

Day Services

Customer Experience Project report

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This research was undertaken in conjunction with the Corporate Policy and Performance Team as part of a programme of Customer Experience Projects.

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Executive Summary

This research was commissioned by the County Day Services Manager to understand the experiences and thoughts of the service users, their families and carers involved in the transition process. Telephone interviews were carried out with the families of service users to achieve the objectives of the research, which were to understand:

- the amount of time the transition process took and whether this was suitable for the young person and their family;
- whether users felt that Day Services were able to meet their needs and expectations;
- the carer's level of awareness and types of information available about Day Services prior to and during the transition process;
- carers' opinions on the quality of the Day Services available and the overall experience of moving into them.

Main findings

The main findings from the telephone interviews are that:

- Carers were extremely pleased with the professionalism of the Day Service staff and thought that the experience of moving into Day Services was positive for both them and the young person.
- There was a common preconception that Day Services were only available for the elderly.
- Participants mostly became aware of Day Services through some form of contact with a Social Worker.
- Participants generally felt that there was not enough information readily available to them about Day Services prior to or during the transition process.
- Most participants felt that the transition process should begin within or before the final years of the young person's education.
- All of the participants felt that staff took time to get to know the young person in a variety of different ways.
- All of the participants felt that the young person's needs and specialist requirements were met by the Day Service.

Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to increase awareness of the range of facilities and user groups which can be catered for by Day Services in Adults and Community Services.
- Information published in the form of leaflets / brochures or online should include a full list of available Day Centres and specific activities offered to service users of all ages. The publications currently available should be developed to include such details.
- The range of publications available on Day Services should be made more readily available, such as through hosting open days at Day Centres, Day Services attending school open days and by members of the transition team sharing the relevant information with service users in the form of leaflets, brochures or links to web sites.
- It is recommended that such publication should include some examples of positive feedback received from service users and their families.
- All carers should be approached regarding the transition process in the final year of the young person's education.
- The transition process should a coordinated approach with staff involved with the families from the Children and Young People's directorate.
- This report should be shared with the PSE Transitions Team to better inform a coordinated transition process.
- Further research should be carried out using a wider sample of participants from across Lancashire to validate the results of this study and see if there are any further areas for improvement.

Introduction

Background

The Adult and Community Services Directorate offer Day Services in a variety of locations such as residential homes, specialist resource centres or other community settings. The services aim to support people with disabilities to regain skills and confidence to live as independently as possible, with a view to accessing employment or further education opportunities

For young people, moving from Children's Services to Adult Services can have a significant impact on them and their family. The transition process between the two service areas can differ greatly across the county depending on the service user and their needs. No previous customer research has been obtained in this specific area.

This research was commissioned by the County Day Services Manager to understand the experiences and thoughts of the service users, their families and carers involved in the transition process. This feedback will contribute towards the work of the Adult and Community Services Transitions Team in order to agree standard protocols to support young people at this time. The research may also be used as a foundation for repeated similar projects in the future to assess any progress and changes.

Research objectives

The objectives of the research were to understand:

- the amount of time the transition process took and whether this was suitable for the young person and their family;
- whether users felt that Day Services were able to meet their needs and expectations;
- the carer's level of awareness and types of information available about Day Services prior to and during the transition process;
- carers' opinions on the quality of the Day Services available and the overall experience of moving into them.

Methodology

To satisfy the objectives, eight telephone interviews were carried out with carers of service users who have moved into Day Services within the last two years.

Telephone interviews are effective in exploring individual's perceptions, feelings and emotions, making them ideally suited to this project. In addition, telephone interviews provide the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions and work directly with the participant to understand their point of view.

Initially, twelve potential participants (four from each geographical area of Lancashire: East, North and Central) were identified by the service. Those identified were approached by the service to take part in the telephone interviews. Those identified were asked if they would agree to take part in an independently performed telephone interview regarding the Day Services that the young person they care for attend.

However, only eight telephone interviews were completed in the time available. These were scheduled to take place at times which were convenient to the participant within a two week period in May 2013.

Limitations

The nature of telephone interviews and indeed qualitative research in general, means that only a small number of respondents from the population in Lancashire can participate. This means that the telephone interviews do not offer results that are statistically representative for all people in Lancashire; they only offer results that are indicative or illustrative. Results are therefore attributed to participants only and not the wider public.

Furthermore, the participants for the telephone interviews were approached by the service and asked if they would agree to take part. This means that the participants selected may have different views from others who were not approached or who may have been unwilling to express their views in a telephone interview, and may only offer a biased view in light of the fact that they willingly agreed to take part and were self-selected by the service.

The advantage, however, of telephone interviews is that they can explore personal issues and perceptions in detail, so a wealth of quality, descriptive information can be obtained, which was ideally suited to the needs of this research.

