

By: Oliver Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services

To: Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member, Adult Social Services

Subject: **OUTCOME OF FORMAL CONSULTATION ON  
CLOSURE/VARIATION OF SERVICE USE OF MAIDSTONE  
DAY OPPORTUNITY SERVICE**

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: A report on the outcome of formal consultation undertaken at Maidstone Day Opportunity Service and seeking Cabinet Member approval to proceed with the closure of the Boughton Mount Site and to continue the service based on a more community focussed model.

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## **Background**

1. (1) Adult Services Directorate is engaged in a process to modernise the way it carries out its responsibilities in order that the service outcomes for the people of Kent are improved. In 1999 and 2008, Members agreed to a Kent wide strategy (in line with national strategy) to move away from large segregated centres for people with learning disability to a range of services in the community. The Good Day Programme was devised in order to deliver this across Kent and its vision statement 'Better days for People with Learning Disabilities in Kent' 2008 looks at how individuals can be supported to be part of their local communities and have the same opportunities as others, in employment, education and training, leisure etc.

(2) This report outlines the views expressed during the formal consultation on Maidstone Day Services. The Consultation focussed on the proposal to permanently evacuate the Boughton Mount Site in Maidstone and move the current learning disability services and their existing staff teams to a community based model, affording Service Users greater access to mainstream activities and enhancing community networks. Learning Disability Services have used the Boughton Mount Site since 1948 providing a campus setting for a range of learning disability services, including Maidstone Day Opportunity Service, Table Talk Catering Service and Spectrum Pottery.

(3) In line with other districts, Maidstone has been working towards community inclusion for a number of years, partnering with a range of local organisations in order to promote opportunity and participation for people with learning disabilities across the area. As a result Service Users had been accessing a range of community facilities such as Trinity Foyer, Maidstone Community Support Centre, Meadowview and local leisure centres for some time.

(4) The Trinity Foyer is a centrally based community facility managed by Stonham Housing. Stonham already lease space to a number of community groups from Samba classes to Health and are keen to facilitate opportunities for the wider community.

Trinity has long been used by Maidstone Day Service and capital has been invested (approved by Project Approval Group) to extend its use, by creating a care suite and “drop in” facility as well as to develop what was previously a disused café area. Its central location means it is an ideal springboard from which to access community activities and to utilise public transport.

(5) Meadowview has been used as a day service building for a number of years, and was already identified as being a vital facility in terms of delivering increased community presence and greater choice.

(6) Maidstone Community Support Centre (MCSC) provides a base for 25 community and voluntary groups and a partnership with Table Talk (Maidstone Day Services) launched the Check In Café in September 2009, and continues to facilitate work based training for people with learning disabilities.

(7) In November 2009 heavy rainfall resulted in the Boughton Mount day service buildings suffering significant water ingress, with consultant surveyors condemning the roofs and the main day service building assessed as a health and safety risk. With the safety of building users paramount, and with established community facilities, the service was able to transfer operations to community locations.

(8) The estimated costs of replacing the roofs were established to be around £250,000 and as such it was felt that it would not be appropriate to invest such a large amount of capital in a site that did not meet national or local strategy and which would therefore not have a long term future.

(9) Reports were presented to SMT on the 27<sup>th</sup> November and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009 outlining the issues and recommending that the Variation of Service/Closure Protocol be invoked and formal consultation be undertaken.

(10) The proposal being that the service and its staff transfer to alternative, familiar community locations as previously outlined in paragraphs (2) to (6) above.

(11) To coordinate a range of community based opportunities there is a need for Staff, Service Users and Carers to have a central point in which they are assured access to management and effective service support. Meadowview (a detached, extended, KCC owned property) was already known as the Maidstone day service community hub but was under utilised, affording opportunity to become this central role and this has already been achieved.

(12) With Meadowview established as the crucial coordination centre, partnerships with other community venues such as Trinity Foyer and Maidstone Community Support Centre mean that the service has a range of alternative community facilities to meet Service User needs.

