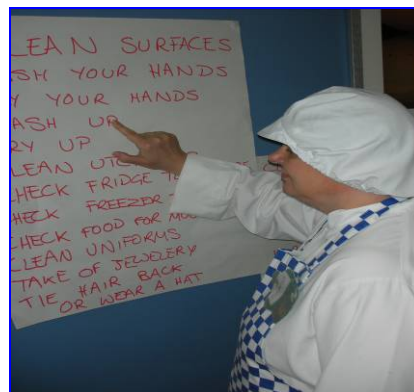


Changing Learning Disability Services



Maidstone Day Services Consultation Report July 2010

Background

Since 28th January 2010 we have been talking to people about the future of Maidstone Day Services

As you know, in November 2009, major roofing problems meant that the main day service building was no longer safe to use and so we were forced to transfer all services to community locations.



As the building no longer meets our needs we proposed that Maidstone Day Services move off site altogether and transfer with the existing staff team to community locations instead.

We therefore started a 16 week consultation programme asking what you think of this proposal.

We asked;

- Everybody who uses the services
- Parents and carers
- People who might want to use any of the services in the future
- Other service colleagues, health, education and housing
- Staff & Union representatives
- The general public

What has been happening since January?

- We sent out nearly 400 questionnaires to different groups and individuals
- We held a range of meetings for people who use the service, their carers, Staff, KCC Members, and other people who were interested.
- Carers were offered the opportunity for 1-1 meetings and 11 individual meetings with carers were held between February and May 2010
- 2 all day consultation events were held for service users (by Advocacy Services) on 29th January 2010 and 15th April
- Advocacy services worked individually and in groups with current Service Users throughout the 16 week period.
- Presentations were made to Tonbridge & Malling District Partnership Group made on 12th April and to Maidstone District Partnership Groups on 29th March and 29th April
- KCC members visited on 16th March, 7th and 15th April

114 people attended the meetings held on the 28th January, 22nd February and 2nd March.

A Total of 54 individual completed questionnaires were received. Comments and feedback were collated through group and individual meetings, emails and letters.



What did people who use the service say?

Most people said they thought moving to community based services was a good thing, as they valued being part of the community and having more choice as a result.



"Meadowview is better....we can do loads of things."

"I feel it's a good thing because I can go to other places. I like doing that."

"It's got me out of a rut- I don't want to go back to Boughton Mount, I like all the activities I am doing."

Some said how much they enjoyed the increased independence brought about by being in the centre of things and how they liked the opportunity to meet more people and being part of smaller groups.

Overall people said they would prefer to see time and resources put in to community buildings/activities and not at Boughton Mount.

What things worried people who use the Service?

"If we don't go back to Boughton Mount I will miss my friends"

People told us how important it was that they get to see their friends. Whilst people value being in smaller groups they told us that they equally value the opportunity to come together.

As a result of this, regular social events are being planned from Bowling Leagues to BBQs.

Also a "Pick & Mix" approach to activities is beginning to take place so that even if you are based at Meadowview you get to choose activities alongside people who

are based at Trinity, so that long term friendships carry on.



Some out of hours support is also beginning, enabling friends to get together at evenings and weekends to take part in shared interests.

The Day Service is also working with Advocacy Services, carers and individuals, to support Person Centred Plans (PCPs) and to make sure there are a range of activities that meet these.

“I like being in Maidstone town centre but would get fed up if there was no minibus, as there are only certain things you can walk to?”



People told us that they preferred being in more central locations, as Boughton Mount was difficult to get to and at times made accessing community activities hard.

Whilst many individuals told us they welcomed the chance to use buses or even walk to their activity, some said they do not wish to use public transport and like the ease of minibuses.

Many told us how important transport is in making community based activities a reality.

As a result the minibus routes have been changed to make sure that each base has access to one vehicle.

To help things further, a new 9 seater people carrier has been agreed.

Also, money has been given to MENCAP so that they can oversee a travel buddy scheme which is working really well for those accessing The Check In Café.

