

By: Graham Gibbens – Cabinet Member, Adult Social Services  
Oliver Mills – Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services

To: Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee – 1 April 2009

Subject: **ACTIVE LIVES NETWORK (formerly Queen Elizabeth Resource Centre)**

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Summary: To provide an update on the current service, share feedback and views of those who use the new model of service and provide information on the future plans for the service

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## Introduction

1. (1) Members of the Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee (ASSPOC) will recall the developments of this Project following discussions last year at ASSPOC, Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, and that a commitment was given to update Members on progress at a future ASSPOC meeting.

(2) The Queen Elizabeth Resource Centre (QEF) closed on 17 October 2008. A new service, The Active Lives Network (ALN), was established from 20 October 2008 for those people previously attending the day service at QEF. The new service is currently being run by KASS staff and is situated at community centres as follows:

Monday – Swanley Youth and Community Centre

Tuesday – Riverside Centre, Gravesend

Wednesday – Temple Hill Community Centre, Dartford

Thursday – Small group Community Activities (generally bowling at Gravesend)

Friday – Small group Community Activities (varies)

(3) Opportunities at each of the centres were developed based on user feedback and include access to computers, card making through a mini social enterprise, jewellery, art and craft and other social activities. Small groups of people go swimming at Dartford from the Riverside Centre on a Tuesday. Service users have formed community groups and meet to go Bowling on a Monday or access Strood Leisure Centre for gym and hydrotherapy on a Friday. A dedicated gym has also been developed at Cascades and will be open soon. The equipment has been supplied and is fully disabled compliant. The dedicated gym will be used pending the development of a fully inclusive gym. The future use of the area could be used as a sensory room for disabled people. One group has got together and are accessing Woodwork classes at Dartford Adult Education using their Direct Payments pooling their money to commission their own tutor.

(4) The management of the current service is an interim arrangement. The intention is to tender for an external organisation to run the service from the autumn of 2009.

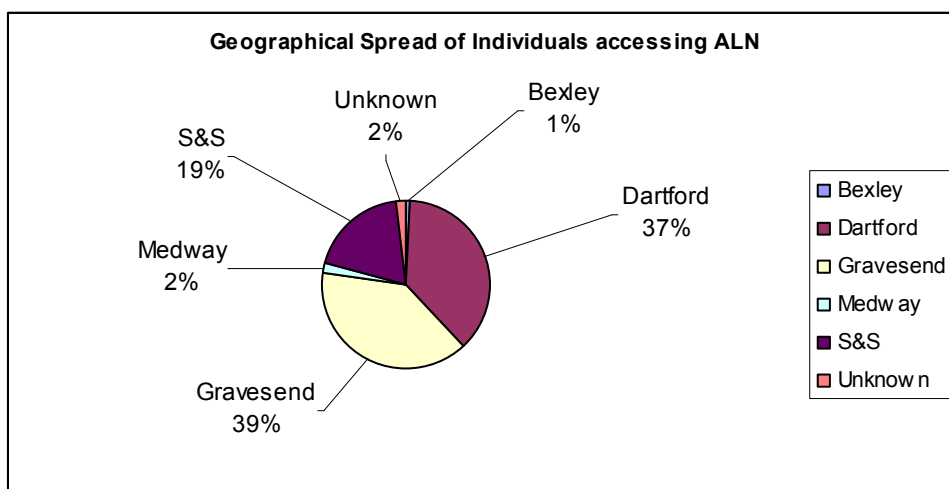
### Current Status

2. (1) Every service user was offered an assessment in the first quarter of 2008. An undertaking was given that people would be able to access the same number of days service they were currently using, and that no-one would be denied a service (as a self referred service there were service users who did not meet KASS eligibility criteria). The assessments provided information on what people wanted from a day service, the days they attended and the activities they took part in. In the summer of 2008, a team of workers held individual meetings with service users once the closing date was announced. The information from both of these exercises has been collated and the average number of places booked totals **161** a week, as follows:

Day	Numbers Attending
Monday	33
Tuesday	55
Wednesday	58
Thursday	8
Friday	7

(2) 31 people have been accessing Direct Payments in exchange for a day at the Active Lives Network; 10 of whom are attending the Woodwork Group on a Friday and others are individually accessing opportunities such as aromatherapy sessions or local leisure facilities.