(13) The vision being that with greater community presence and on going community networking, people with learning disabilities will have more choice and more fulfilled lives.

(14) This report sets out comments received following the formal consultation.

## Consultation Process

2. (1) Acknowledging that Learning Disability Services, Service Users and their Carers have had a long association with Boughton Mount it was agreed that consultation should be extended to a 16 week period in order to maximise stakeholder involvement.

(2) Consultation has been extensive with information and questionnaires cascaded to nearly 400 groups and individuals. This included Service Users, Parent/Carers, Staff, Trade Unions, Advocacy Groups, Residents, District Partnership Groups, Community Partners, Integrated teams, Parish Councillors, Borough Councillors and KCC Members.

(3) A significant number of individual and group meetings have been held to talk through the proposal, promoting involvement and collating feedback.

### Pre Consultation:

- Reports presented and agreed at SMT- 27<sup>th</sup> November and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009
- Cabinet Member visited Boughton Mount Site and briefed- 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010
- Leader of the Council Briefed- 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Process	Date Action Completed
<p><b>Formal Consultation invoked</b> with Cabinet Member present for a series of meetings that included Members, Service Users, Staff and Carers with an information pack sent to those invited and attended:</p> <p>The Chairman and Vice Chair of ASSPOSC            Opposition Spokesman            Local KCC Member(s)            Responsible member of SMT            Head of Adult Services            Area Personnel Manager</p>	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
<p><b>Stakeholders were informed in writing</b> and invited to comment: -</p> <p>Users, relatives and carers            Head of Service            Staff/Trades Unions            Local residents            Local KCC Member(s)            Borough Council and Parish Councils            Integrated teams etc</p>	<p>Letter sent 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010. outlining the proposal, 16 week consultation process/timetable and including a questionnaire and website</p> <p>Summary of Meetings and correspondence received as a result of the consultation</p>
<p>Directorate issued a <b>Press Release</b></p>	
<p><b>Website</b> made live with proposal and questionnaire</p>	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2010

<p>A wide range of <b>stakeholder meetings</b> have been held</p>	<p>2 Information Roadshows were held for Stakeholders on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March</p> <p>A range of Meetings held with staff &amp; union representatives on 15th February, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> March</p> <p>All carers were offered the opportunity of 1-1 meetings and 11 individual meetings with carers were held between February and May 2010</p> <p>2 All Day Consultation events were held for service users (by Advocacy Services) on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and 15th April</p> <p>Advocacy services commissioned to work individually and in groups with all current Service Users throughout the 16 week period.</p> <p>Presentation to Tonbridge &amp; Malling District Partnership Group made on 12<sup>th</sup> April and to Maidstone District Partnership Groups on 29<sup>th</sup> March and 29<sup>th</sup> April</p> <p>Individuals and group visits made by Members on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 7<sup>th</sup> April and 15<sup>th</sup> April</p>
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### **Outcome of the Consultation and Issues raised during the Consultation**

3. (1) 114 people attended the meetings held on the 28<sup>th</sup> January, 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

(2) A Total of 54 individual completed questionnaires were received. Comments and feedback were collated through group and individual meetings, emails and letters.

(3) Advocacy services undertook thorough consultation with Service Users, working in a variety of ways, with individuals, group workshops and experiential sessions, to ensure that Service Users not only understood the proposal but have had a very real opportunity to develop their own viewpoint and to express this.

(4) The following points were raised by those participating in the consultation process:-

## **Service User feedback**

4. (1) The overwhelming majority have given an emphatic positive response to the proposed (and in part already operational) changes.

(2) People have told Advocacy Services that they value being part of the community and having a broader range of choice as a result. They have valued the increased independence, particularly bus travel, the opportunity to meet wider social networks and being part of smaller groups.

(3) Advocacy services have worked in an unbiased way, using photographs and drawings to ensure people understand what is being proposed and are able to give their views. Using a range of communication mediums and styles, the absolute majority have said they would prefer to see time and investment in community buildings/activities and not at Boughton Mount.

(4) Appendix 1 lists remarks and direct quotes made by Service Users and other Stakeholders.

