Why is there a need to change the Learning Disability Offer?

The needs of people with a learning disability are continuing to change and are becoming more diverse. People and families have higher expectations of an independent life in their community, and want more control over their lives. People with a learning disability have been telling people who commission and provide services that they want the same quality of life as anyone else; that they have the same dreams and wishes as other people, and that they want the same chance as anyone else of being able to realise these dreams. They want access to employment, jobs, good leisure time, friendships and to travel as independently as possible around the borough.

In 2015 we undertook a review of our services for people with learning disabilities. The review is integral to the Council’s overall vision for transforming social care and builds on the principles of the Care Act 2014 and the need to move away from traditional large building based support, which is in line with government policy and good practice. The review has led to a full and thorough consultation process and a number of reports submitted to Cabinet which outlines the direction of travel.

The Council is facing severe financial pressures and an increase in the number of people with a learning disability. Higher numbers of people with a learning disability are reflected in the proportion of 2017/18 budget spend, with 30% of all Adult Care expenditure being spent on people with a learning disability. The current service spends a net £20.4m on learning disability services for approximately 750 people.

What does the Care Act 2014 say?

The Care Act 2014 reinforces national policy for adults with learning disability, including the core principles in Valuing People (2001) and Valuing People Now (2009) - rights, independence, choice and social inclusion.

It reaffirms the principles of personalisation, legislating for personal budgets and requiring local authorities to promote direct payments. Assessments will build on individual, family and community strengths, support, access to universal services and aim to prevent, delay or reduce people’s dependency on services and transitions for young people with a learning disability into adulthood must be effective.

What consultation has been undertaken?

Consultation about Rotherham’s offer to people with learning disabilities took place in two stages.

In November 2016, Cabinet and Commissioners agreed the first stage - a broad consultation about the Council’s services and the expectations of service users, their families and other stakeholders. This ran between 5 December 2016 and 2 February 2017, and engaged 627 people, including 23 engagement opportunities (one to one conversations, group discussions and focus groups).

That consultation informed a further report to Cabinet and Commissioners in July 2017, which proposed further consultation, including specific proposals for the building-based day services at Oaks and Addison, and Treefields and Quarryhill respite centres. That consultation period ran from 27 September to 22 December 2017.
In the pre-consultation period, the Council engaged with customers with a learning disability and their carers about the content, process and method of consultation to ensure equity of access across the stakeholder groups. Following this engagement, an online questionnaire was finalised, a set of flashcards developed for people with complex needs, and an easy read paper based questionnaire was developed with the support of a doctor and researcher specialising in learning disabilities and autism. Engagement sessions were set up and facilitated by the Council and Speakup Advocacy service.

A ‘train the trainer’ programme was run to support and prepare 12 consultation champions - a one hour session every two weeks for the duration of the consultation period repeated in each of the three day centres. The sessions encouraged feedback from those present at the sessions. The consultation champions then fed back to the Council in week 12 of the consultation period.

Flyers were produced and distributed to customers and their carers. In order to promote maximum awareness of the consultation to the wider community. A total of six press releases were distributed to launch the consultation and remind people to take part and as a result the story featured in local news publications, including the Rotherham Advertiser. The consultation was advertised on the Council’s website, with a bespoke consultation page and a news story linking to the online consultation.

There were regular updates on the Council’s social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, and posts were shared across our partner’s social media accounts. Information about the consultation was shared with our communication partners including the Rotherham Together Partnership (consisting of 19 different organisations) and local colleges.

Hard copies of the easy read consultation questionnaire were also available on request.

In total, 473 responses were received (177 from people with a learning disability and/or autism and either mental health or a physical disability, 112 carers, 99 staff and 85 members of the public) which formed the basis of the report to Cabinet and Commissioners in May this year.

**What reassurance can you give that the service will be able to complete all the required assessments?**

A My Front Door learning disability reviewing team has been created. This is made up of a number of professionals, including social workers and support planners, who link closely with learning disability health workers. We are currently in the process of recruiting an occupational therapist and reablement staff. Some of the team have experience, skills and extensive knowledge of working with people with a learning disability; others are experts in their own profession. Together the team provide a range of skills which will enable the assessment and support planning process for people with a learning disability to have a meaningful life which maximises their own skills, talents and independence.

**Can a non-qualified worker carry out assessments?**

The answer is yes - it is common practice nationally. In all adult care services, there are qualified and unqualified staff undertaking assessments, this includes qualified occupational therapists as well as OT assistants. As long as the worker has been appropriately trained, then an unqualified social worker can be an assessor. Dependent upon complexity, sometimes these will be
co-worked or moved to a qualified social worker. All safeguarding will be undertaken by qualified social workers. This information conforms entirely with statutory requirements.

In terms of timing of assessments, under the Care Act 2014 where it appears to a local authority that an adult may have needs for care and support, the local authority must assess whether the adult does, in fact, have needs for care and support, and if they do, what those needs are. There is no general statutory timescale for the completion of an assessment, but the Care and Support Statutory Guidance states that the local authority should inform the individual of an indicative timescale and keep the individual informed throughout the assessment process. While assessments can be carried out in a variety of ways, including face to face assessments; supported self-assessments and online or telephone assessments, they must be appropriate and proportionate. Once the assessment has been completed the local authority must ensure that it is an accurate and complete reflection of the person’s needs.

When will assessments begin and how long will they take?