(3) The Active Lives Network supports **105** individuals. Alternative services have been provided to everybody who used the QEF centre with the exception of four individuals who only want to use the Cascades gym when it is ready.



(4) A number of service users are known to the Community Mental Health Teams and work is taking place to ensure that suitable services and support are offered to these people who attend the Networking Centres and community activities.

(5) Feedback was taken from service users on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009 to be part of an article for 'Step by Step'. This feedback is shown at **Appendix One**.

(6) Newsletters produced by service users are attached at **Appendix Two and Three**.

### **Venues and Capital Works**

3. (1) A key feature of the Modernisation Programme was to ensure that as far as possible people were enabled to access mainstream community facilities. To support this Capital has been invested in upgrading the venues accessed by ALN to make them 'DDA compliant plus'. These works include:-

- Capital works funded by Social Services at the Swanley Youth and Community Centre include improvements to their accessible toilets, new blinds to assist with heat issues, reducing the height of the serving counter and having suitable internal and external doors for people to move around the centre more easily. Feedback from service users has been very positive.
- At the Riverside Centre changes have been made to the layout of the accessible toilets, magnetic door openers have been fitted and Braille signage has been improved. The Riverside Centre themselves have identified improvements to further accommodate service users such as building an inclusive garden with raised beds and opening up other events to include physically disabled people.
- Initially, Dartford Adult Education Centre was identified for the service but due to the higher than expected numbers an alternative venue had to be found. Temple Hill Community Centre was identified by service users and has been used since 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Work is proceeding with Dartford Borough Council to have two accessible toilets installed at the Centre. The Library adjacent to the Community Hall is not open on a Wednesday but the Library service has provided KASS with a key to enable access to the Library and the computers. It is still the intention for the Dartford service to be based at The Bridge when it opens later this year – nevertheless any improvements to Temple Hill Centre will ensure that it is more accessible to the whole population in the future
- Work continues at Cascades for the inclusive gym facilities in securing agreement on the fire exit routes. Due to a change in fire route, the plans require further approval from Gravesham Borough Council but an interim arrangement is being planned ensuring the service is opened to a limited number of people at any one time. In the mean time, most individuals are accessing other mainstream gym facilities using their Direct Payments.

- Service users are identifying further improvements now that they are using the buildings such as requiring different doors for toilets and entry and a further request for capital will be required.

(2) In addition to the importance of these improvements in enabling the activities of the Active Lives Network, they will also ensure that the buildings are more accessible and available to all disabled people and supports the Council's ambitions in respect of addressing issues of social isolation and developing sustainable communities.

## **New Referrals**

4. (1) The Active Lives Network is predominantly focused to support the people who were attending the Queen Elizabeth Foundation Resource Centre.

(2) An element of the original service from QEF was Advice Information and Guidance. The Simon Paul Foundation has been commissioned to extend their existing role to enable them to take more referrals from KASS, as well as self referrals. Additional staff have been employed to work with people to develop person centred plans and plan for their future, especially around the use of Direct Payments

(3) It is expected that the externalisation of the ALN service will take the form of a block contract covering the existing service and the people currently attending. The current contract with the jewellery tutor is to be extended until April 2010 and this contract will be assigned to the new provider. In the longer term it is possible that the jewellery service will become a social enterprise.

(4) It is anticipated that there will be fewer people in the future who choose to meet their identified needs by long term attendance at a day service. It is more likely that there will be short term use of such facilities to meet a specific need, such as building confidence or learning a skill, with individuals then supported to access personalised services which support independence and social integration. The introduction of Self Directed Support will result in the offer of individual budgets and/or direct payments to all new service users.

## **Direct Payments & Kent Card**

5. (1) The Modernisation Programme for this project has embraced Self Directed Support and is looking to meet the outcomes for people within a day service that reflects their needs. It is also wanting to offer people the choice and control that comes with having a Direct Payment and the opportunity to purchase a unique solution to their individual needs.

