

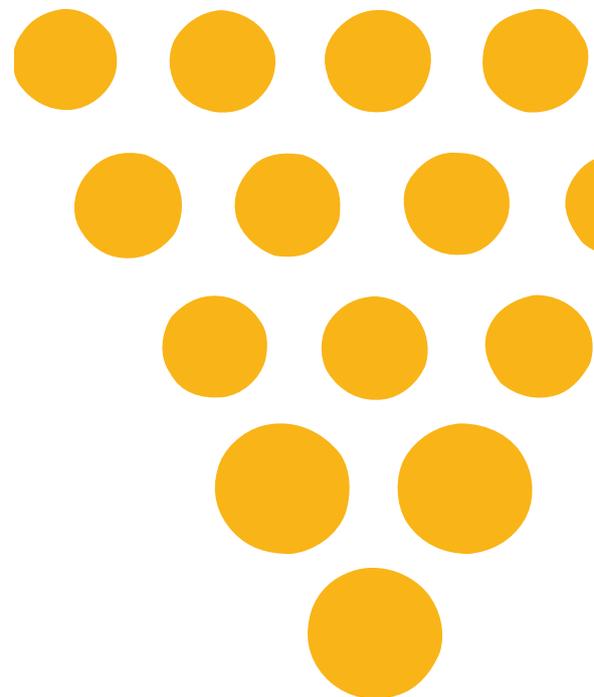


# Modernising Day Opportunities

## Executive summary of engagement findings

Version 1.0

Adult Transformation and Commissioning



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# Introduction

1. The aim of this report is to summarise the findings of the Adult Transformation and Commissioning Team engagement undertaken between July and September 2019 relating to non-residential care provision, referred to here as “day opportunities” but also known commonly as “day services”, or “day care”.
2. Cornwall Council offers day opportunities through two channels. Since 2018, a portfolio of more than 25 day opportunity settings operated by contracted providers has been available through a framework agreement. Alongside these there are a range of long standing services operated by the council itself. There is, in practice, fluidity between the two and concurrently attending in-house and commissioned provision is commonplace.

## What We Did

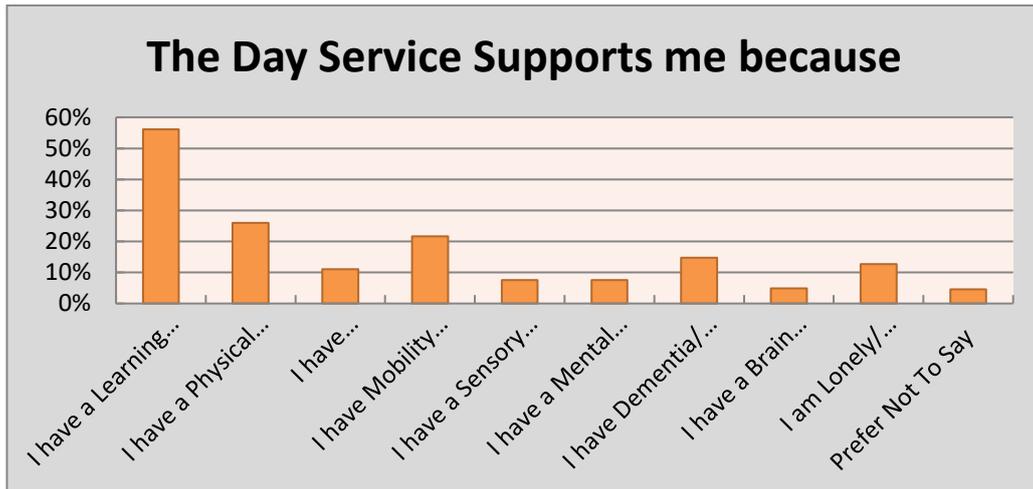
3. Commissioning staff sought the views of people with an interest in the provision of day opportunities through the following avenues:
  - A widely distributed survey in a range of format including an Easy-Read format,
  - 3 public drop-in events during the opening phase of the engagement, in Liskeard, Penzance and Truro.
  - 3 provider workshops in Liskeard, Penzance and Truro,
  - 5 further public drop in events during the closing stages of the engagement period, in Hayle, Falmouth, Wadebridge, Treverbyn (near St Austell) and Bude.
  - Attendance of current providers where invited so to do. Commissioning staff ran engagement sessions at 4 current providers located in Gweek (near Helston), St Austell (twice), Penzance and St Ive (near Liskeard).
4. Commissioning staff were conscious of a history of adverse public reaction to proposals to change provision of day opportunities. Criticism of previous similar engagement centred often on commissioning staff appearing unavailable and seeming to avoid unwelcome views. Commissioning staff therefore made ease of access a priority: setting up a direct phone line and dedicated email address so that any interested members of the public could contact commissioners with a minimum of barriers.
5. Maximising participation was also a priority so all people currently accessing a commissioned or in-house day opportunity were issued, via their provider, a copy of the survey and a postage paid envelope to return the survey.

