TRACS
Community Day Service Consultation

Better days with learning disabilities in Kent

for people

Easier to read guide
What has been happening since May?

Since 21st May 2013 we have been talking to people about the future of TRACS Day Services.

As you know, the TRACS building in Longfield is leased and this lease ends in December 2013.

As the building no longer meets our needs we proposed that TRACS moves from Longfield and goes with the existing staff team, to community locations instead.

We therefore started a 12 week consultation programme asking what you think of this proposal and what you would like the Service to be in the future.

We asked:

- everybody who uses the services
- parents and carers
- people who might want to use any of the services in the future
- other services, Care Managers, health, schools etc
- staff and Union representatives
- the general public.
• We sent out nearly 300 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 1-1 meetings and 6 individual meetings with carers were held between May and August 2013 as well as a Presentation made to Dartford Gravesham and Swanley Carers’ Forum.

• 3 Group workshops were held for service users (by Advocacy Services) on 31st May, 6th June and 8th August 2013.

• Advocacy worked individually and in groups with Service Users throughout the 12 week period.

• 2 Information Workshops for other people interested in TRACS were held on 12th June and 25th July.

• A Total of 44 individual completed questionnaires were received.

• Comments and feedback were also gathered through group and individual meetings, emails and letters.
Most individuals said they would like to have more choice and were keen to do a whole range of community based activities, keen to go out, rather than stay at the centre.

13 people said they would like to get involved in deciding what the new hubs would look like and were keen to choose paint colours, furniture etc.

People told us how much they enjoy the independence brought about by being in the centre of things, how they liked being part of smaller groups, although were keen to continue getting together for things like summer BBQs.

“I would like to be able to do different activities every week e.g first week archery, bridge, going out and fishing. I like gardening, it’s important.”

“I’ll be going to new buildings. I won’t have to stay with everyone. New friends.”

“It’s going to be a good change.”

“I’d like to get a job; I want more activities to do. I would like to help decorate TRACS.”

“I like travelling by bus, reading in the library, going out and having drinks and cycling”

What people said
People told us they worried about things they had not seen, that they wanted to know what activities there might be and what the buildings would be like.

The management team have looked at all the activities people said they wanted to do and are using this to make new timetables - keeping the things people like and adding new things that were chosen during the consultation.

The aim is to have a timetable that has lots of choice and that is based on what people tell us they want.

Many people did not know where Essex Rd was and whilst many people got involved in choosing things for the new hub, some individuals also wanted to visit it.

“I feel a little nervous going to a new building - I want someone to show me the new buildings. Talk to me about the buildings.”

“Give us timetables so we know where to go. I would like to know where all the buildings are.”

“It will be easier to get to. I will be able to use buses to get to the new TRACS.”
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 try and shorten the routes taken and to make sure that people are not spending too long on the buses.

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

Some people told us they were sad about the old day service building and were worried about some of the things in it.

Therefore things that are important will be kept safe and where wanted, moved to the new hubs.

Things like the Lockers.

Also it has been important that Service Users and Staff are at the centre things, from the design of rooms and the colours within Essex Road, to the timetable itself.

People told us that they have welcomed the chance to give their ideas and time to improve the Service and that this has helped them to feel in control.
What activities did people want to do?

- Computing: 17
- Cookery: 20
- Reading and Writing: 21
- Music: 24
- Gardening: 9
- Art and Craft: 22
- Drama: 18
- Health and wellbeing: 22
- District Partnership Group: 15
- Archery: 18
- Travel Training: 18
- Meeting Friends: 27
- Library and Museums: 23
- Speaking up groups: 21
- Help to get a qualification: 17
- Advice on local resources: 16
- Work Experience: 18
- Horseriding: 11
- Sensory: 17
- Cycling: 17
- Daily living skills: 22
- Rambling: 17
What did Carers say?

Some carers have known TRACS for a long time and have liked the service and the safety of the Longfield building. So individual meetings were offered, and a total of six carers chose to have these.

These meetings were positive in that carers could speak openly about the things affecting them and had any questions answered and addressed.

Most Carers said they were keen on the proposed changes to TRACS as they like the idea of more activities and greater choice and were keen to see the timetables improved.

What things worried carers and other people?

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

Money has already been put into The Bridge and Cyclopark which both have a Changing Suite (that include changing benches and ceiling hoists), with The Bridge also having a wheelchair accessible kitchen and a sensory room.

We have made sure that the downstairs area of Essex Road is made a lot more

“I think that a service based in Dartford will be much better for all the people that attend TRACS”

“We think that what has been put forward has been well documented, but what does concern us is that there are many different needs for the clients. If centres like TRACS are to close, will the options cover all these needs”
wheelchair friendly so that those with higher support needs have access to the facilities they need in central Dartford.

Also, the new hubs planned for the Library and Lowfield Street will both have facilities to meet the needs of people with complex disabilities. We also know that just taking part in community activities is helping to raise the profile of people with learning disabilities and is building greater awareness and confidence.

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.

Some people asked whether the proposal was based on an idea to save money and were reassured that the changes were aimed at increasing choice and making things better.

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.

Some carers asked about transport, and it was explained that whilst some minibuses may still be used, the new hubs will open up new opportunities and choices such as travel training and taxis.
Some carers (as well as other people interested in TRACS), told us that they thought the proposals were a good thing but only if there are lots of planned activities happening.

With 2 Essex Road as the central hub, management will be within easy reach of all the community places and will be able to oversee and support staff, as well as make sure activities are well planned.

Some Staff and Carers told us that whilst they liked community based services, they worried about having enough space and asked that there were places to store things such as sports and art equipment.

Listening to this, extra storage has been put at Essex Road and will also be part of the design of any of the new hubs at the Library and Lowfield Street.

“Only worries I have are getting to and from different hubs, but we live locally and our daughter can travel on the bus and be trained to use different routes. Think it’s a great idea!”
What has been decided

The 12 week consultation has been really important, because 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 the website.

The last few months have shown us that people like the support offered by TRACS but are keen to see the service get even better and are open to trying new things.

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

We took everyone’s views and comments to Graham Gibbens the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care.

He looked at what everyone had said and agreed that TRACS should move out of Longfield and into new community hubs in Dartford.

As a result, now that the building work at 2 Essex Road is finished, TRACS will move its base there, continuing to use local facilities and supporting people to take part in a range of activities.
If you would like this questionnaire available in an alternative format or another language, please contact us on: 01622 221022

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