### **Issues raised by Service Users:**

#### **a) If we don't go back to Boughton Mount I will miss my friends**

A real theme to individuals' concerns was the fact that Boughton Mount is a large building that enables weekly discos and get-togethers. Whilst people value being in smaller groups they have also told us that they value the opportunity to come together.

As a result of this regular social events are being scheduled, from Bowling Leagues to BBQs. In addition a "Pick & Mix" approach to activities is beginning to take place so that long term friendships can be maintained and flexibility promoted.

Out of hours support is also beginning, enabling friends to get together at evenings and weekends to participate in shared interests.

The management team at the day service are working with Advocacy Services, staff and individuals to facilitate Person Centred Plans (PCPs) and are coordinating a range of activities that have been high lighted as themes across those PCPs.

#### **b) I like being in Maidstone town centre but would get fed up if there was no minibus, as there are only certain things you can walk to?**

Transport is a complex issue, involving transport contracts and specific age/training conditions for minibus drivers.

Many individuals have welcomed the opportunity to use public transport or even walk to their activity, valuing the flexibility and independence this offers. However, some have said they do not wish to use public transport and value the convenience afforded by minibuses.

As a result the minibus routes are being reconsidered to ensure that each base has access to one vehicle and that there are a number of sessional/casual minibus drivers available, according to planned activities.

To address the inflexibility of minibuses and the associated driving licence requirements, a 9 seater people carrier has been agreed on a three year contract. Ultimately this will alleviate transport pressures as it will mean a further 5 members of support staff will be able to drive Service Users to activities.

Equally investment has been made in MENCAP to co-ordinate a travel buddy scheme and this has been working exceptionally well for those individuals accessing Maidstone Community Support Centre.

c) **What will happen to Boughton Mount and things in it?**

The majority of Service Users have told us that they prefer community based activities with many saying that they did not like the location and condition of Boughton Mount. This said, some have expressed concern and sadness about not being in the old day service building and specifically have asked about the familiar equipment and items within it.

The consultation has been a very open and honest exchange and both Service Users and Carers have been reassured that the proposal has not been based on preconceived ideas regarding the site's future. Service users have welcomed the chance to contribute ideas and time to the development of community locations- relishing the opportunity to take ownership and control over new opportunities.

Service Users and Staff have been and continue to be, at the centre of all new developments, from the Check In Café- its design and name, to furniture and décor within Meadowview and Trinity. This has proved empowering and has mitigated most of the feelings of loss.

One individual is quoted by Advocacy as saying;

*"I don't want the roof fixed because I want to stay down here...there are things we can do here. Meadowview is posh because me and Bill have done lots of work here"*

**Carer Feedback**

5. (1) Some carers have had a long association with Maidstone Day Services and understandably value the security and safety of the Boughton Mount Site and its buildings. Carers attending the briefing on the 28<sup>th</sup> January articulated a range of concerns, fearing that the proposal to move away from the Boughton Mount buildings may be based around the desire to make financial savings rather than improve the existing service.

(2) Those who were vocal also said that they worried that the local community would not have the facilities or understanding to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. (See issues raised below)

(3) One Carer attending an information road show, noted afterwards that they had valued the opportunity to debate the issues and ask questions, and as a result now felt that the proposal was in fact a positive development.

(4) However for some the group meetings were not a positive forum and a few carers came back to the day service management and said that whilst they agreed with the proposal for community based services, they had not felt able to voice this in a large group meeting.

(5) Acknowledging that some carers may (understandably) have concerns, the opportunity to have individual meetings was also made available, and a total of 11 carers chose to have these.

(6) The individual meetings were positive in that carers could speak openly about the issues affecting them and as a result had specific questions answered and individual issues addressed.

### **Issues raised by Carers:**

#### **a) What about people with more complex needs, how will their needs be met?**

Some Parent/Carers raised concern that existing community facilities did not meet the needs of people with complex disabilities.