(2) Of the 105 individuals registered for ALN, **31** people are now accessing Direct Payments for planned group activities and for their own individual needs. **21** of the 31 are using the Kent Card to access their Direct Payments.

(3) The Community Activity days on Thursday and Friday will, when the service is delivered by an independent organisation be accessed via Direct

Payments, however, because the service is currently being run in-house this is not possible at present.

(4) Discussions are underway with an external organisation to run the Community Activity days as an interim arrangement so that people can use a Direct Payment for their activities, including the care support and transport. Longer term, the service will be tendered with the Monday – Wednesday service.

## **Transport**

6. (1) Transport is currently undertaken by Kent Passenger Services for the Monday to Wednesday service. Work is progressing to improve the service in line with service user feedback.

## **Plans for Service**

7. (1) The current service is predominantly focused to support those who previously attended the QEF Resource Centre. The Simon Paul Foundation will be supporting individuals into further identifying their new emerging needs and person centred plans will be drawn up with each individual.

(2) Contact has been made with the Mental Health Teams to ensure appropriate support is provided to their service users and that they all have up to date plans with outcomes listed.

(3) As already indicated, in the future people may be referred via the Simon Paul Foundation or the Enablement Teams for a time limited period for a specific outcome such as learning to use a computer in a supported environment or for social interaction to build confidence rather than a long term placement. Increasingly, as more individuals come through the system with a Direct Payment, the service will need to evolve so that Service users can be supported to maximise their independence and skills and achieve the outcomes identified in their personal plans.

(4) The tender documentation will be drawn up through early summer of 2009 with the intention of being tendered later in the Summer. Service users are aware of the plans to tender the service and will be part of the process in both drawing up the documentation and through tender evaluation.

## **Financial Position**

8. (1) The original QEF budget has been shared across a range of services. The undertaking was given that all the money from this agreement would be used for the delivery of services to disabled people. The new service is comprised of an extended Simon Paul Foundation service, the Active lives Network, extension to the Sportslink service, funding for the MS Society exercise class in Dartford, and Direct Payments. Budgets are being set for 2009/10 based on ongoing costs rather than set up costs and work will continue to ensure that accurate information will be provided when the service is tendered.

(2) Capital funding was approved to support the initial changes required for four buildings in Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley and should support accessibility for the local community and provide a foundation for the modernisation of other day services. Further capital will be requested to enhance accessibility now that service users are getting around the buildings and finding further enhancements. This expenditure represents a draw down on the capital value of the site at Brent Way.

## **Recommendations**

9. (1) Members of the Policy Overview Committee are asked to NOTE and COMMENT on the contents of this report

Margaret Howard  
Director – Commissioning and Provision  
(West)  
Kent Adult Social Services  
Tel: 01732 525219  
Email: [margaret.howard@kent.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.howard@kent.gov.uk)

Christy Holden  
Project Manager  
Kent Adult Social Services  
Tel: 01622 694272  
Email: [christy.holden@kent.gov.uk](mailto:christy.holden@kent.gov.uk)

*Background documents:* None

*Previous Committee references:*

Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee - 29 January 2008 (Oral update)  
Cabinet Scrutiny Committee - 26 March 2008, Item E1  
Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee - 1 April 2008, Item B6  
Cabinet - 14 April 2008, Item 5

**Direct Quotes from People using the new opportunities in North West Kent  
11<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Active Lives Network**

Barry Pessell - "Since I have been coming here to Riverside it has opened my eyes to what I can do. I go shopping by myself over town (Gravesend). I even use the cash machine to get money out.

"My Mum and Dad have noticed a difference in the way I am acting around my house. When we go out I am more confident. I even speak up when we have the quiz at Riverside instead of thinking about the answer I say it and get it right.

"I think my life is changing, thanks to Yasmin and Davina."

June Cook – "I like coming to Dartford and Gravesend, the atmosphere is very good and people do more for you here"

Anna Hornby – "People join in more here, it's good"

**Card Making**

Dolly Witt - "Paul [Morris] and I run card making lessons for people with disabilities which we love doing. We do lots of things including Iris folding, 3D cards, teabag folding and recycling greetings cards. The cards and present tags are sold to people using the Active Lives Network and we want to start going to craft fairs and other events to sell the cards. We are in the process of contacting schools to look at whether we can sell our cards at some of their fairs.

