

# A review of changes to adult daytime support in Oxfordshire



A picture presented to Healthwatch Oxfordshire by a service user.

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to:

- All the dedicated staff, volunteers, service users, family members and carers across all of Oxfordshire's diverse services for their time, care and heartfelt input into supporting us with work for this report.
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) staff and those across the Community Support Services
- Staff from Independent Sector Day Centres
- Age UK Oxfordshire
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- My Life My Choice and Paul Scarrott providing insights as 'Expert by Experience'

All others who contributed to this report



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### Introduction

I would like to give a huge thank you to all those who contributed to this report. In October 2017, Healthwatch Oxfordshire informed Oxfordshire County Council about the concerns we were hearing about the impending changes to adult daytime support services. Oxfordshire County Council responded by asking Healthwatch Oxfordshire to carry out an independent review of the changes and the change process. We did this by listening to people affected by the changes, their carers and staff across the county.

This report tells their story and should be listened to by all services and commissioners planning service change.

**Rosalind Pearce**  
**Executive Director**  
**Healthwatch Oxfordshire**

Firstly, I would like to thank colleagues at Healthwatch Oxfordshire for carrying out this review of the changes made to daytime support in 2016-17. It is very important for us to understand how people who use our services feel about the way the transition was carried out, and how they feel the new service is working for them. In making these changes, we wanted to ensure there was a flexible model of daytime support which would meet a wide range of people's needs whilst ensuring that any future service was financially sustainable.

We know that many people can find change difficult, but it is pleasing to see that the report notes that people have adapted well to the new service. Despite some initial concerns, the mixed age groups are working well, and people are enjoying attending. I would like to thank everyone involved in the review as well as those members of staff working in the day centres who provide such an important service. I would also like to take the opportunity to recognise the vital role that our community and voluntary sector plays in providing over 200 daytime support opportunities across the county. We are keen to support these services through the use of our innovation and sustainability funds which have given grants totalling £550,753 in the last year to date.

Listening to the voice of people who use services is absolutely vital in ensuring that the services we provide meet their needs. I look forward to working more closely with people to help develop and assess our services in the future. The report gives us valuable insight into how we can improve the way in which we manage change and I will ensure these lessons are taken forward in future work.

**Kate Terroni**  
**Director of Adult Social Care**  
**Oxfordshire County Council**

# 1 Daytime support in Oxfordshire 2018

*‘When we got to Redlands and met the wonderful staff and guests, they made us feel like long lost family - it was great and renamed it GREATLANDS’*

Healthwatch Oxfordshire was asked by Kate Terroni, Director of Adult Social Care, Oxfordshire County Council to undertake an independent review of the user experiences of the 2017 changes to daytime support. This report is a result of this research, completed in October 2018 - a year on from when the changes came into being.

## Summary of what we heard

People told us that daytime support made a difference to their lives, and valued daytime support for:

- Social connection and friendships
- Meaningful activity
- Independence
- Reduced isolation and loneliness
- Support for carers to continue caring



## What people want to tell the council about the changes

*‘Changes are very difficult for older people’*

- The need to listen and communicate more to service users and carers and have a clear route for contact and communication throughout changes to service provision.
- Provide accurate predictions of care resulting from assessments and clearer information and be more open about what was planned at the start.
- Plan the speed of changes, and make them more slowly, with staged transition and communicate throughout at all levels of the system.
- Better consideration of and planning for the human impact of system changes on service users and carers.
- Consideration of impact of changes on loneliness and isolation, particularly for older people.
- For those with dementia the need for available and sustainable support in the wider community.

### Healthwatch Oxfordshire recommendations to Oxfordshire County Council

1. Oxfordshire County Council review its approach to major changes to services including:
    - the time it allows to implement changes
    - communications with service users and their carers
    - communication throughout all levels of the system affected
    - the impact of service changes on carers be addressed through the change process
  2. The findings of this report are considered when drafting the 2019 Older People's Strategy.
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## 2 Context

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### 2.1 Oxfordshire County Council review of daytime support

From March 2016, Oxfordshire County Council embarked on a **review of daytime support for people over 18 in Oxfordshire**. This review looked at understanding the needs of vulnerable people for daytime support, core support needed to meet eligible care needs and ways to prevent care needs escalating- ensuring sustainability into the future.

This work was set within a challenging financial context and need to find savings of £69m across the council by 2020. This included identification of £1m savings in daytime support following the agreement of the county council joint budget in February 2016, and the need to continue to provide statutory services to the most vulnerable groups (Oxfordshire County Council 2017).

The work was underpinned by the vision of Oxfordshire County Council's core strategy. Now encapsulated in the Corporate Plan (Thriving Communities for Everyone in Oxfordshire 2018-21) this recognises the value of community-based support, and its role in offering choice and independence.

During 2017, Oxfordshire County Council undertook a far-reaching reshaping of adult daytime support across the county. This was the result of more than two years planning, and affected many, including older and disabled people, and those with a learning disability. Leading up to the changes, the council tried hard to engage and consult with those affected using a range of methods.

### 2.2 Healthwatch Oxfordshire research study

In October 2017, whilst Healthwatch Oxfordshire was 'out and about' speaking to people on the streets of Bicester, many people we met expressed concerns about

the changes taking place at the time. We reported this to Oxfordshire County Council. Following discussions with the council, Kate Terroni, Director Adult Care, asked Healthwatch Oxfordshire to undertake an independent review of the user experience of the changes. Healthwatch Oxfordshire carried out this work in September - October 2018 under its main remit as an independent watchdog and was not paid or commissioned to carry out this work.

This report to Oxfordshire County Council is the result of that work. Everyone (835 people) who went through the changes was contacted with a postal survey - freepost return. In total we had direct face-to-face contact with a total of 288 service users, 68 staff and volunteers and 40 family members/ carers. We also had 154 responses via questionnaire<sup>1</sup>, and three by email and on the phone. We have made sure that all the comments we received, have been passed onto Oxfordshire County Council (with permission).