## Survey Findings

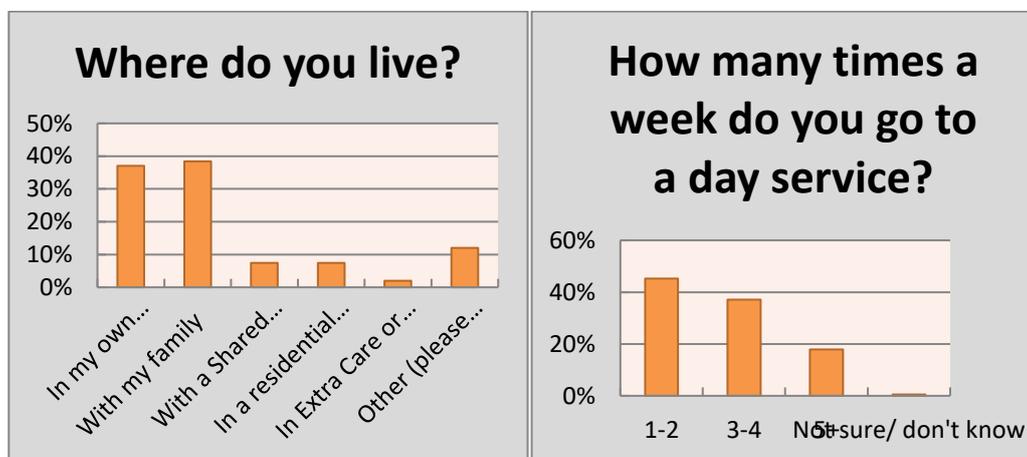
6. Commissioning staff were pleased with the scale of the response received; at the time of writing we have received in excess of 500 surveys from people accessing day opportunities.

### Trends identified

7. Aside from the demographic information gathered through survey completion we asked respondents what was most important to them about the opportunities they access. There was a significant cluster of responses appearing to cut across all types of service, age brackets and care needs.
8. The spike cluster incorporated the following:
  - Being with [their] their friends - (selected by 70% of respondents)
  - Staff who know and care about [them] - (65% of respondents)
  - Doing things that interest [them] – (50% of respondents)
9. This suggests two issues of interest:
  - Historically (and to a lesser extent during this engagement) there has been vocal public support for “building based services”. The relatively low level of response for being in a “familiar building” which was only deemed important by 20% of respondents suggests that either it is being over-represented in discourse, or that it is a proxy for other priorities, most likely the subjects captured in this spike.
  - Whatever care needs are met by access to day opportunities they are secondary in the view of those accessing the opportunity to more prosaic needs for socialisation and stimulation. Future service models must therefore meet these needs as well as formal care needs to be well received. Understanding this disconnect between the formal needs and the perceived value of the commissioned opportunity to the individual will be key to any proposals generated through this process.
10. Most access to day opportunities in Cornwall is by people with a learning disability (56% of respondents reported this as a reason for the support they received). Physical Disabilities were the second mostly frequently referenced reason for accessing a day opportunity (25% of respondents).



11. Survey respondents tended to live in a setting which does not involve residential care provision. 37% lived in premises they described as their “own”, and an additional 38% lived with their family. People tended to access day opportunities less frequently than more. 45% attended only once or twice a week, and 37% attend three or four times a week.



12. Within the free text sections of the survey there was support for day opportunities fulfilling a need for social connection with references to “friends” and variants thereof being the most frequently used word. A range of popular specific activities were also reflected in the free text responses in locations where they were available. Equalising access to these popular activities across the county is something for commissioning staff to reflect on. These two elements frequently occurred in combination; “activity with my friends”.