“ What will happen to Boughton Mount and the things in it ?”

Most people who use the Service told us that they prefer community based activities, with many saying that they did not like the location and condition of Boughton Mount.

This said, some told us they were sad about the old day service building and were worried about some of the things in it.

Therefore management have reassured people that things that are important to them will be kept safe and where appropriate, returned to the Service.

Things like the statues in the garden and the pottery.



Also it has been important that Service Users and Staff are at the centre of all new developments, from the Check In Café- its design and name, to furniture and colours within Meadowview and Trinity.



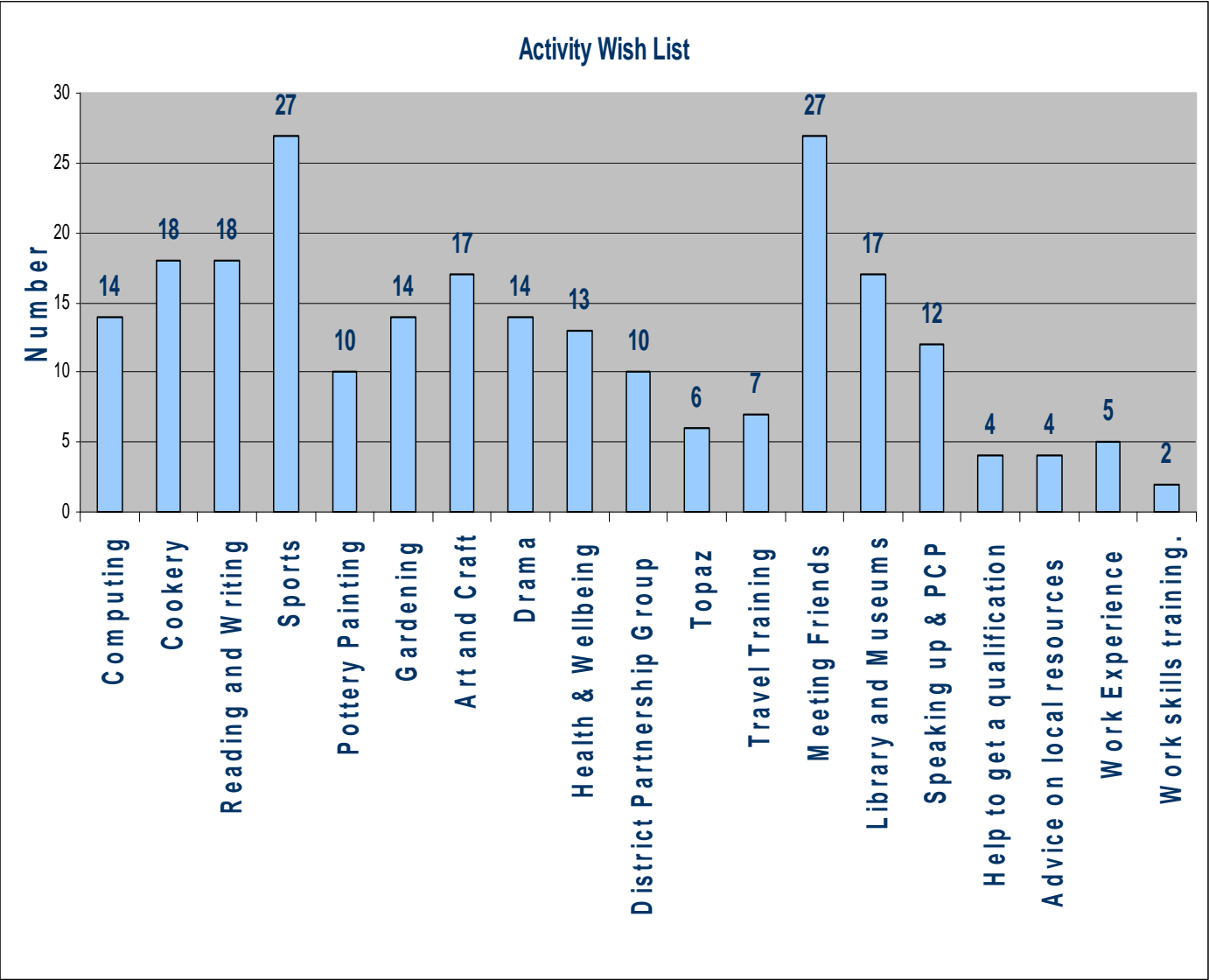
People told us that they have welcomed the chance to give their ideas and time to the development of community locations and that this has helped them to feel in control.

