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LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

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y/r
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The person dealing with this matter is
Address

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Date November 2019

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Dear Parent/Carer

Have your say on the Council's Day Services Model for People with Learning Disabilities.

I am writing in response to concerns I have received as a result of the letter we sent to you on 25th October. Firstly, let me apologise for the confusion that many carers have reported with regard to the way the previous letter was drafted and the apparent misunderstandings that have arisen as a result. I am writing again to try to clarify the purpose of the consultation and the proposals that are being consulted on (apologies for the length of this letter).

I want to immediately dispel one of the misunderstandings – this is not a consultation on the closure of any existing day centres. It is a consultation about the contract payment method, which is currently to give guaranteed funding for the service provider to the agreed capacity of the centre, regardless of the numbers actually attending. That may have made sense at the start of the contract five years ago when there was high demand for the service. Since then capacity has fallen significantly such that we are paying c£270,000 per year for places (15% of capacity) that are not taken up. That is not sustainable.

As a result of concerns expressed, we have extended the consultation to Monday 6 January 2020 and your views are really important to ensure that we have representation from all those who have an interest.

What We Are Proposing

We currently fund three day centres: -

- Ken Boyce Centre, Footscray
- Smerdon Centre, Belvedere
- Carlton Centre, Sidcup

We currently pay for these day centres on a guaranteed funding basis (block contract), i.e. the service provider is paid for a set number of places whether or not those places are taken up. Over recent years, fewer people have chosen to take up a day centre place, meaning we are paying for spaces that are not being used.

The current total annual cost of unused places amounts to c£270,000. This is not sustainable when set against rising demand for social care services.
The contracts for the day centres expire at the end of May 2020. Our proposal is: -

- Not to seek a provider to run the Ken Boyce Centre on a guaranteed funding (block contract) basis from June 2020
- To seek a provider to run the Smerdon Centre on a guaranteed funding basis for one year (with an option to extend by one year)
- To seek a provider to run the Carlton Centre on a reducing guaranteed funding basis for three years (with an option to extend by two years)

Why Are We Proposing These Changes

As we have said above, our data shows that over time fewer people are choosing to attend a day centre such that the average unused places are running at 15%, with a general downward trend. Whilst those who do use the day centres (and their carers) generally express high levels of satisfaction, it is particularly true that younger people are attending less. The trend shows that under-usage will be exacerbated over time. It is not sustainable to continue with guaranteed funding for more places than is needed. Equally, we do not as a rule provide guaranteed funding in this way for other services, e.g. day services for older people, residential and nursing homes or homecare – these services are viable on a payment per person basis because there is demand for that service model.

In Bexley, we are looking to promote personal choice and control – a key aspiration of the Care Act 2014. More and more people are using personal budgets or Direct Payments to get the services that best suit their needs and preferences. We want to both increase the take up of personal budgets and increase the number of service options available. We believe that the take up of personal budgets and the freedom this brings has been a contributing factor to the reduction in the take up of day centre places.

Thinking about the proposal to not provide guaranteed funding for the Ken Boyce Centre and using the principle of choice, clearly if enough people want to use their personal budget to buy a day centre place – and there is a willing service provider to run the centre at its risk – then Ken Boyce Centre can continue to be one of the choices available to people. What can't be right is that public funds are used to subsidise Ken Boyce Centre if fewer people want to use it than can make the centre viable.

The Learning Disability Strategy 2017 – 2021 sets out a shared vision for people to have a full and active community life. Over the time from 2017 to today, we have expanded the range and scope of community activities and these have proven very successful; however, everyone recognises that there is a need for a sizeable dedicated space (or spaces) for people with learning disabilities, suitably adapted and equipped for managing personal care. The vision is to provide three such 'hubs' – one each in: -

- The South of the borough (Sidcup, Bexley Village, Footscray – known as the Frognal neighbourhood)

- The middle of the borough (Crayford, Bexleyheath, Welling – known as the Clocktower neighbourhood)
- The North of the borough (Slade Green, Erith, Belvedere and Thamesmead – known as the North neighbourhood)

Note these neighbourhoods are aligned to the way the NHS primary care (GP's) coordinate their services (known as Local Care Networks) and we have adopted both the boundaries and the terminology for consistency.