## Emergent Themes

13. The following are themes about the function served by day opportunities which arose throughout the face to face engagement. Commissioners have tried to order them logically however it was evident from many of the discussions that there is a proliferation of feedback loops where one theme facilitates greater engagement or progress in another.
14. It is notable that there are themes below which would not, taking a strict view of care needs and entitlement, be matters in which social care provision has historically had a role. Given the complexity of the relationships between the themes commissioners feel that an *'ancillary effect'* is the fairest description whereby legitimate commissioning aims are served by recognising things which would not be a legitimate aim themselves but which create the environment for greater success for the legitimate aims.

### “Me, being myself”

15. Day opportunities are viewed, particularly by people for whom parental care has continued into adulthood, as a setting in which the person can develop a life away from the mediation and control of others, make choices and pursue interests of their own and build a life of their own. Several participants and their families spoke openly about the need for a space for someone receiving family care into adulthood to “become their own person”. Many noted that this increased sense of agency made them more determined to attend and make progress throughout their lives.

### Reducing Isolation

16. There was significant support for day opportunities being a rare avenue through which people with eligible care needs are able to socialise freely. Individuals spoke about a provider having a feeling of *“family”*, or a *“gang”*, or *“camaraderie”*. Amongst older people, there was recognition that simply spending time in the presence of others was preferable to the isolation that many felt in their home environment.

### Building Peer Networks

17. Day opportunities are seen as a venue for developing social connections because the development of peer networks from which people derived support. A number of people spoke about a peer network, built through a day opportunity, being a source of *“challenge”* and *“example setting”* which

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facilitated people pushing beyond their perceived limitations, trying new things, and developing new skills. Numerous individuals referred to the difficulty in forming meaningful relationships with strangers in the absence of an understanding of living with a particular set of needs.

18. It was noted that there was a secondary supportive peer network that flourished amongst the carers and families of those accessing the opportunity growing out of shared interest and mutual understanding.

## Confidence in staff

19. Throughout the engagement people referred to the qualitatively different relationship with staff working in day opportunities. People accessing the opportunities were likely to believe that the staff with whom they interacted knew them, and viewed them positively. Staff were seen as skilled and trusted but independent of social services and “officialdom”. It was believed that staff exercised good judgement in their selection of activities for people and encouragement to participate. This belief that staff viewed them positively based on real knowledge of the individual, meant that people felt safe trying new things with them.

## Supportive environment

20. Participants discussed their feeling that the supportive peer network, and informed and well-meaning staff, combined to make the day opportunity they accessed an environment in which it was “safe” to try new things and push themselves. They felt sure that failure would not be too impactful on them, and where there was a diminished fear of ridicule compared to trying things outside of a day opportunity setting.
21. This sense of being in a safe space permeated how people viewed interactions with other professionals where the contact was mediated through the day opportunity meaning that those interactions were more likely to lead to successful outcomes.

## Welcome

22. Participants spoke candidly about their sense that a day opportunity was a setting in which not only were they entitled to be, but that their presence was positively welcomed. They felt this was not always the case in the wider community.

## Purpose and Structure

23. Participants spoke about their access to day opportunities giving them a sense of purpose. This often manifested as undertaking projects over several weeks, or skills acquisition but was frequently also discussed in terms of doing things for others (either as part of a defined role within the opportunity itself or working jointly to help others).
24. Participants also spoke about the positive impact that adherence to routine can have. People said that they responded positively to the knowledge that they would be attending an opportunity on given days, and would have to be ready for a certain time, and present themselves in a way that would be well received by their peer network.

## Long-term development (relationships and skills)

25. A large number of participants referred to the different timescales that apply to accessing day opportunities where attendance frequently spans years and sometimes decades. This long timeframe permits the slow, iterative, build-up of skills and relationships.

## Enjoyment and combating boredom

26. A number of people felt it was important to record that day opportunities should be enjoyable notwithstanding any greater purpose which people wished them to have. Certainly the positive features noted around day opportunities only arise where people attend willingly and engage positively with the opportunity offered.
27. Boredom was a significant factor adversely impacting quality of life for many participants and measures combatting boredom were seen as transformative. There were examples of activities tried through a day opportunity becoming something which people did themselves away from the encouragement of the staff.

## Respite capacity

28. There was strong support for day opportunity access being necessary for those supporting the people who attend in terms of providing them with daytime “respite” which allowed them to manage their lives, and in some cases permitted them to work. There was widespread recognition that this was not a purpose of the provision of day opportunities but it was nevertheless felt to be an important consideration

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