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### 3 Summary of what we heard

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People told us that daytime support made a difference to their lives, and valued daytime support for:

- Social connection and friendships
- Meaningful activity
- Independence
- Reduced isolation and loneliness
- Support for carers to continue caring

Overall, those using Oxfordshire County Council's Community Support Services were now settled in their new environment, some within the Community Support Services, within the community, and others are attending voluntary sector day services. Few have opted for alternatives to centre-based activities.

Accessible, timely and safe transport is important for enabling people to access daytime support, broader community-based activities and so reducing isolation.

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<sup>1</sup> There is some cross over between face to face and questionnaire return contacts.

## 4 What people want to tell the council about the changes

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*“Changes are very difficult for older people”*

Comments heard and contained within the survey that can bring lessons to the council broadly cover:

- The need to listen and communicate more to service users and carers and have some personal contact throughout changes to service provision.
- Provide accurate predictions of care resulting from assessments and clearer information and be more open about what was planned at the start.
- Plan the speed of changes, and make them more slowly, with staged transition and communicate throughout at all levels of the system.
- Better consideration of and planning for the human impact of system changes on service users and carers - ‘consultation over the whole process of change, not once decision was made’.
- Wider consideration of impact of changes on loneliness and isolation, particularly for older people.
- For those with dementia the need for available and sustainable support in the wider community.

*‘No one from O.C.C. talked to me face to face.’*

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## 5 Summary of observations and some questions

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*Without the commitment of time and support from staff and carers, the process for those people affected would have been more difficult, for some impossible.*

*“Made me feel nervous. Made me feel sad.”*

Whilst the whole process of change from planning to implementation was planned, and occurred over a two-year period, and the council involved service users often using the term ‘co-production’ we did not find a coherent understanding of what this meant.





Then an ambitious implementation timeline was adopted by the council that involved simultaneous multiple changes for infrastructure, staff and users.

*“I would have the building and equipment ready before moving people in. There was no provision for the older people...”*

**A staged implementation would have been kinder on both users and staff.**

**Clarity is needed over what co-production means across all those involved.**

It appears that the impact on the older people regarding uncertainty, ability to understand, and to seeking alternative provision was greater partly because of time taken for assessments and for outcomes to be known.

**It is important to treat all those affected equally during the change process. Having the appropriate level of resource at the outset to deliver change is crucial.**

A year on and those who access the new Oxfordshire County Council provision - Community Support Service centres - have generally settled down. For them transport seems less of an issue, people are integrating in the new centres and overall are responding well to mixed groups. Some who did not settle have left.

**What assurance does the county council have that those who left the Community Support Service that their assessed needs are being fully met elsewhere?**

*“Worried about the outcome. Not enough info given about the changes - why? I found the disabilities very distressing - also communication was hard, so I didn't bother anymore”*

**What longer-term support is being given to non-statutory (mainly voluntary) sector providers to ensure that they can meet the needs of most vulnerable accessing their provision?**

One of the key drivers for this change was the belief that the traditional day centre model was not what many people wanted and that alternative activities would be met by other providers within the wider community (mainly the voluntary sector).

*“I go to Sterling's old people's home - it is just down the road from my house - they let me go there for meals twice a week and join in some of their activities and events”*

*“Before I attended Deddington I stayed in with just contact from my family, sometimes a visit, sometimes a telephone call. I had no interaction or stimulation with anyone of my own age. At least I go out once a week now.”*

Given the expansion of social prescribing in the county it is fair to assume that demand on independent / voluntary sector community-based services is rising.

Is Oxfordshire County Council working with health commissioners to ensure that the capacity within the voluntary sector is sustainable, that volunteers are able and trained to support those most vulnerable - particularly with the increasing numbers of people with dementia seeking daytime support?

Is the county council working with district councils and the voluntary sector to address the widely reported fact - and echoed in this report - that limited access to transport for those living in a rural community has a major impact on older people’s ability to access support services and so can increase isolation and loneliness?

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## 6 Lessons for change

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1. It still takes time to implement change, even if it the new service is co-designed which can lead to the assumption that everybody is on your side, informed, able to respond...this is not always true.
2. Major changes that directly impact on people, especially those most vulnerable, cannot be done at speed without a negative impact on staff, service users, carers. Staging the changeover should be considered from the start.
3. Make sure at the outset that there is enough capacity in the community, to provide services for those people who no longer qualify for Oxfordshire County Council’s service but do need support and, as we all do, benefit from social interaction to reduce loneliness and isolation.<sup>2</sup>
4. Consideration must be given to access to public transport or community transport for those without personal transport.



*‘Someone came to talk about other clubs, but without transport I cannot get to them, and also some were very expensive...I no longer attend a day service’. (ex-Health & Well Being Centre attendee)*

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<sup>2</sup> Since the changes the Alzheimer’s Society and Age UK Oxon have closed day centres thus reducing the capacity in the community to respond to some of the most vulnerable older in Oxfordshire

5. It appears that the focus on the service users throughout this change process failed to adequately acknowledge or address the impact on carers.
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## 7 Recommendations

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### 7.1 Oxfordshire County Council reviews its approach to major changes to services including:

- the time it allows to implement changes
- communications with service users and their carers
- communication throughout all levels of the system affected
- the impact of service changes on carers be addressed through the change process

### 7.2 The findings of this report are considered when drafting the 2019 Older People's Strategy.

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## 8 Headline findings

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We wanted to find out about people's experience of

- The *process* of change to daytime support in 2017
- The *impact* of these changes on service users and carers
- What was going well *now* and what could be better
- What *lessons* could be learned, for the county council and Oxfordshire as a whole

In all during this process, we heard from more than 288 people, including service users, carers and family members, staff and volunteers. To reach people, Healthwatch Oxfordshire used the following methods:

- Initial desktop survey and meetings with key stakeholders
- Develop, pilot and disseminate a questionnaire in a range of accessible formats to more than 800 service users who had been affected by the changes, with 154 returns to date

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- Visits to nine voluntary sector day centres across the county, three phone interviews and questionnaire
- Visits to all eight Community Support Services to speak with service users and families informally and at 'coffee and cake' events
- Engagement of support from an 'expert by experience' through My Life, My Choice

**NOTE - the following sections 8.1 to 8.3 covering process of change, support with change and impact on service users and their carers refer to the period March 2016-October 2017.**

The following sections reflect what we heard from these encounters, where comments have been used anonymously, and grouped to illustrate the themes that came to light.

