

Day Opportunities Commissioning Plan

Background

Day service transformation has been explored in Brent over a number of years. The rationale for change has been informed by current priorities within Adult Social Care including personalisation, strengths-based approaches and the promotion of independence.

It is also supported by themes within the Brent Health and Wellbeing Strategy including accessibility, good information, reducing inequalities and access to open spaces. Similarly, the Brent Borough Plan includes an outcome to **“ensure all adults with care and support needs are able to access support and services and they are integrated with health, culturally competent and responsive to individual need.”**

A new offer will support those priorities and will also be in line with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) paper, Adult Social Care – Shaping a Better Future (July 2020), which identified the need for government and local authorities to think very differently and transformatively about the future of social care.

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‘For too long care has been built around organisations and buildings such as hospitals, day care centres and care homes. The future must be about what works for us as individuals and our families, with a whole series of local organisations working together to organise care and support that enables us to work, stay independent at home, and be as engaged in our communities as we want’.

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Background

Between 2018 and 2020 the Council undertook a number of pieces of work, engaging with service users and carers, providers, social work teams and children's services.

Analysis at that time indicated:

- There would be an increase in demand due to the ageing population and increased complexity of service user needs
- Overall, there was sufficient capacity within services but not sufficient variety/range
- Services for those with the highest needs were close to capacity
- Some people were going out of borough to access services
- There was no agreed service specification and providers were not working under contract
- Rates were not transparent/consistent
- Transport arrangements were variable and problematic

Feedback from people who used services and their carers at that time was:

- Young people in transition wanted to develop skills which increased their independence
- People with lower needs and a learning disability wanted to be involved in volunteering or seek employment
- Carers valued the respite day services offered
- Accessible transport was important
- There were few services in the evenings

Covid-19 impact

Since that time Covid has changed the way people access services and what they are choosing to do. Fewer people are using day services. Numbers have reduced from over 500 people in 2017/18 to 350 in 2024. Of the 350 people using services, we have data on 320 and of those the majority have a learning disability, with 209 having this recorded as their primary support need. Physical support and disability is the second largest group with 99 people having that as their primary assessed need. Of the 320 we hold data on, 236 are under 65.

When assessing the impact of Covid, disabled people more often indicated it had affected their life than non-disabled people in ways such as their health (35% for disabled people, compared with 12% for non-disabled people), access to healthcare for non-coronavirus related issues (40% compared with 19%), and access to groceries, medication and essentials (27% compared with 12%).

Among people who indicated coronavirus affected their well-being, disabled people more frequently than non-disabled people specified that the coronavirus was making their mental health worse (46% for disabled people and 29% for non-disabled people), they were feeling stressed and anxious (67% and 54%) or they were feeling lonely (49% and 37%). Already marginalised people were therefore more excluded from society due to their vulnerabilities.

The pandemic also meant that redesigning day services and opportunities was necessary to ensure compliance with restrictions and keep people safe. Whilst many of the changes, such as reduced socialisation was negative, others were welcomed by people who use services and gave them the chance to take part in new activities, learn new skills and do things in a different way. Although many things have returned to pre-pandemic status, day service utilisation remains low.

(data taken from [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain](#), Office for National Statistics, February 2021)

Transport

Commissioning of day services is inextricably linked to transport as the nature of people's support requirements means that plans need to be made to get someone safely to their chosen service.

There are a variety of arrangements in place including:

- Family members doing the transporting
- Dial a ride
- Day Service providers doing the transporting
- Other transport providers such as Brent and Harrow Hub and Brent Community Transport
- Taxicard scheme
- Public transport – with support/escort
- Taxis

Most people transported to Brent Council run day services are transported by the Brent and Harrow Hub, with a smaller number taken by Brent Community Transport. This is different to the arrangements for independent day services where the majority of people are transported by the day service providers. However, these arrangements vary considerably across services with some not providing transport at all.

The current approach to assessment and funding means that the Council is, for the most part, paying transport costs without consistent application of the Transport Policy. The policy has recently been updated and is awaiting sign off. Once updated, staff will be given support to ensure it can be consistently applied.

Transport presents a number of challenges including:

- Increasing costs
- Negative impact on referrals where providers do not offer transport
- Provider sustainability/subsidising transport – no full cost recovery
- Unreliability of some transport meaning person does not make it to the service
- Social care staff not consistently assessing for and planning transport – limited use of transport eligibility assessment
- Lack of equitability – some people pay, some don't, people in the same service paying different rates
- Lack of transparency – some providers "roll up" the transport cost within the day service fee
- Very limited use of travel training

As part of the future arrangements, clearer guidance will be given regarding the assessment, planning, commissioning and delivery of transport. This will include a clear separation of the commissioning of day opportunities and transport and information regarding options available and pricing structure. In addition, consideration will be given to how best to meet the need for travel training which could include commissioning a bespoke service.