Capital has been invested in Trinity Foyer and subsequent building works have resulted in the provision of a changing suite (including changing bench and ceiling hoist) and accessible kitchen, so that those with higher support needs have access to the facilities they need in central Maidstone.

Discussions with other community partners are taking place (specifically with Mote Park Leisure Centre and the new YMCA development) to explore opportunities such as a Hydrotherapy Pool, sensory room, a changing place and an additional community hub.

Furthermore increased community participation is both formally and informally raising the profile of people with learning disability and thereby building greater awareness and mutual confidence.

#### **b) Is this a cost saving exercise?**

Some Parent/Carers asked whether the proposal was based on an agenda to sell Boughton Mount and save money. Reassurance was provided by both officers and the Cabinet Member that this was not the case.

Carers were reminded that there continues to be a need to use resources well and as such the revenue historically directed towards the Boughton Mount buildings would need to be spent differently and that liberation of such a building would enable revenue to be directed to things such as additional staffing.

In terms of capital, any capital receipt will be reinvested back in to Learning Disability Services across Kent to develop a community infrastructure that has facilities and capacity to embrace people with learning disabilities and additional complex needs.

#### **c) What about Staff?**

Some carers and stakeholders said that they thought the proposals were a positive move forward but only if staffing levels were sufficient and coordinated.

Acknowledging that community activities require enhanced support, an additional three staff have been recruited to the existing staff team from within available resources. Furthermore, some service users have been assessed as needing additional 1:1 support and are receiving this through agency workers and/or Direct Payments. This has resulted in 10 of the 68 service Users, now receiving individualised support.

The new permanent staff have been recruited to Support Worker roles, affording much greater flexibility in terms of working evenings and weekends and therefore a greater menu of choice for Service Users.

The Management team are committed to developing the whole staff team, devising a new Staff Information Pack, hosting development days and working with individuals around their own personal training needs and professional goals.

With Meadowview as the central hub, management are within easy access of the other community facilities and therefore will be able to support and co-ordinate staff and activities effectively.

d) **Will there be enough space in the community?**

Staff and carers have questioned whether community venues will be sufficient, and in order to be responsive to these concerns, discussions are taking place with a range of community partners (specifically Mote Park and YMCA) to ensure that the facilities are more than adequate so that there is provision for both existing service users and any new referrals. Equally by informing community buildings and activities we aim to promote accessibility for all, both those within the service and those without.

## **Conclusion**

6. (1) The 16 week consultation has proved beneficial in that it has meant that people with an interest in Maidstone Day Services have been afforded a longer period in which to understand what is being proposed, gather their views, experience community operations and feed back through meetings, questionnaires and a website.

(2) Over this extended period the service has had the opportunity to address any practical issues and to make considered plans for the future. Throughout this, individuals have continued to be encouraged to speak up and inform viable future opportunities. Person centred planning has continued and although a few people have moved on, mostly this has been circumstantial, moving out of area, to residential care or choosing Direct Payments.

(3) The proposal has been well received by a wide range of stakeholders during this consultation process. However, a small group of carers have expressed anxieties about the loss of Boughton Mount, valuing the sites rural isolation and tradition.

(4) Financially, staff and carers have been reassured by the fact that cost saving is not the driver behind the proposal. Initial indications are that the revised community model is affordable within the existing revenue allocation. Set up costs in terms of equipping new venues will be incurred and further capital will need to be invested in order to secure appropriate community facilities. The model is financially viable and crucially it enables KASS to redirect resources away from outdated buildings towards the front line.



(5) Currently, daily attendance varies from 42 people on a Wednesday to 53 people on a Friday; with the newly recruited additional staff and successful community negotiations, we are confident that transferring services away from Boughton Mount will deliver improved outcomes for all.

(6) The last six months have demonstrated that it is possible to provide the same level of Day Service without the Boughton Mount buildings and that there are positive benefits to community based services. Whilst a small number of carers expressed doubt and reservations, the majority of feedback has been positive and therefore a continued community presence is recommended, in order that people with learning disabilities continue to access and develop a full range of opportunities and networks.