### 8.1 Process of change

Only a third of respondents from all three settings agreed that their opinions were listened to during the changes.

Significantly 50% of those with learning difficulties or their carers did not understand from the information given to them what the changes would mean for them.

### 8.2 Support with change

Overall, the majority of those responding to the questionnaire said that they had received support and that this was helpful.

47% of respondents who were using an independent centre did not find the support helpful - they were dependent on carers and family to access alternative services

*“Leaflets don't help a 90-year old person with dementia.”*

### 8.3 Impact on service users and their carers

Significantly 71% of people who had been using an independent centre reported a negative experience (they felt terrible or bad during the process) going through the changes, and 51% who were using a health and wellbeing centre reported negative feelings about the experience of change. Whilst 61% of people with learning difficulties reported a positive or neutral experience.

The emotional impact on the older people was greatest during the change than for other users.

The impact on carers brought about by the changes runs through what we have heard. This includes having to



reduce their working hours to provide increased care to their loved one, increased pressures and stress on carers. Concerns focussed on support for people with dementia and Alzheimer being received at alternative services is not at the same level as previously. The independent sector echoed this often stating that their volunteers are not able to provide personal and individual care for Alzheimer sufferers and so often are unable to offer them a place.

Respondents identified a potential knock on effect of the changes on the wider health and social care system including where hours have been reduced, and costs increased, carers not able to provide the level of care at home and the likelihood of those cared for having to access residential care.

### 8.4 Community Support Services centres - what is going well now, and what could be better?

Notably 70% of respondents still attend either a Community Support Service or voluntary centre, this figure is increased to 91% with further analysis of the 'other' responses. This figure is influenced by the fact that many respondents received their survey form through their day centre setting. The return rate for non-users of day centres was markedly lower than for that of centre users.

To understand what is going well now for people going through the change we need to understand what concerns people had at the start. These included:

- Concerns about the **mix of older people and people with learning disabilities**, including increased noise, challenging behaviour, and how the centre would provide a balanced service meeting the different needs. This concern was predominantly expressed by the older service users or their carers. Overall these fears have been allayed. However, some older people who attended the Community Support Service moved to the independent sector as they did not cope with the change to a mixed group.

*“From the beginning I stated that a joint group with learning disabilities was not what x needed. He is a quiet man, that's not the stimulation he needs” (carer, ex Health & Wellbeing Centre who moved to independent sector)*

- Many people have expressed their gratitude to staff at all centres who have worked hard to make the centres a welcoming place for all.
- Transport problems that affected many at the change have settled down for those attending Community Support Service.
- Concerns about whether the mixed centres would offer appropriate stimulation for both older people and those with learning disabilities remain. However, both older people and those with learning disability are enjoying the mixed groups with more opportunities for the older people to have more frequent external activity is welcome - shopping, going to town

etc. Some people said the chance to meet new people and make new friends has been good.

### 8.5 Voluntary sector centres

21% of those who responded to the survey and had been attending Health & Wellbeing Centres last year now commented that they were attending voluntary sector daytime support/ day centres. These included centres / support that were already in existence in 2017, and those that opened their doors in 2018 in response to the changes and were supported by the county council's transition and sustainability fund.

The need for this fund was identified by Age UK Oxfordshire and supported by Oxfordshire Community Voluntary Action to increase the number, capacity and sustainability of the voluntary sector to provide for those people who would not qualify for a place at the Community Support Service. Ironically, Age UK Oxfordshire has subsequently closed its day centres; and Alzheimer's Society did not apply for funding and has closed its centres.

*“We play dominoes, have a chat and a banter, also get a nice meal...and not only that, its respite for my wife, she can go off on her own and do her own thing”.*

The centres are valued by those who attend but are often open for shorter time, staffed by volunteers, and sometimes not able to provide the level of care needed for those most vulnerable e.g. dementia sufferers.

Transport access to these centres, when not local, was a key concern raised by service users and service providers.

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## 9 The *process* of change to daytime support in 2017

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NOTE - the following sections 9.1 to 9.4, 10 and 11 covering process of change, support with change and impact on service users and their carers refer to the period March 2016-October 2017.

### 9.1 Context

Changes to daytime support that took place in 2017 were far reaching and the transition to the new model happened at a rapid pace. They encompassed closure of Health and Wellbeing and learning disability centres, establishment of new Community Support Services.

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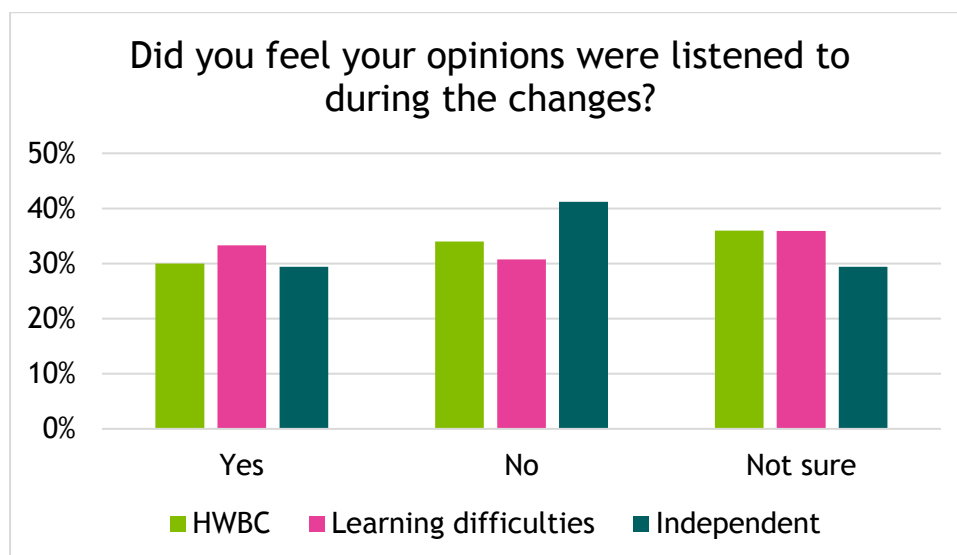
For some, the changes meant a move to a new centre or being encouraged to find alternative and new activities within the community. Removal of funding to the voluntary sector also meant some of the independent day centres made decisions to close (for example Alzheimer's Society in Abingdon), or faced uncertainty about future sustainability.