Carol Thomas said "the class is invaluable; it helps with co-ordination and thinking"

Valerie Crane said "I am thoroughly enjoying the classes and I look forward to it"

The card making classes are run as a mini social enterprise with Paul and Charlie [Westacott] helping with the accounts and card inserts.

This is supported by the Simon Paul Foundation

**Statement submitted by Karen Watson:**

I attended the QEF Resource Centre for 15 years and was able to move around the centre for independence from one room to another and then in 2008 we moved to the Temple Hill Community Hall. The Temple Hill Community Hall is a nice hall where I can continue using the computer with the Lunar Plus speech programme so that I can do my emails and letters on the computer and in time I will learn my way around to regain my independence to do things for myself. It is a new year and time for us to move on and accept that the QEF centre has gone and we should put the past behind us and work together to make the community hall a good place to be

where we are all together. This is the time to build new bridges and new friendships because the Temple Hill Community Hall is better than having nothing at all. Yasmin and Davina do a fantastic job and we are very grateful for the help and support that they give us.

## **Woodwork**

A group of service users with an interest in Woodwork have exchanged a day in the new Active Lives Network for a Direct Payment.

Ten people are pooling their monies to commission a course at Dartford Adult Education Centre.

Tony Brooks – “it’s nice to get back to using old fashioned hand tools and have a tutor who can pass on knowledge; he is showing us how to do things with hand tools which is tailored for disabled people. We are using our hands and arms more which is therapeutic for people who have had strokes. This is one of the best courses I have ever been on. Not only are we shown how to do things, we are taught to understand how to do it. I am lucky that I am on the course and I don’t want to leave it. I am really, really impressed.

“I also now know about Direct Payments which will help me with other things too.

“We have been taught how to do French Polishing. He teaches us how and tells us the best places that we can buy the equipment. I have now even bought some equipment as the project I am doing on the course is making a chest and carving out a sailing boat on the front which I will polish up.

“We all have a group project and also individual projects.

“Franco [tutor] shows us how to look after tools and sharpen them correctly. He is brilliant and has a knack for looking after disabled people.”

Vic Cooke said “I have learnt more in 4 weeks than I have done before”

Bill Chance said “Franco has time for us. We are all individuals and he treats us as a group and as individuals. He knows that we all learn at different paces. Franco has people skills; he has gone back to basics teaching us things that we have never learnt before.

“This course will cost us a fortune; through Franco showing us which tools to use for each job, we have realised that we need new tools at home as ours are no good. I have been making joints in wood for years and have been throwing away saws when they get blunt but with Franco’s help we are getting better value from our new tools and they are doing a better job as they are the correct tools.

“Franco comes back to us time and time again if we do not understand. He is a craftsman and is passing on knowledge. He makes you feel comfortable and he has a great sense of humour.”

Paul Hurren said "Franco has time and patience and he cares for us"

Lee Forder said "I am learning lots of new things and am enjoying it".

### **Article written by Danny O'Brien regarding Christmas celebrations**

Service users of the Active Lives Network put on a 7 course Christmas Dinner for themselves at a cost of £7 each which over 70 people attended. Although the festive traditional turkey was the main course there was a stuffed butternut squash available for the vegetarians who attended. The hand made Christmas crackers were made by Brenda Wright [service user] and the table decorations were made by Carol Mahony [art tutor].

A secret Santa and a raffle was also held; this added to a most enjoyable day with some very happy service users who have happily transferred to the Riverside Centre at Gravesend from Bridge Court, Dartford.

Many thanks to Bridget Pestell whose help was most appreciated.

### **Statement from Peter Wright regarding Self Directed Activities**

11 people now access the gym at Strood Leisure Centre. They are welcomed by staff and other able bodied gym members.

An article was printed in local press and there are now enough people interested to book sessions in the hydrotherapy pool.

Up to 15 people meet at Gravesend to go bowling on a Monday

**Also attached – Newsletters no 1 and 2 – produced by Celia Luscombe, Service User**