Main research findings

Quality of the Day Service and overall experience

The feedback received from the participants when asked whether they felt that the move into Day Services was positive was unanimous in that all answered "yes". They all further stated that it was positive for both the carer and young person using the Day Service. Some explanations for these answers were:

- "they're in one place instead of going to all different places";
- "it all just flowed... [the young person] is happy to go";
- "they were restricted to one room at school but are now out in the community and has adapted really well";
- "now treated like an adult and allowed to make own choices";
- "it's given them another dimension";
- "they're used to other people, going outside and learning to behave".

Similarly, extremely positive responses were received with regards to the quality of the staff and the overall experience of moving into Day Services.

When asked to rate the professionalism of the Day Service staff on a scale of one to five (see Appendix One), with five being excellent, all participants gave a rating number of five (excellent). Supporting comments included the carers stating;

- "extremely happy";
- "really good, they have been excellent";
- "I would rate them ten if I could";
- "staff are very professional and make you feel welcome";
- "staff do a very challenging job and I feel they should be praised for it".

Furthermore, all of the participants rated their overall experience of moving into Day Services as a five (excellent) on a scale of one to five. Concluding comments made by the participants when asked to reflect on the overall experience included:

- "I couldn't believe they had a place like this";
- "no problems whatsoever";
- "Done excellent with [user]";

- "[user] is fitting in with different characters and enjoys it";
- "Various activities".

Level of awareness and information available

Two questions in the telephone interview asked if participants were aware of Day Services before any kind of transition process began and what information was made available to them.

Half of the participants said that they weren't really aware of Day Services before the transition began for them. Several participants mentioned that they did not think that Day Services offered anything that would be suitable for young people beforehand. Participants said that they did not realise the variety of activities on offer by Day Services and that they had a preconceived idea they were "just places / community centres for old people".

When asked how they became aware of Day Services, the majority of participants stated that they were made aware through some form of contact with a Social Worker. Half of the participants mentioned that they visited some of the Day Services and viewed what was available first hand and the majority of people who visited the Day Services were happy with the amount of information they received during the transition process.

However, three out of the eight participants felt that they did not receive enough information about what was available to them once the young person they care for had left education. Additionally, no responses made reference to any kind of informative documentation being available to them beforehand.

Only one participant made reference to receiving "forms and letters" advising them about what Day Services offer. These were provided by a Social Worker whilst the participant was undergoing a financial assessment.

What information would be helpful

Those who said that they felt that more information would have been helpful to them were asked what they would have liked to have received. Half of the participants mentioned that they would have found documentation useful and suggested the use of material such as "brochures, booklets or leaflets"

Some participants elaborated that that such material could include information that informs people of the existence of Day Services, a list of all the Day Services that are available and advice on what options are available to young people who are about to leave educational establishments.

Participants also specified that they thought that this information would be best received in advance of the young person leaving education, with common

suggestions stating that they felt this should be received during the young person's final year of education and at least six months in advance of any move.

Many had to be referred to the Day Services available via a Social Worker and were unable to access the information themselves.

Additionally, there was a common perception among the participants that Day Services were not aimed at young people but were community centres for the elderly. Many were impressed at the range of service on offer once they had become informed of what was available.

The time taken for the transition to take place

In terms of the amount of time taken for the transition process to take place, seven out of the eight participants said that staff from the Day Services took the time to get to know the young person prior to them attending the Day Service. This was done in a variety of ways, the majority of participants citing visits to the Day Service. This also included attending meetings, being introduced to the members of staff and the service communicating with them on a regular basis.

When asked when the transition process began, half of the participants stated that the transition process began when the young person was in the final year of their education, with time periods ranging from three to seven months before the move into Day Services actually took place.

A further two participants stated that the transition process "happened very quickly", beginning in the month of July and taking around two months in total to complete before the move. Two participants also commented that they felt like there wasn't really a proper 'transition' process for them.

Only one participant said that the transition began earlier than this and that the whole process took approximately 18 months.

Sufficient time periods

Over half of the participants felt that the time period taken for the transition process was sufficient for the young person's needs, whilst the remaining participants stated that they felt that this process was delayed.

When asked for the participant's opinions on what they thought would have been an ideal time for the transition, over half suggested that the ideal time for this to begin would be within or before the last year of the young person's education.

Two participants specified shorter time periods, with a range of three to six weeks, would have been sufficient to meet their needs. However, one of the participants was undergoing the move into Day Services under "urgent" family circumstances. This

participant felt that the delay in this process was "not good" for the young person and felt that the transition from mainstream to special school was much better coordinated.