Transport provision also changed, affecting those at Community Support Services and independent sector in different ways. Other aspects, such as provision of meals, activities, staff and service user mix and increased cost also had an impact. Overall, those involved experienced many aspects of their lives changing.

Change is always a difficult process, but for many, including carers, and vulnerable adults this was a particularly stressful time. There is no doubt that for many, the changes were experienced as a time of great uncertainty and worry. For some, the impact of the changes on their lives had been huge and felt in different ways depending on the needs, background and personal circumstances and level of assessed need of the individual concerned. For some, the changes generated intense emotions and upset. For others, change was not a difficult process, and brought welcome new interests, friendships and improvements to their lives.

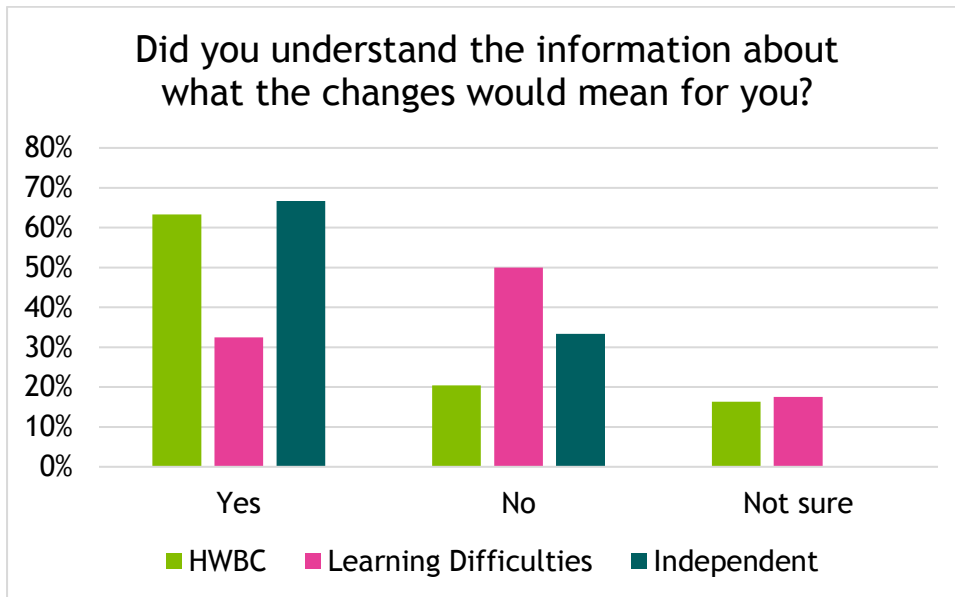
We asked people to tell us about their experience of change to daytime support. Questions focused in part on the *process* of change, people's experience of this, and to what extent they felt informed, involved and listened to during the changes.

### 9.2 Initial engagement - did you feel your views were listened to during the changes?



Only a third of respondents from all three settings were sure that their opinions were listened to during the changes. Comments from service users and carers of those attending independent sector affected by the changes showed a lower level of respondents feeling that their opinions were listened to during the changes.

### 9.3 Did you understand from the information about what changes would mean for you?



Significantly 50% of those with learning difficulties or their carers did not understand from the information what the changes would mean for them.

*“we were unsure what was going to happen, didn’t really know what was going on” (carer).*

### 9.4 Support, assessment and review process

From May 2017, running up to the opening of the new Community Support Service in October, service users attending both learning disability centres, and Health and Wellbeing Centres were taken through a review process. This was to determine eligible needs, based on personal and financial criteria, and to provide support and signposting to new options for daytime support<sup>3</sup>.

Reviews and support through this time was provided as follows:

- those attending learning difficulties centres, most of whom had eligible assessed needs, were given support by the transition team of social workers, with a review of support packages to develop new care and support plans. They were offered a place at new Community Support Services. Support was given with personal budgets where required.
- those attending Health and Wellbeing Centres who were assessed as having eligible support needs again were given support through the transition team

<sup>3</sup> See Oxfordshire County Council website <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/getting-needs-assessment/members-public> for information about eligibility criteria

