



Hertfordshire Record of consultation event

Meeting name:

Short Breaks (Respite) Consultation Meeting

Date:

13/09/2019

Time:

6pm

Location:

Jarmen Centre, Dacorum Day Centre, Hemel Hempstead

Meeting organiser and contact details/

Vicky Swarbrick, Adult Care Services. Respite2019@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Attendees: 10-12 people (combination of service users, carers, general public)

Feedback given

1) Challenges over the particular three units proposed to close:

- Closing Tewin Rd and Hixberry Lane has a disproportionate impact on the Dacorum area, despite it having the largest population. Other areas are less impacted by the proposals, and Dacorum already has a lack of services for adults with disabilities. Need options in St Albans and Hemel.
- The units proposed for closure do not have the lowest occupancy rates – why aren't ones with lower occupancy rates being selected? [It was clarified in the meeting that this was related to distance to alternatives]
- Unhappy about prospect of using Tanners Wood centre – some had had previous negative experiences there. Some had “heard” it was not popular or well regarded as a centre (and people chose to travel further to use a different centre at the moment). Some had visited it previously and found it “gloomy” and would not be happy to have a loved-one staying there. If that was the only alternative option, some may choose to not use short breaks (increasing stress on carers).
- It will be too far for those living in Dacorum to go to access emergency respite services if Tewin Road and Hixberry Lane are closed.
- The ‘per capita’ budget for Tewin Road is the lowest – so why close this? [was clarified in the meeting that this budget would need to increase if it was to stay open].
- Why is The Meadows not being proposed? Has one of the highest per capita budgets and has an alternative (St Michaels) close by.
- Tewin Road is used by the highest client base so the proposals are impacting more people than if others were selected.
- Don't feel there is enough rationale on why these particular centres have been selected.
- Hixberry has a waiting list of approximately 30 people - why would this be the case if occupancy was so low?
- Is Tewin Road being proposed because it is run by Care Tech? [it was clarified in the meeting that this is not the case].
- Tewin road is a wonderful place – “it is allowing us to have independent holidays for the first time ever”.

2) Impacts on carers

- Proposals put increased pressure on carers if they can't access suitable short breaks easily.
- “If we can't cope because we can't access respite, we may need to consider residential care settings sooner than we otherwise would, which will cost the Council more”.
- Don't want alternative options – “we are happy where we are”.



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- Less rooms overall means risk of not getting the nights you want for short breaks – increases stress on carers and families.
- “I feel my daughter is safe where she is” – carers have to feel the Short Breaks centre is safe and secure to use it. This is at risk if it changes.
- “I feel like the Council just wants us to jump off a bridge and take them [service users] with us.”
- Difficulty in making plans, booking holidays etc. if we are not sure of respite options.
- Six months isn't a long time to sort out transitioning to an alternative.

3) Other issues which may be impacting on usage of the centres

- Service users/carers are finding it difficult to find out how many nights of respite they are eligible for. Some reported 'rationalising' what they currently use but if they were aware they could use more, they would.
- The Council needs to clarify what the possible alternatives are – people are not being given this information by social workers. Lack of awareness/ not easy to find out what the alternatives might be for accessing short breaks locally. Are these alternatives suitable for older people who tend to use the Short Breaks centres currently? How do the costs of the alternatives compare?
- Are we confident people are being offered respite care routinely? (Anecdotally, we have heard that people in the 0-25 Service are being told they can't have this).

4) Impacts on those staying in the centres

- Nature of the service user group – often change is very unsettling for them. In some cases it has taken a long time to persuade the service user/loved-one to stay in a short break. Considerable worry over the impact of changing routines and having to transition and settle them into a new environment that they may not like (when they are happy where they are going currently).
- Decreases the choice adults with disabilities have in terms of accessing short breaks.
- People like to go to short breaks with their friends, and be able to access things they are familiar with in their local community. Very disruptive to them to not be able to do this anymore. Negative impacts on their mental health. It takes them away from their local community - can be very stressful and mean they become very isolated in short breaks. If they are not happy with the short break, they won't use it and that increases stress on carers/families.
- Relationships between people using the service and particular staff in the centres is very important for people feeling comfortable and happy to use the service. This is at risk.

5) Travel and transport

- 15 miles is an unreasonable distance to have to travel to access short breaks.
- “I work nights and my wife doesn't drive – we would struggle to access short breaks that weren't very local”
- Is the cost of travel being factored into the rationale for which centres have been proposed to close? Is it partly to reduce travel costs of people choosing to travel further to access Tewin or Hixberry at the moment? [it was clarified at the meeting that this was not the case].
- Concerns about transport costs increasing (for individuals) in order to access short breaks/respite.
- Has the Council considered that transport costs may increase for it if it needs to transport people further?

6) Other



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- Are the proposals about recouping money spent on refurbishments to centres in Welwyn? [it was clarified in the meeting that this was not the case].
- Feel “targeted”. Worries that adults with disabilities are ‘taking the brunt’ of cuts to services. Worries about further cuts to their services in the future, and impact on carers.
- Have we considered asking parents to make a financial contribution towards the service rather than reducing the service? [it was clarified in the meeting that this is not legally possible].
- Unhappy about the “if you don’t use them, you lose them” situation for short breaks allocations/bookings currently.
- Why aren’t Councillors hear listening to the impacts on people?
- What is the percentage usage of alternative options compared to the usage data for the council-run services?
- Not everyone in the room had received information/an invitation about the previous ‘Co-production’ events held to discuss the findings of the initial review of Short Breaks (held in July 2019).