Whether Day Services met their needs and expectations

When asked if the Day Service was able to meet the needs of the young person, the responses received were very positive: all of the participants interviewed stated that the Day Service was fully able to meet their needs and none thought that anything was missing.

It was felt that the Day Services made an effort to ensure that user needs were met: one participant elaborated to state that a piece of specialist equipment (a hoist) was ordered within two weeks of the young person they care for attending the Day Service. An additional participant referred to the Day Services staff undertaking specific training to ensure that they were able to cope with the behaviours of the young person moving into the service prior to their arrival.

Half of the participants stated that they felt that they did not have any 'specialist requirements' such as speech therapy or physiotherapy. The remaining half of participants felt that the specialist training requirements that they did have were sufficiently met. These involved the provision of a relaxation room for one user who had previously received hydrotherapy, speech classes for a user who had speech therapy whilst in education and one user having the assistance of someone from a nursing team whilst at the Day Service.

Issues with regards to meeting needs and specialist requirements

Although the responses to these questions were extremely positive in their nature, two participants did refer to some issues that they experienced in relation to the cooperation with the National Health Service.

One participant stated that they experienced delay due to having to change their GP in order to be eligible to receive the service. This was said to be due to the area they live in and more suitable facilities being available outside of their locality.

An additional participant also mentioned that they did not consider the National Health Service to be equipped with regards to technological advances that can now be utilised to assist people with speech and communication. The young person was previously using a software programme on an Apple iPad in their educational establishment which greatly aided their communication abilities. However, this could not be provided by the National Health Service when the young person left education and moved into Day Services, which the carer felt was disappointing.

One participant also mentioned that the transport arrangements to and from the Day Service were "not quite right" and specified that changes to the type of vehicle and the staff personnel who had previously assisted the young person were the only issues that they had with the whole transition process.

Conclusions and recommendations

The main findings from the telephone interviews are that:

- Carers were extremely pleased with the professionalism of the Day Service staff and thought that the experience of moving into Day Services was positive for both them and the young person.
- Many participants were not aware that Day Services were available for young people and a preconception that such services were only available for the elderly.
- Participants mostly became aware of Day Services through some form of contact with a Social Worker.
- Participants generally felt that there was not enough information readily available to them about Day Services prior to or during the transition process. Many suggested that informative documentation would have been helpful to them.
- Most participants were happy with the period of time over which the transition into Day services took place and felt that this should begin within or before the final years of the young person's education.
- All of the participants felt that staff took time to get to know the young person in a variety of different ways.
- All of the participants felt that the young person's needs and specialist requirements were met by the Day Service: any issues were slight and external to Day Services, such as transport and the NHS.

Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to increase awareness of the range of facilities and user groups which can be catered for by Day Services in Adults and Community Services.

- Information published in the form of leaflets / brochures or online should include a full list of available Day Centres and specific activities offered to service users of all ages.
- The Day Service Brochures which are currently available and the information available on the internet should be further developed with such additional details.
- The range of publications available on Day Services should be made more readily available and should not be restricted to only those undergoing a transition process. This could be achieved by hosting open days at the Day Centres, Day Services attending school open days to promote their services and by ensuring that members of the transition team are able to share the relevant information with service users in the form of leaflet, brochures or links to web sites.
- It is recommended that such publication should include some examples of positive feedback received from service users and their families.
- All carers should be approached regarding the transition process in the final year of the young person's education.
- The transition process should a coordinated approach with staff involved with the families from the Children and Young People's directorate.
- This report should be shared with the PSE Transitions Team to better inform a coordinated transition process.
- Further research should be carried out using a wider sample of participants from across Lancashire to validate the results of this study and see if there are any further areas for improvement.

Appendix One

Telephone Questionnaire

1. Were you aware of the Day Services available to you before you were referred to them through any kind of transition process? If yes, how did you become aware of these?
2. What information did you receive about the services available? Do you feel that any other information would have been helpful to give you a better understanding of what Day Services provide?
3. Did staff from the Day Service take the opportunity to get to know the young person? If so, how was this done?
4. When were you first contacted about the move into Day Services? How long was it before the move actually took place?
5. Do you think this time period was sufficient enough to meet the young person's needs? If not, what would've been the right amount of time?
6. Were the services available to you able to meet the young person's needs? Was there anything that was missing?
7. If there were any specialist training requirements to support the move into Day Services, i.e. community nurses, speech therapists, etcetera, was the service able to meet your requirements with these?
8. Was the move into Day Services a positive experience? Could you explain the reasons for this? *[The second part of this question will be asked whether they answer yes or no to the first part]*
9. On a scale of one to five, one being the lowest, how would you rate the professionalism of the Day Service?

Unsatisfactory	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

10. On a scale of one to five, one being the lowest, how would you rate your overall experience of moving into Day Services?

Unsatisfactory	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5