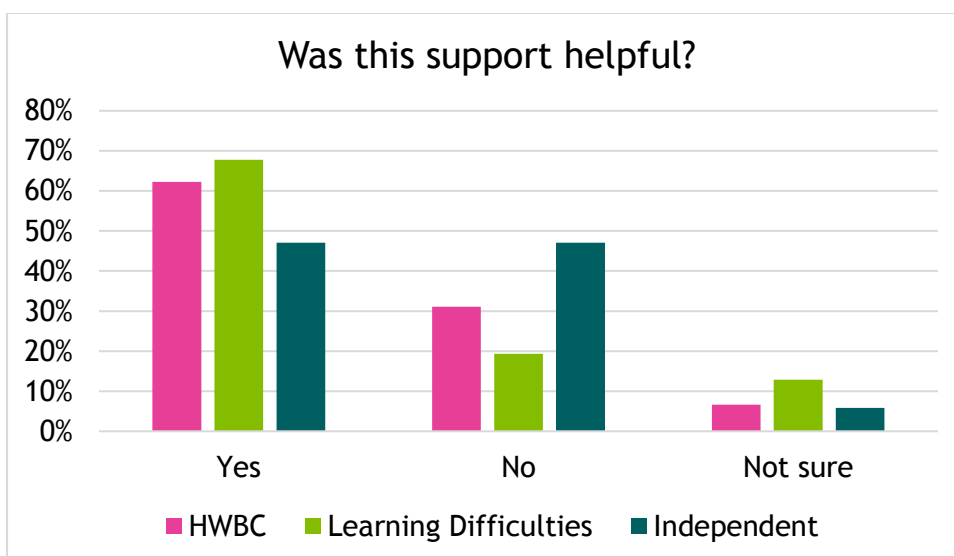
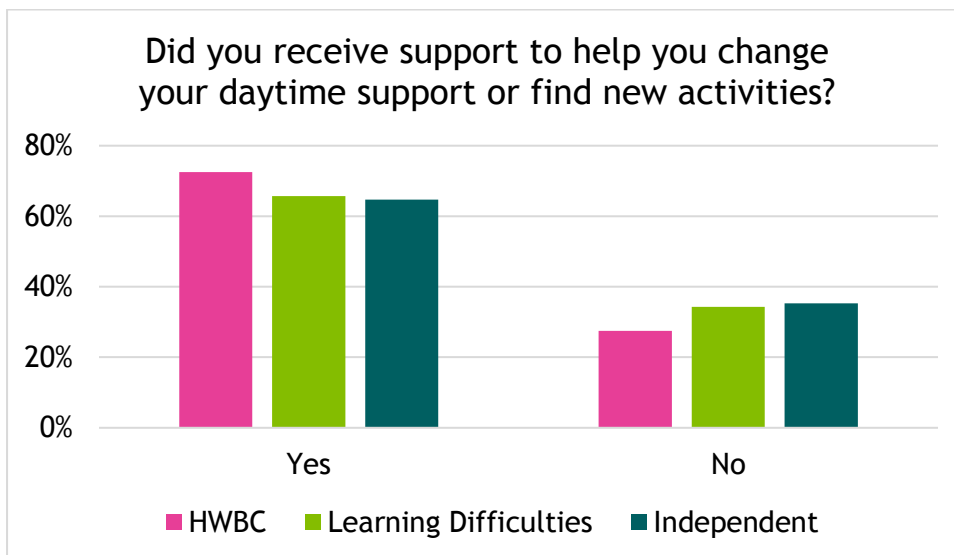


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- via a social worker. They were offered choice of places at the new Community Support Services, or alternative community-based centre
- Those attending Health and Wellbeing Centres identified as either self-funding, as not having eligible assessed needs, or with needs but self-funding, were passed onto the Community Information Network (Age UK Oxfordshire) for support and signposting to access and choose alternative community-based support, including Community Support Services.

Communications about this process were through an initial letter from Oxfordshire County Council and followed by one to one review meetings based either at the person's home, or at the centre. Family members were able to attend where suitable.

## 10 Support with the changes



Overall, the majority of those responding to the questionnaire said that they had received support and that this was helpful. However, 47% of respondents now using an independent centre did not find the support helpful.

As part of the review process, and the move by the council towards its model of ‘support for living well in the community’ the Community Information Network, (Age UK Oxfordshire) teams worked to help older individuals identify and learn about a range of local community- based activities available.

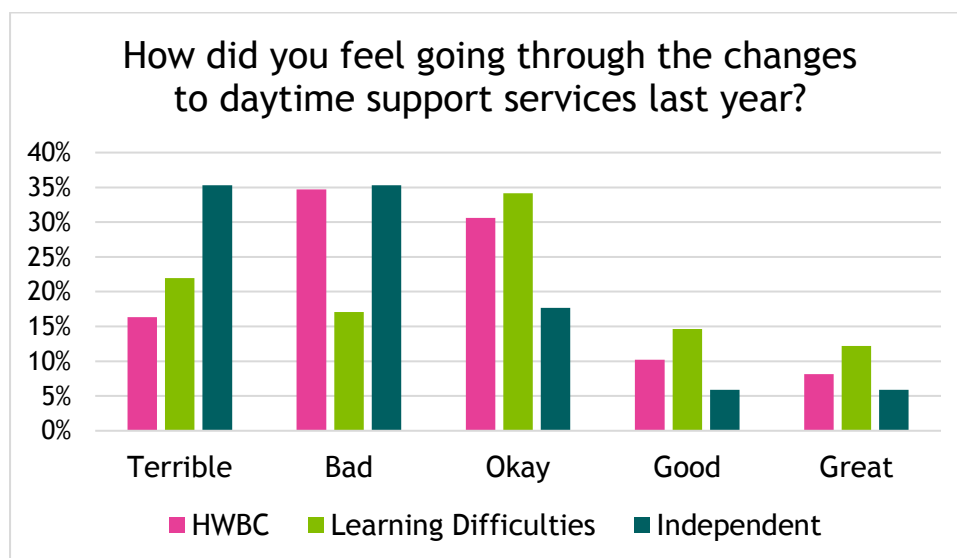
*“information verbally and some paperwork from Age UK lady who visited Day Centre. This gave me other choices of things to do during the day”.*

## 11 The *impact* of these changes on service users and carers

We asked people to tell us what their experience of the actual changes to daytime support was like, what it felt like for them, and why.

How did you feel going through changes to day services last year?’

*“When there was talk of the Wellbeing Centre closing my mother was upset and it was on her mind constantly. When it did close, she was upset and it was difficult to motivate her. I feel upset and sorry for her, she was missing her friends’ (carer-older person).*



Significantly 71% of people now using an independent centre reported a negative experience, and 51% who were originally using a health and wellbeing centre reported negative feelings about the experience of change. However, 61% of

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people who had attended learning disability centre reported a positive or neutral experience.

The emotional impact on the older people was greatest during the change than for other users.

Those who told us about difficulties about the changes, focused on:

- experience of loss
- uncertainty of change
- emotional impact
- knock on effects
  - increased costs
  - reduced hours
- changes to meals
- transport

*“Badly missed all the things provided for at Day Centre. It was WELL OVER a year before I found another suitable Day Centre”.*

Others described a sense of loss, and emotional upset. Carers also spoke about the impact on their lives and their ability to care.