Most of the My Front Door learning disability reviewing team is now in place and has started to work with a number of people and families. Assessments can take a variable amount of time as complexities of people’s individual needs and circumstances dictate how long an assessment would take. Some assessments will need to be led by health colleagues with social care support.

How can the savings be predicted before the assessments are made?

The identified savings will come from across the current learning disability budget and will be found by a reduction in infrastructure costs, such as double funding and using community solutions rather than building based services. Not all savings will be made from the in-house learning disability provision, as we will be reviewing all people who are currently receiving support from the Council.

How are you prioritising assessments?

Over the next two years, we will prioritise assessments for people to ensure that we meet the recommendations outlined in the Cabinet report and delivery plan, and those people where there is an identified change in need.

When will services such as Oaks Day Centre and Quarryhill be closed?

At the Cabinet and Commissioners meeting that took place on 21 May 2018, there was an agreement to decommission the internal learning disability services, including Oaks and Quarryhill, over the next two years. We will build on the work we have already undertaken with staff, customers and families to ensure that we continue to engage with people about how we can help achieve their aspirations within the local community.

What is happening with Parkhill Lodge?

The decision was to agree the recommendations within the report to Cabinet, with an additional consultation to be completed around the future use of Parkhill Lodge at Maltby, which we anticipate doing in 2019, unless building changes necessitate earlier consultation.
Will people with learning disabilities be able to keep friendship groups?

As part of their person centred assessments, people will have the opportunity to speak about their lives, their friends, people who are important to them, their interests and needs and wishes for the future. Maintaining friendships is a key part of anyone’s life and we see no difference for people with a learning disability or autism. Friendships could be maintained in their own home, at a friend’s home or any appropriate location and we will work with the people to make sure that friendships and important relationships are maintained.

What services will there be for people with complex needs?

The Cabinet report makes reference to retaining a building based service for customers with complex needs. In addition, the commissioning team are also working with new providers to build on existing capacity to support all customer groups.

What available alternatives are there to the current Council day centres?

All people will have the opportunity to make sure each day in their life is meaningful, of value and leads to them having a ‘good day’. Doing things which have a purpose, being in ordinary places doing things most other people in the community would be doing, doing things that are for the individual, making sure they receive the right amount of support and are in touch with local people, developing friendships. There is a mix of opportunities for people which meet a variety of needs and we will continue to work with new providers and existing staff to encourage a rich offer for the people of Rotherham.

Community Catalysts are working with people who have a learning disability to offer them the opportunity to try alternative activities within the community. This has proved very successful and the new exciting activities continue to grow in Rotherham.

What is Community Catalysts?

The Council is working with Community Catalysts over a three year period to look at supporting the creation of micro-enterprises in Rotherham that will offer people with learning disabilities in Rotherham meaningful activities. A number of people have attended some ‘taster sessions’ with Community Catalysts and the feedback has been extremely positive.

What support is there for carers?

The Care Act 2014 has a strong focus on carers and local authorities now have a responsibility to assess a carer’s need for support, which includes considering the impact of caring on the carer. We are currently in the process of strengthening our support to carers.

What about direct payments?

The direct payments policy and procedure has recently been reviewed. Rotherham Council commissions a managed account and payroll support service, who will receive the direct payment on a person’s behalf, help recruit Personal Assistants (PAs), pay the PA, support people with all the legal responsibilities of being an employer and also provide the Council with financial monitoring information.
Where people choose not to have a direct payment, the Council’s commissioning officers have a number of options available for people needing formal support. We recognise that a direct payment is not suitable for everyone.

**Will Shared Lives be available?**

Shared Lives offers opportunities for vulnerable adults to live or spend time with approved Shared Lives carers and their families as an alternative to traditional forms of care. Shared Lives is where a person or family offers accommodation or care in their family home to people with support needs. Shared Lives carers can:

- provide long-term support to someone in their own home;
- provide short-term support / respite to someone in their own home;
- provide day support to someone using their home as a base.

Shared Lives is an evolving and developing service which is constantly recruiting Shared Lives carers who are matched to a person. The matching of a person requiring support from a Shared Lives carer will be based on what a person’s wishes and outcomes are and then what the carer can offer. It will take into account the race, age, gender, cultural and religious background of the person and the carer, together with lifestyles and personal interests. The carer assessment process gives the Shared Lives Scheme and prospective carers opportunities to consider particular strengths and areas where they can offer support.

**What is the My Front Door Project?**

The My Front Door project was set up to mobilise the plans to transform the learning and disability services in Rotherham. Through the project, we will provide and support people with learning disabilities to live a life, rather than solely accessing traditional services. The project will ensure that:

- Each person with a learning disability will have a reassessment / review, based on a person centred approach, which will inform the support and services we need to provide to meet their individual needs over 2018/19.
- All people involved will have the opportunity to make sure each day in their lives is meaningful, valued and leads to them having a ‘good day’.
- More people with a learning disability will be in paid work and volunteering opportunities and working alongside the rest of the community.
- We will provide high quality care and support to people with a learning disability and their families.
- We will be more diverse so all people with a learning disability in Rotherham, whatever their age, background, or level of need, will have more choice in their support.
- We will move away from traditional building based or institutional form of support and will focus on support which is personalised, flexible and meets people’s individual needs.

**Links to Cabinet meeting and webcast on 21st May 2018**

[https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home](https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)