Each hub is intended to be part of a mixed-use community building, but with sizeable dedicated space within for people with learning disabilities to use as a base. The idea is that people will be supported to access a range of community activities, but, given that few of us are active every hour of every day, there will be a comfortable, well equipped hub (but not at the scale of a day centre) to go to when not enjoying a community activity.

The Carlton Centre in Sidcup is well placed to become the hub for the Frognal neighbourhood, which is why it is intended to seek a provider to run the centre at the termination of the current contract. Although the aspiration is to make the Carlton Centre more of a mixed-use asset, particularly in the evening and at the weekends, it is likely that this will develop over time as centre use diminishes because people are out using community activities. It is important to note that the Carlton Centre will always have a separate, secure space, segregated from the public for the exclusive use of people with learning disabilities. The other two hubs are yet to be determined, but funding has been set aside to adapt or extend a suitable community building.

Recognising that it will take time to develop hubs and create a full range of community activities, the proposal is to contract for a provider to continue to run the Smerdon Centre at least until May 2021, with an option to extend to May 2022 to ensure that there is capacity to meet everyone's need and provide for a transitional period.

At the end of the contract period for the Smerdon Centre, the proposal is to not seek to contract with a provider on a guaranteed funding basis (block contract) – but of course if enough people choose to continue to use the Smerdon Centre using their personal budget and there is a willing provider to run the centre on the basis of individual payments, the Smerdon Centre would continue to be available as a day service choice. It should be recognised that this is not a life-long guarantee that Smerdon as a day centre will always be there even with sufficient demand – there may be future unforeseen issues or events either within or beyond the control of the Council that cannot be anticipated at this time.

It is important to stress that this proposal is not about closing day centres – it is about changing the basis of contract payment so that learning disabilities day centres are eventually funded on the same basis as any other social care service, i.e. payment per person either by an individual using their Direct Payment or on behalf of an individual by the Council where the person (or their carer) chooses the day centre. The proposal recognises that at this point in time there is insufficient demand to sustain all three day centres on a payment by individual basis, but there is both demand and space to accommodate all those who currently want a day centre service in Carlton and Smerdon. Of course, it is for day centre providers to market and promote their service where their income is dependent on individual

choice rather than block contract payment. This may lead to increased demand. Day centre services currently are and will continue to be offered by social care staff as a choice for any person with day service needs.

We do respect this may cause some people and their families' anxiety and we want to hear people's views to ensure we are informed on what the future of day opportunities may look like. We acknowledge and respect that for many people with learning disabilities and their carers, day centres offer a range of social activities that enable people to remain independent at home. We also recognise the growing numbers of people with learning disabilities who choose to access more self-directed alternatives to care by drawing support from the wider community and universal services using a personal budget or a cash direct payment in a creative way. The result of the consultation will inform the proposed procurement options regarding day services models.

Why It Is Important For You To Have Your Say

This consultation will be used to make decisions about how we contract for day centres and therefore may influence the shape of day services for people with learning disabilities in the future. We want plans for day services to be developed with the people who use those services now and potential future users and (recognising that some may not be able to express a view), their carers, service providers and other stakeholders. We also want people who have an interest to get involved, particularly in thinking about the concept of community-based hubs and options for community activities that enhance learning, employment or simply enjoyment. For those with more profound disabilities, we recognise there is a bigger challenge to ensure options are available that reflect their unique needs and we are committed to ensuring that is taken into account as new options are developed.

We would welcome your views on these proposals. To get involved and have your say then please complete the written survey or on-line survey.

The consultation period has now been extended until 6th January 2020

Also, you can attend one of the following consultation events which have been arranged.

Date of Meeting	**Time**	**Location**
For Carers and families		
13 November	10am – 11.30am	Crayford Library, Crayford
13 November	7pm – 8.30pm	Bexley Civic Offices
21 November	11.30am – 1pm	Welling Library, Welling
21 November	7pm – 8.30pm	Bexley Civic Offices

If you have any queries, please contact 020 3045 5900 or email LDTransformation@bexley.gov.uk

At the end of the consultation, we will publish the findings in a report on the Council website.

I would like to thank you in advance for completing the questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely

Stuart Rowbotham

Stuart Rowbotham
Director of Adult Social Care & Health