Savings

The contract value of day services commissioned from independent providers is currently £3.6m per annum. This budget includes the transport for many of the users as the commissioning of the two elements is currently linked. The external offer has 38 day service providers, 11 of which are supporting 77% of the total service users.

Most providers offer support tailored to a specific group as opposed to generic provision, with support mainly focusing on those with a learning disability or autism and any associated physical needs, or older people including those with dementia. Of the 38 services, only four have a main focus of older people.

The remainder focus on people under 65, mainly learning disability or Autism but also some services for people with physical and sensory impairments and mental health conditions. Where someone has attended a service for people with particular needs when they were under 65, some services will enable people to stay beyond 65 where needs can still be met. Of the 238 people currently commissioned to attend a service delivered by independent providers, 176 are under 65 and 62 people are over 65. The majority of those under 65 have a learning disability as their primary support need (147 people). Of the 238 placements, 74 of them are out of area (outside the borough of Brent), this is nearly a third of the packages commissioned.

In addition, the Council runs two of its own day services, the budget for which is currently approximately £3.35m per annum. This budget does not include transport costs. There are currently 113 people attending these services.

Savings

Adult Social Care has been required to achieve a £500k saving from the day opportunities budget during the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/2026. To achieve this, it was proposed to close one of the Council's own services – the New Millennium Day Centre.

A consultation was undertaken in 2023 and feedback included:

- People valuing many of the facilities – pottery, arts, IT
- The importance of making friends
- The sense of security/safety from services designed specifically for those with disabilities
- The desire to do activities with the wider community/people who are not disabled
- Important respite for carers – to allow them to work or take a break and the wider impact this has on mental health and wellbeing
- Valued role in reducing social isolation
- Desire to access facilities in the wider community
- Wanting to volunteer or access work experience as well as education/training

The outcome of the consultation is to retain the building at New Millennium but with a changed purpose. The centre will now form the site of a community wellbeing hub, supporting a wider section of the borough's population, with the day service negotiating future shared usage of the centre and its facilities. The details of this are still in development and to be co-produced by users of the day service and other interested parties, but this multi-use community site will support the move towards greater community access and integration.

Our Vision

With this context in mind the Council has revisited the initial engagement feedback from before the pandemic, along with the New Millennium consultation feedback and built on that by speaking to people from wider day services to ensure that a broad section of current views are reflected.

Talking with service users, carers and providers the following issues have been highlighted:

- People already using day services continue to value them as a place to meet and socialise
- Some of the facilities and sessions such as art, pottery and drama are enjoyed
- Most people would like to do more things in the community
- Friendships made are the most valued element of services offered
- Carers value the safe environment and support that services offer
- People would also like to see services delivered outside of weekdays 9am–3pm
- Many providers have capacity within their services and utilisation has not returned to pre-pandemic levels – this is causing some financial concern
- Transport continues to be a challenge

The feedback has been used to develop a vision for day opportunities in Brent. Brent recognises that people value day opportunities and our vision is for:

‘a community-based offer that enables people to have a choice of provision which is flexible and enables people to be as independent as possible, healthy, resilient, and having meaningful relationships in their community’

To support the vision, we have developed **6 key commitments**:

Increasing access to leisure, recreation, education and employment opportunities

Supporting people to make friends, build relationships and social connections

Supporting people to live healthier, more independent lives

Offering local support within Brent via community-based services and networks

Improving access to good information and advice

Everyone has access to the right support at the right time

Commitment One: Increasing access to leisure, recreation, education and employment opportunities



This commitment reflects feedback received through engagement where people told us they would like to do more leisure activities in the community. In addition, it was clear from many younger people transitioning to adult services that their aspirations were towards education, volunteering or work opportunities. Brent aspires to improving its performance in supporting people to access work and volunteering.

To achieve this we will:

- Support people to play an active role in their communities
- Offer opportunities to stay active, participate and contribute in the community
- Provide opportunities to make a positive contribution including employment opportunities
- Focus on skills development, learning and employment
- Ensure there are clear pathways that reflect the variety of needs and outcomes of those who might be accessing support.

Outcomes

- Increase the proportion of adults who are supported to access employment, education, training or volunteering
- A focus on support not services

'I' statement...

"I have a busy and active life"

Commitment two: Supporting people to make friends, build relationships and social connections



This commitment focuses on the importance people who responded to our engagement put on the friendships and connections they made. This was the strongest theme throughout the engagement. One person told us “it’s important for people who do not have anyone at home. It stops people from becoming depressed. It also helps carers, as they get a rest”.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve wellbeing through increasing the opportunities, places and spaces that you can meet and socialise with others
- Support people to build relationships and avoid social isolation
- Provide support that enables the person to access a range of opportunities in the wider, and their own, community as an active and equal participant

Outcomes

- Increase the proportion of carers who report that they have as much social contact as they would like
- Increase the proportion of people who use services who report that they have as much social contact that they would like

'I' statement...