### 11.1 Knock-on effect of changes on wider health and social care system

*“I felt very discouraged by the changes as my mother needs a lot of support and even losing one day at the Health & Wellbeing Centre has a detrimental effect. I know she is more lonely at home and even though I pay a carer to come in at lunch time she is less likely to eat when on her own. I feel less supported as someone who also tries to combine work with care of my mother and feel that if the council cuts services in this way it makes it harder to continue care at home and more likely that residential care will be needed. This will then cost the council more in the long run’. (carer - older person).*

### 11.2 Increased costs - reduced hours

*“She was offered another day club but being charged £50+ and also taxi fares is just too much for someone on a pension” (carer-older person).*

*“twice the expense and less activities done” (Community Support Service), (older person).*

### 11.3 Impact on carers

*“It has increased my stress levels and now I need to use more of my limited non-working time to arrange hair appointments and chiropodist that used to*

*be available at Health & Wellbeing Centre. I have temporarily reduced my hours on one day a week so that I can be with my mother at home some of the day. This of course has a financial impact” (carer -older person).*

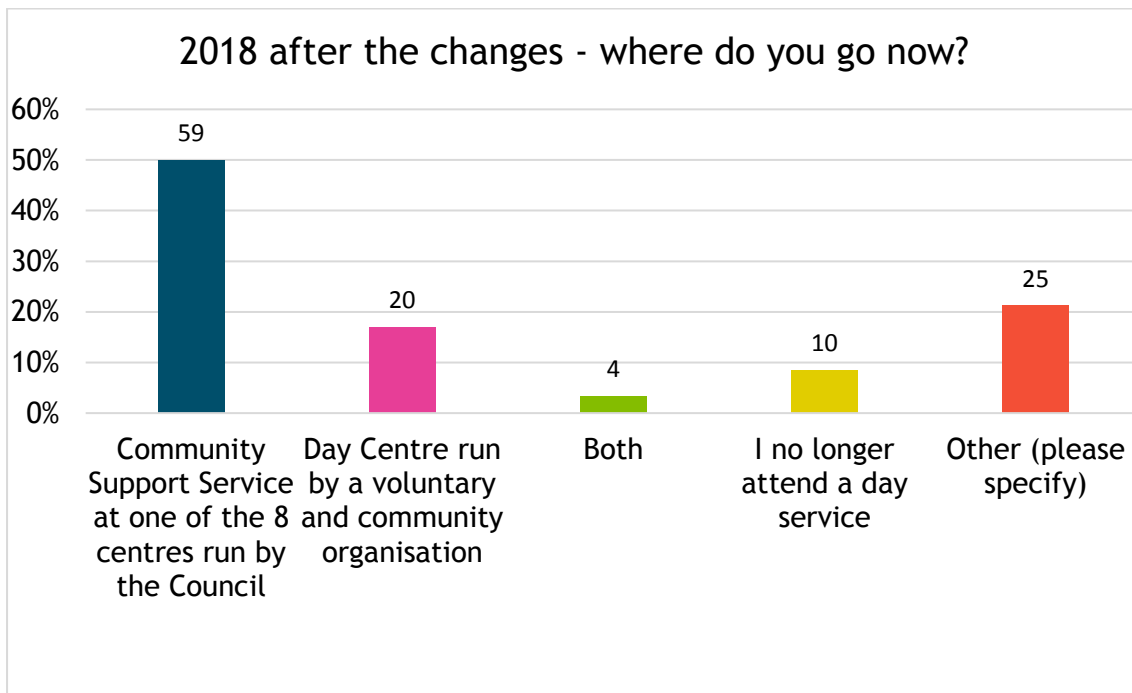
*“it has been very helpful to me as a carer to have a little time to do things for myself, I would like to thank all the staff and drivers for their support”.*

## 12 What is going well now and what could be better

Questions also focused on finding out what people were doing for daytime support almost a year after the changes had been implemented, where they were now, and how this was experienced.

People noted that since the changes, they were attending a range of places for daytime support, including Community Support Services, voluntary sector day centres, ‘other’ and ‘none’. Those who noted attending ‘other’ mainly did in fact attend independent / voluntary sector or Community Support Services but had not been clear what type of support they were attending.

### 12.1 Where do you go now?



Notably 70% of respondents still attend a centre. This figure is increased to 91% with further analysis of the ‘other’ responses. This figure is influenced by the fact

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that many respondents received their survey form through their day centre setting. The return rate for non-users of day centres was markedly lower than for that of centre users, as anticipated.

To understand what is going well now for people going through the change we need to understand what concerns people had at the start. These included:

Concerns about the **mix of older people and people with learning disabilities**, including increased noise, challenging behaviour, and how the centre would provide a balanced service meeting the different needs. This concern was predominantly expressed by the older people or their carers. Overall these fears have been allayed.

Some older people who attended the Community Support Services moved to the independent sector as they did not cope with the change to a mixed group.

*“coping with physical and learning disabilities - too upsetting for me - made me very uncomfortable, not a pleasant experience’ (Older person moved from Health & Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service, now accessing voluntary sector centre).*

*“Staff were pre-occupied with those with learning disabilities, the ‘activities’ were totally unstimulating for someone, though 99 at the time, x had a clear mind’ (carer comment older person, Health & Wellbeing Centre to independent sector).*

### 12.2 How people responded / what is good

Many people have expressed their gratitude to staff at all centres who have worked hard to make the centres a welcoming place for all.

*“they are amazing”,*

*“have supported individuals and carers through the change”*

#### Community Support Service mixed community centres

People attending Community Support Service centres have settled down and their fears of a mixed community have mainly been allayed. Both older people and those with learning disability are enjoying the mixed groups. The chance for the older people to have more frequent external activity is welcome - shopping, going to town etc. Some people said the chance to meet new people and make new friends has been good.

*“older people are definitely going out more, one person ‘I haven’t been out for years, I’ve either been at home or the centre, it’s lovely to go out’ even Aldi, simple things but it has meant a lot to her’ (Community Support Service staff).*

### Transport

Transport was a key message taken from both the survey questionnaire and group discussions. The major changes in provision of transport to both county and independent sector centres had an initial negative impact on many attending the Community Support Service and have a lasting impact on the ability of the independent sector to meet the needs of all who want to access their services.

*"X is 95 years old and very disabled. She relies on me for transport, shopping and leisure. I am sorry to say without me she would go nowhere, I am 80 years old myself".*

Transport problems that affected many at the change have settled down for those attending Community Support Services. However, this is often a different story for those using voluntary sector provision or people trying to access alternative activities in the community.

