compromised by the severity of the slopes on the east elevation. Installation of track hoists within the changing facilities cannot be pursued in view of the roof structure and additional facilities would be needed to support higher dependency in the future. Heating and ventilation are a major difficulty in the changing facilities and large communal areas.

19. Lower Gornal Centre was opened in March 1973. DPC estimate that necessary repairs to Lower Gornal (replacement of the roof and the heating system) would cost £300,000. Additional works to address the ventilation and provide basic changing facilities would be approx £80,000. Improvements to fire exit routes as above could be £50,000. A complete refurbishment of Lower Gornal in addition to these essential repairs would cost almost as much as a new centre.
20. Amblecote shares some of the disadvantages of Lower Gornal, including its large size and institutional appearance and will not be fit for purpose in the longer term. The timing of the re-provision of Amblecote will be determined by the needs and aspirations of people with a learning disability and their carers. In the event of re-provision in the longer term monies released would be used to improve facilities elsewhere and would be in the later stage of the Modernisation plan.
21. To construct a new day centre, of an approximate floor area of 600m<sup>2</sup>, including demolition of existing structures, site development, external works (car parking, paths, etc), mains services connections, infrastructure costs, and specialist equipment, would cost in the region of £1.2M.
22. The sale of the Audnam Centre site is expected to realise circa £400,000. Cabinet agreed in November 2005 that the capital receipt from the disposal of Audnam should be used to improve facilities in the other three centres. In March 2007, the Cabinet approved the re-provision of Grange House, which is expected to close by March 2008. The sale of the Grange House site would realise a further £350,000. The current market value of Lower Gornal is in the range of £450,000 - £600,000. Legal and Property advises that in the future land adjacent to Lower Gornal may be redefined as residential land, but currently is commercial use. The cumulative total of these capital receipts from service modernisation would enable a new centre for people with learning disabilities to be built.
23. A new smaller centre to replace Lower Gornal would not be able to cater for all of the clients who currently use the service; the average daily attendance is 73. Instead, the Council would offer some clients an individualised budget i.e. a sum of money to commission their own day opportunities at a time and place of their choice. People could continue to purchase DACHS provision, but alternatively might want to purchase from the private sector market in day care or other forms of support. Our staff or independent advocates would help them to access support services of their choice. This initiative would be very much in line with the thinking in the White Paper – 'Your Health, Your Care, Your Say'.
24. There is also scope to further modernise the day-to-day running of the Service. The DACHS fleet of minibuses is being renewed, but there

will be an overall reduction in the number of vehicles from 26 to 18. Instead, we will put more resources into helping people to travel independently to day services, and into delivering day services closer to home.

25. There are already excellent services running at the Dingle on Fridays for people who used to attend Audnam, and for older people with a learning disability at three community centre venues, and we want to create more opportunities to set up much smaller day care units in local communities in order to build security and confidence in alternative community-based provision. We would introduce independent travel training and 'walking buses' to make day services more accessible.
26. We have recently consulted with parents/carers and service users on proposals to change the opening hours of centres, specifically to open the centres 52 weeks a year thus dispensing with fixed centre closures during holiday periods (currently two weeks in the summer and one week at Easter, Spring Bank Holiday and Christmas). PULSE already remains open during the summer. Parents/carers have said they value current arrangements but we would hope eventually to extend opening to 50-52 weeks per annum, when the buildings based service is delivered from two specialist centres for people with high dependency.
27. Finally, the modernisation of community and buildings-based Day Services, requires a different mix of staff and higher staff ratios. We have experienced increasing difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff. There is also a need to rationalise the numerous different posts and grades which exist in the Service and introduce a coherent career structure.
28. Subject to the outcome of the Council's Pay and Grading Review, all existing care posts in the Day Service would be replaced with a single post of Development Worker, which would be graded in four bands based on a list of accountabilities linked to National Occupational Standards. This would create a career structure for front-line staff; eligibility to progress from one band to another would depend on achieving a recognised qualification.

## **FINANCE**

29. Savings from the reduction in numbers of people attending day opportunities, including those who currently attend from residential care homes, but these savings will be offset by investment in pump-priming private providers to deliver day care, individualised budgets, more support in the community for those who do not need a day centre service, and improved staffing ratios in the Council's centres.
30. The total capital available from the disposal of Audnam, Grange House and Lower Gornal is expected to exceed £1.2M, which will provide sufficient resource to build a new centre.

31. Changes in the grading for day services' staff will be cost neutral.

## **LAW**

32. The Council has powers and duties to support persons with a learning disability under its welfare function contained in a number of statutes including the National Assistance Act 1948, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Community Care Act 1990 and the Mental Health Acts and may do anything incidental to conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT**

33. The Council's Equality and Diversity Policy addresses our commitment to ensuring that all Dudley Citizens have access to services and opportunities that allow them to play as full a role as possible in our Local Community. By developing services for People with Learning Disabilities in the way recommended in this report, we are ensuring that our services support them to experience the same ordinary life opportunities that many of us take for granted

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **34. It is recommended that Cabinet**

- approve further service modernisation as detailed within this report, including the promotion of individual budgets, travel training, community based services and social enterprises.
- adopt a formal policy that day opportunity places will be allocated according to the needs of the client and his/her carer and that the primary purpose of the Service is to support people living at home with their families or living independently.
- approve the appointment of two Reviewing Officers to undertake a programme of reviews of individual care plans to ensure that all clients are receiving the appropriate level and type of day opportunities.
- approve the sale of the Lower Gornal site and the building of a new smaller centre in the North of the Borough with 50-60 places. The centre would be equipped to care for the most dependent and challenging clients.
- agree to earmark the Capital receipts for Audnam, Grange House and Lower Gornal for the replacement cost of a new centre in the North of the Borough.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the word "Linda".

**Linda Sanders**  
**Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**DACHS Key Contact**  
**Richard Carter**  
**Assistant Director – Learning Disability and Learning Disability**  
**01384 815804 - Email : [Richard.carter@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.carter@dudley.gov.uk)**