"I have friends and can get out and about"

Commitment three: Supporting people to live healthier, more independent lives



This commitment aims to address the disproportionate impact Covid had on disabled people; supporting people to develop the skills and access the support and services they need to stay healthy and well, remaining as independent as possible within the community for as long as possible. Loneliness reduces people's healthy life expectancy and research shows that "loneliness and social isolation are harmful to health. Lack of social connections can increase the likelihood of early death by 26%". Recognising Loneliness, Royal College

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure all services enable or reable people to do as much as they can for themselves and live as independently as possible in their own homes
- Ensure people have the support they need to stay active and healthy
- Focus on skills development, learning and improving independence in daily living including travel training
- Ensure appropriate transport arrangements are in place to facilitate access to services and support.

'I' statement...

"I feel happy and well"

Outcomes

- Every person travels as independently as possible
- Person-centred planning that supports individual aspirations, strengths and choices

'I' statement...

"I am able to do things for myself and learn new things"

Commitment four: Offer local support within Brent, via community-based services and networks



This commitment addresses the desire for people to be supported as close to home as possible, reducing travel time and enabling people to have a presence in their local communities. In addition, it supports the borough plan commitment support the local economy.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure as many people as possible are supported within the borough
- Promote welcoming communities that understand the needs of those who access them
- Promote the use of local services and the local Brent economy in line with the Borough Plan "supporting community wealth building by encouraging retention of investment in the Brent economy".
- Work with local providers to ensure services can meet local need.

Outcomes

- Increase the proportion of people who report doing things in their community that they enjoy
- Maximised use of community assets

'I' statement...

"I go out locally and know people in my area"

Commitment five: Improving access to good information and advice



This commitment underpins the delivery of the plan. Both individuals receiving support and staff working within ASC will benefit from improved information and advice about what is available in the borough and how to access that support. One person said to us “there are lots of services out there but how do we know how to find them?”. Information will include information about non-traditional services and support which may better meet people’s assessed needs.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve the website content for ASC
- Develop guidance for staff on day opportunities
- Work with partners to share information/directories
- Improve information on education, training and employment opportunities and pathways
- Increase support for sourcing services and setting up Direct Payments

Outcomes

- A clear information and advice offer of what is available
- Those who don’t currently access services will be supported to self-serve or find out what is available to them

'I' statement...

*"I know what is available
and where to ask for
support"*

Commitment six: Everyone has access to the right support at the right time



This theme particularly resonates with carers, knowing they have appropriate and flexible support for the person they care for. It also addresses the changes that people experience during the life course, with the potential for both skill development and progress, and the acknowledgement that some people will experience a deterioration in their health and wellbeing.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure carers needs are taken into account through whole family approaches.
- Ensure choice and flexibility is available through a diverse range of opportunities and support mechanisms (people are supported to do the activities they want to do and, wherever possible, they can choose where they want to do them).
- Support people through their life course, recognising that needs may change over time as people age, or their independence increases or decreases
- Encourage the development of services that are flexible to meet the needs of those who use them including during evenings and weekends
- Ensure specialist provision is available for those who need it

Outcomes

- Accessible community opportunities are available when they are required including at weekends and evenings
- Increase the proportion of adults in receipt of a Direct Payment
- Carer reported satisfaction will increase

'I' statement...

"I can change my support when I need to"

"I feel supported" (Carers)

Commissioning Plan

The Council is responding to feedback received, addressing inequalities within the borough and making sure the right services are available for people to meet a variety of need.

A set of commissioning intentions will support the vision and commitments, helping the development of day opportunities in the borough, enabling an increase in people's access to their local communities and services.

Commissioning Intentions and Market Management	Aims	When		
Development of a new service specification and associated procurement process. Specification to support a sessional model and reflect a digital offer	Support current services to meet need into the future and enable new providers to enter the market		6	Next 6 months
Development of new payment approach/pricing structure	Support a transparent and sustainable market structure		6-12	6-12 months
Work with Brent CVS to reach out to VCS organisations who may be able to meet the needs of the current and future day opportunities cohort	Diversify the offer to those using Direct Payments and increase the number of organisations working directly with the Council. Ensure services are available for newly emerging communities		12+	12 months +
Pre-market engagement – work with procurement team to make commissioning intentions known	To “warm up” wider/new market. Encourage a broader range of providers to engage with the Council			
Investment to support sourcing of services and setting up of Direct Payments	Promote the use of DP and therefore greater choice			
Work with providers in Brent to ensure services are available to meet a spectrum of needs including those with complex or specialist requirements and those who want to volunteer or work	Reduce the need for Out of Area placements Increase access to employment pathways in the borough			

Commissioning Plan (cont.)