*"The changes went OK but the transport is awful, I have to take him or get a private taxi. This is all a pain because I have cancer myself". (Older carer of older person moved from Health and Wellbeing Centre to centre run by voluntary sector)*

The impact of changes and savings to transport under the daytime support review included:

- Removal of Integrated Transport Model (ITU)
- For **Community Support Services**, transport now to be provided in-house, as an integral part of provision, with support staff taking on the role of drivers to collect and drop off service users, using a new fleet of in-house vehicles. Cost for transport is £20 a day (via personal budget or independently to this without eligible needs) (Oxfordshire County Council, 2017). In addition, some were eligible for exceptional transport (via taxi etc) or were encouraged to travel independently on public transport or with a carer.
- For the **voluntary sector**, existing transport arrangements (via Integrated Transport Unit) were no longer provided by the council. This group would be encouraged to access one of Oxfordshire's over-60 community-based transport schemes, such as Aspire, Good Neighbour or local schemes (Communities First Oxfordshire 2018). Oxfordshire County Council provided 'Comet' also offered smart use of council minibus out of school hours (weekdays 10-2pm) for bookable, accessible transport in some areas. Some support with loss of transport and change-over was available from the Transition Fund.

Comments from people using independent rural and other day centres, showed the individual effort that goes into using local transport to reach places, as well as the impact of loss or unpredictability of local services. Service users were concerned

about uncertain costs. Limited transport or removal of transport also impacted on their sense of social connection and loneliness.

*“none of the centres I contacted provided transport”.*

*“I have to rely on my daughter to transport me from Abingdon to Wantage. This means I only go one day a week instead of three.”*

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## 13 People’s Stories

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Stories of people who now attend one of the eight Community Support Services, at the top of each story is a short description of where the person was prior to moving to a Community Support Service/voluntary sector service or an alternative activity.

All respondents gave permission for their comments to be used in the report.

### Learning disability and carer. (Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service).

Daytime support is people I work with, people help... It was ok going through the changes...as its near where I stay. I felt my opinions were listened to during the changes, and I did understand what the changes would mean for me. I got support with the changes, and all the support was the same (almost) as the support provided by the old centre. It was helpful. Its good because the new centre is near my home, so nothing was difficult about the changes for me. Now I go swimming, so that’s good. Everything is ok. My daytime support is good now, because I get all the support I need and I am happy...people help me and I enjoy meeting friends and the activities. I am now picked up by the centre minibus...there is nothing to improve there, it is ok, and very easy to get to the centre.

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*Carer: there is no noticeable change, there was nothing outstanding from what was going on at the previous location to the new centre...the staff moved too to the new day centre.*

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### Older person. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing centre to Community Support Service).

Daytime support gives me the opportunity to get out of my home, to go to the centre where I am able to meet and communicate with other people - clients and servers. I felt bad going through the changes to daytime support, as I was happy with things as they were. I did not feel my opinions were listened to during the changes. I did understand the information about what the changes would mean for me and did get support - I saw a social worker, and this was helpful...she sorted out the financial side of things. The changes were difficult because so many clients

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left because they couldn't afford the charges. What went well for me was more 'carers' mean that I now have the chance of being taken out on rambles, shopping trips etc. I would tell the council that they need to think more about social isolation - it's not easy to be old, disabled, lonely... put less emphasis on money saving. ...why can the council decide to change the criteria for their own benefit?

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Now at the Community Support Service, staff are supportive and kind, and I get the opportunity to go out, I enjoy the company and outings. Sometimes it's very noisy. It could be improved by having more choice of activities. Focus is on people with learning disabilities, and/or physical difficulties, old age, social isolation are no longer enough. I get to the centre on the bus, its easy. How could my daytime support be improved? Remember that not everyone has a learning disability.

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### Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service.

Daytime support makes a difference, making new friends and participating in social and leisure activities like going to bowling, dancing, exercise and singing. Changes were ok, but I would like to go to the centre more. I understood what the changes would mean for me and I received support...I like going into town on a bus for a walk or shopping now. Nothing was difficult about the changes, I am now going out more often, like going shopping. I am fine with the change...happy now with the way things are. I now go to daytime support once a week and go out on the other days. I am doing new things now like going out a lot or into town shopping, I love going dancing locally.

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My Community Support Service is good, because I love it there.... I like helping in the kitchen, and meeting my friends. I feel I have a say in what happens at the Community Support Service. I am happy with the way things are...but I would love to go horse riding.

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### Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service. (Written by support worker).

I used to go to a centre, with lots of people, and I never showed any enthusiasm, if I was offered a day off I would jump at it. Now we have moved to the Community Support Service I look forward to going. I am more willing to join in things there and the staff at home know not to book things on those days for me as I want to go. The changes felt bad, as I didn't understand before hand, if I had moved day service before it was because I had moved house. I didn't understand about what the changes would mean for me.... but staff encouraged me to give it a try and



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reassured me all my friends were going as well. This was helpful. I don't like change and need routine. It was hard just at the last week of the centre and the first week at the Community Support Service, I needed to know that things I loved doing would continue. Now, the new Community Support Service is a nicer place, a lot more space, more choice of activities and places for quiet time. I am doing new things and joining in now with more activities.

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My new Community Support Service is great, because I look forward to going, because I always come home now and say I have had a good day. I love the people and going out. I would love to do drumming and karaoke.

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### Older person and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service).

Daytime support helps me to meet new people and it gives my x a break, as x is my main carer. The changes were ok, but I was happy with everything at the Health & Wellbeing Centre. I am not sure I felt my opinions were listened to during the changes, but I did understand the information about what changes would mean for me. I received support, they were quite thorough in talking to me about it. Nothing was difficult about the changes, it was just adapting to the change. I enjoyed meeting new people. I think the council could have ensured a hot meal was provided. My new Community Support Service is good, I enjoy being around people and I am now doing new things like trips out, meeting new people and doing different activities. I couldn't improve it. I get to the Community Support Service on community transport, its easy. Having an extra day would benefit us.

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Carer: having X attend the day centre has made a huge impact in giving me some respite.

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### Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service, and carer.