One person said;

"I don't want the roof fixed because I want to stay down here.....there are things we can do here. Meadowview is posh because me and Bill have done lots of work here"



What activities did people say they want



What did carers and other people say?

Some carers have known Maidstone Day Services for a long time and have valued the service and safety of the Boughton Mount Site and its buildings.



Carers attending the briefing on the 28th January were worried that the proposal to move away from the Boughton Mount buildings was about saving money rather than improving the service.

Those who spoke up worried that the local community would not be able to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.

However some carers said that whilst they agreed with the proposal to move into community bases, they had not felt able to voice this in a large group meeting.

Knowing that some carers may (understandably) have concerns, individual meetings were offered, and a total of 11 carers chose to have these.

These meetings were positive in that carers could speak openly about the issues affecting them and as a result, had some of their questions answered and addressed.

What things worried Carers and other interested people?

“What about people with more complex needs, how will their needs be met?”



Some Parent/Carers were worried that community places would not meet the needs of people with complex disabilities.

Capital has been put into Trinity Foyer and there is now a changing suite (including changing bench and ceiling hoist) and a wheelchair accessible kitchen, so that those with higher support needs have access to the facilities they need in central Maidstone.

Discussions with other community partners are taking place (specifically with Mote Park Leisure Centre and the new YMCA development) to explore the chance to develop a hydrotherapy pool, sensory room, a changing place and an additional community hub.

Also, just taking part in community activities is helping to raise the profile of people with learning disability and build greater awareness and confidence.

Is this about saving money?



Some people asked whether the proposal was based on an idea to sell Boughton Mount and save money.

Both officers and the Cabinet Member have publicly said that this was not the reason for changing Maidstone Day Services.

That the aim is to use the current budget differently, which means that the budget will be used to support people more flexibly instead of spending it on buildings.

If the Boughton Mount buildings were to be sold, any monies received would be put back in to Learning Disability Services across Kent, and towards community facilities that meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.

“What about Staff?”

Some carers and other people interested in Maidstone Day Services told us that they thought the proposals were a good thing but only if there were the right number of staff.

As a result three more staff have been recruited to the existing staff team.

Furthermore, some service users have been assessed as needing additional 1:1 support and are receiving this through agency workers and/or Direct Payments.

This has resulted in 10 of the 68 service Users, now receiving individualised support.

The new staff have been recruited to Support Worker roles, which means they can work evenings and weekends and therefore the service will be able to offer a greater menu of choice.

With Meadowview as the central hub, management are within easy access of the other community places and therefore will be able to oversee and support staff and the activities

“Will there be enough space in the community?”



Some staff and carers told us that whilst they liked community based services, Meadowview and Trinity were not big enough and more community space was needed.

Having listened to this, we are talking with Maidstone YMCA and other community partners to secure more space.

Equally by talking with community groups about the needs of people with learning disabilities we aim to promote access for all, both those who use the service and those who do not.

Conclusion

The 16 week consultation has been really important, in that it has meant that everyone has had time to understand what is being proposed, take part in community based activities and give their views through meetings, questionnaires and a website.

The last six months have shown us that it is possible to have the same level of day service without the main Boughton Mount building and that there are real benefits to community based services.

Whilst a small number of people said they were worried about change most people said they thought change was a good thing.

We took people's views and comments to the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, for him to look at and make a decision.

He agreed that Maidstone Day Service should continue to remain in its community buildings and move away from the Boughton Mount site completely.