Commissioning Intentions and Market Management	Aims	When
Undertake a review of transport arrangements: • Develop transport eligibility guidance • Develop transport commissioning guidance • Agree pricing structure • Promote independent travel training where appropriate and consider the need for a bespoke commissioned service • Review BCT contract	Ensure equitable access to transport and associated charging Ensure all those who need it can get to day opportunities Separate provision of day services and provision of transport	
Transformation of Council owned day services including: • Reviewing provision in line with the increasing shift to the community • Repurposing of NMDC to form a community wellbeing hub • Co-producing the new offer with people who use services • Explore opportunities for volunteering and work experience in the hub • Working with external services to support people through enablement/reablement to gain independence including accessing employment and alternative support	Support the implementation of the vision Modernise the offer Increase access to the community Provide more integrated services Increase volunteering and work experience opportunities	
Development of a Service Level Agreement for in house provision	Provide clarity over the offer and enable quality monitoring	
Improve access to befriending support. Links to new providers/services and sharing of information on referral routes	Delay the need for formal support and provide alternatives to building based services	
Work with communities, community groups, voluntary sector organisations and local businesses to ensure community facilities are accessible	Widen options for those who want to access community opportunities	

6	Next 6 months
6-12	6-12 months
12+	12 months +

Commissioning Plan (cont.)

Commissioning Intentions and Market Management	Aims	When
Explore links to existing borough initiatives including: • Social Prescribing • Brent Health Matters Programme • Family Wellbeing Centres • Community Grants Funding opportunities • Our Parks activities/sessions • Brent Hubs • Brent Libraries • ICB hub developments	Ensure maximum use of borough resources and joined up approaches to support <i>Interdependency with Prevention Strategy recognising different tiers of support</i>	
Work with providers to ensure services are in line with the vision and that development of any new services helps to meet gaps in provision such as services at evenings and weekends	Support the local market to be sustainable	
Work with providers and CVS to apply for relevant funding (respond to opportunities)	Develop new community provision	
Introduction of service monitoring to commence once new contracts are in place	Review quality and outcomes	

6	Next 6 months
6-12	6-12 months
12+	12 months +

Commissioning Plan (cont.)

Culture Change	Aims	When
Strengths-based approaches to assessments are utilised across all staff teams	To ensure support is building on existing strengths and interests Enablement/reablement focus	
Develop day service referral guidance for staff (include IAG on services available) to ensure that the full range of day opportunities have been considered	Match people to broader community alternatives Facilitate a move to community-based options	
Transport commissioning and eligibility guidance developed and implemented	Staff consider transport as part of the assessment and planning process	
Ensure that services are commissioned based on needs and outcomes	Move away from fitting people to services Ensure volunteering and employment pathways are considered where appropriate	
Promote the use of “next steps” through regular reviews, when identified outcomes have been met	Support people through the life course to develop or regain skills	
Ensure whole family approaches are followed	Ensure both the carer and the cared for person’s needs are met	
Greater promotion of Direct Payments	Offer flexibility to purchase sessions at appropriate times and locations to meet assessed needs	
Co-production with key stakeholders	Ensure services meet local need	
Review Out of Area placements	To have needs met within the borough where possible	

6	Next 6 months
6-12	6-12 months
12+	12 months +

Commissioning Plan (cont.)

Enablers	Aims	When
Independent travel training	Greater independence and flexibility	
Enhance the information and advice offer to ensure a full range of alternative options can be effectively communicated: - Contribute to the Community Services and Wellbeing Directory - Enhance website content	Ensure there is good IAG for those who use Direct Payments and the workers supporting them Support self-service Interdependency with Transformation Project to improve ASC IAG	
Work with social prescribers to ensure community-based opportunities are known and used by ASC workers and service users – consider linking up directories	Improve IAG to increase awareness of options	
Include an employment focus in the updated IAG. Include links with wider employment opportunities within Brent including increasing access to volunteering. Link Adults IAG to the SEND offer	Improve access for young adults to the volunteering and employment pathway	
Create an accessible “offer” for users and carers	Ensure residents understand the service offer	
Appropriate transport options are available and put in place at the point of support planning	Facilitate access to appropriate services and ensure day opps providers are not required to offer transport where not sustainable	
Make information available regarding: - Community Toilets scheme - Changing Places toilets	Facilitate wider use of community resources	

6	Next 6 months
6-12	6-12 months
12+	12 months +