## **Recommendations**

7. (1) Following consideration and endorsement at the Adult Social Services Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 June 2010, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services is asked to give approval to proceed with the closure of the Boughton Mount Site and to continue the service based on a more community focussed model.

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### *Appendices:*

Appendix 1- Comments made during the Maidstone Day Service Consultation

### *Background Documents*

- Valuing People and Valuing People Now
- Better Days for people with Learning Disabilities in Kent

### **Comments made during the Maidstone Day Service Consultation**

- “It’s got me out of a rut- I don’t want to go back to Boughton Mount. I like all the activities I am doing now.” – Service User
- “An excellent service at Boughton Mount, it’s safe, out of the way and is good in many ways” – Carer
- “With adequate staffing the new style service could be a lot better and much more stimulating and interesting for service users. They would still meet up with old friends but in small groups and they would be better integrated into the community” – Carer
- “It’s better coming here to the Check In Café. I used to get picked up by the minibus in the town. Now I get the bus straight from home by myself”- Service User
- “I think it is good that the services are being brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century- In some ways it is good to bring services in to the community, and in some ways it is not- some trainees may feel intimidated by other people like teenagers and youths” – Service User
- “Get the roof repaired & leave the clients at Boughton Mount where they are happy and safe. Too much going here and there tires them out” – Carer
- “I have since learned that my daughter may be attending Trinity, which is fine by me and my daughter.”- Carer
- “I enjoy working at both Trinity and Maidstone Community Support centre because I am still with the people I know and am used to.” – Service User
- “Like anything else, a new way of working is only as good as the people who are implementing it so as long as the staff are well supported and trained and adequately resourced this is a great opportunity for learning disabled clients.” – Health Professional
- “I would like to work in the new café at Trinity”- Service User
- “Not sad not going to Boughton Mount-am happy at Meadowview.”- Service user
- “I am heartbroken because it is leaking down there but cooking down here (Check In Café) is best- I love coming here, it is one of my favourite things.” – Service User
- “The Ceramics Café is the best one. I like this more than painting pots at the centre.”- Service User
- “I don’t want the roof fixed because I want to stay down here. There are things we can do here. Meadowview is posh because me and Bill have done lots of work here” – Service User

- “I worry about my son’s safety in the community and the dedication of new staff – I hope that’s your worry as well. On the whole my son seems happy.” – Carer
- “I miss Boughton Mount and would like to go back but wouldn’t be upset if I stayed at Meadowview.” – Service User
- “I like it at The Check In, better than Boughton Mount doing Table Talk” – Service User
- “The idea of small groups and a wider range of activities is really good” – Carer
- “I don’t mind changes so long as I am told what is going to happen”- Service User
- “I feel sad they closed it. The rain will get in. I do like coming here (Meadowview)- I like Meadowview best- my friends are here- I want to go here, I don’t want to go back” – Service user
- I like doing pottery at Boughton Mount and the ceramics Café- it’s the people that I enjoy.”- Service User
- I liked the centre because there is more space. Meadowview is too small. I want to make Meadowview bigger by building on top of the red room.” – Service User
- “I feel ok about it- not really worried about leaving Boughton Mount- I wouldn’t miss going back, I like Meadowview.” – Service User
- “I like just me and my mum- mum is not happy about the roof caving in & water coming in. If Boughton Mount gets knocked down, I will still come here (Meadowview) all the time” – Service User
- I don’t like it at the centre no more...Meadowview is better, we can do loads of things.” – Service User
- “it’s important Service users are introduced to new environments in a managed and shaped way, using familiar staff”- Staff
- “We need a change up there. Spend all the money on new things. They should split everyone up in to small groups, some go to trinity and some go to Maidstone Community Support centre. That’s the way I want it. Everyone gets to go out more.” – Service User
- “I felt uncomfortable with things last year but now feel happier.”- Service User
- “I liked being at Boughton Mount- I fix things if they are broken.” – Service User
- I would like to work with children and babies in a nursery.”- Service User
- “I feel it’s a good thing, because I can go to other place and that. I like doing that.”- Service User