Daytime support gives me a variety of activities, keeps me stimulated, minimizes boredom. I felt good going through the changes to daytime support and did feel my opinions were listened to during the changes. I received support, information relating to daily activities...this was helpful. Nothing was difficult for me about the changes, all went well, and I am generally happy with all the support programmes, it was a very smooth change from one day centre to another, and I am generally happy. I am doing new activities now, like golf, cooking, afternoon tea, travel to places locally of interest.

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Everything is going well at my Community Support Service now...I like the door to door transport, and visiting places of interest....no

improvements, happy in general, happy with activities. Transport via social services appears to be straightforward.

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### Disabled person and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service).

Daytime support I meet my friends and do different activities, if I didn't have this, I would just be at home all the time. I felt great going through the changes to daytime support, there wasn't much difference, just a different place, and transport, everything else was the same. I am not sure I felt my opinions were listened to or that I understood information about the changes. I did receive support...just reassurance about the changes, and this was helpful. Nothing was difficult for me about the changes. I am now doing new things at the Community Support Service, including the sensory room, cooking meals and cakes. The Community Support Service is great, I enjoy what I do at the centre, like trips out, cooking and bingo. Getting there on the minibus is very easy. I am happy with everything at my centre.

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**Carer:** there was no significant change to us, some worry about transport but these were soon resolved. X is very happy now, kept busy doing the things X enjoys, likes staff and seeing friends. If we didn't have daytime support X would be at home alone...so we both benefit. The change of venue meant X could do other activities.

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### Older person. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service).

New daytime support has made it much better. The changes were ok, because I knew no one, wherever we finished up would only be for our good. I did not feel my opinions were listened to during the changes, and no one told us anything except that the Health & Wellbeing Centre was closing, I got no support to help me with the changes. It was difficult not knowing anything.

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What went well...when we got to the new Community Support Service and met the wonderful staff and guests they made us feel like long lost family, it was great. I would tell the council...I suggest they do the change with even a bit of heart...they could have informed us one way or the other, they have no excuse. My new Community Support Service is great, we are now part of the family...we feel safe and wanted. It gets me out of my carers hair and gives (X) a bit of respite from looking after me. There is nothing that is not going well with my daytime support now...it

couldn't possibly be improved. Transport is very easy. We have everything we need except of course more staff.

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### Older person with dementia and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service).

At daytime support its nice to see a lot of people, different people. The staff are exceedingly kind and very thoughtful. Going through the changes to daytime support was bad as we were uncertain because we weren't sure what would happen...we were told we wouldn't get a place any longer so we had to go and look at other provision. We did feel listened to during the changes, and understood the information. We got support through visits by a social worker and lots of suggestions of things to do. The support was helpful, done with kindness, but many of the alternatives weren't terribly suitable for someone with dementia. Expectation that I would not be offered a place any longer turned out to be false. The changes were difficult with anxiety about the likelihood of no places being available and trying somethings which weren't very suitable. A lot time wasted but we acknowledge people were working with predictions that turned out to be unrealistic...in the end a place was still available as before...the predictions regarding the lack of availability unfortunately turned out to be quite erroneous.

The Community Support Service is good now, with friendly and helpful staff...enjoy meeting people and doing different activities. The cost is quite high compared to similar activities in other areas. X is collected by minibus, which is easy.

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**Carer view:** The main impact is that it had on me was the time taken to consider the various options suggested, telephoning etc, and then visiting them with my (parent) who was anxious about the new setting and concerned about why it was happening and what the outcome would be. We were told all along that it was extremely unlikely that X would be offered a place under the new regime and then right at the last moment (X) was. We were very grateful, but we felt that the planning had been poor and that although supported, we had had an unnecessarily difficult time.

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### Older person and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service).

Daytime support gives a chance twice a week to meet other people who like myself need companionship and support. It is nice to get my nails done, to sing and do quizzes. It felt terrible going through changes to daytime support we were put together with younger people who were loud and quite scary, also some of my friends lost their places and we lost contact. We did not feel our opinions were listened to during the changes and did not understand the information. I didn't

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feel any support as staff were having many changes like me...I was confused as to what would happen next. Everything was difficult about the changes...staff change, room changes, client changes. What went well for me was that I kept my place twice a week. 'Insecurity' is the one thing I would tell the council about the changes and impact on me. Now, the catering seems not so good, there is no pudding most days, and loss of staff I liked. Its not easy to find new activities and support in the local community, other day centres, like Age UK Oxon have all closed. Now, at the Community Support Service it's ok, we do a lot of singing and music which I love. Would like to do more trips out...Transport to the Community Support Service is very easy, I am picked up by lovely drivers in the transfer and feel very safe...its perfect.

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**Carer:** thank you for looking after X twice a week it gives me respite. As a carer I need to know X is safe when with you. During changes X was very unsettled due to addition of young disabled to a club with was mostly the same age group as her. X particularly likes to be entertained...singing, quizzes etc.

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### Person with a learning disability and carer. (Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service)

Daytime support has given me the chance to be independent. I am given choices in terms of what I do each day when I am at the centre. I like to meet people who are familiar to me each day. The staff are very good to me they meet all of my needs. We have lots of fun doing different things. I look forward to going each day. It makes me happy when I am there. It felt great going through changes to daytime support, as there is lots going on, people there and the staff are great! I did feel my opinions were listened to during the changes, and that I understood the information about what it would mean. I got support, which was helpful, I had a meeting with my keyworker, and parents. We discussed my needs and talked about other activities that I could try or do.

The staff listened to what I would like to do. Nothing was difficult for me about the changes, I am happy. Everything went well for me with the changes, I like being in the new building and there is more room for me. I like meeting all the different people of various ages, and all my needs are met. On top of other things I do we now go to the Leisure centre.

Daytime support now at the Community Support Service is great...the staff understand my needs and what I want. Everything is going well, I am well supported, I like all the people and staff that work there, they are all kind and nice to me...I like it all. I feel I have a say in my daytime support...staff ask for my opinion.

Getting there is easy, my family take me. I am very happy with the service provided.

**Carer:** At the time of the proposed changes it was rather worrying as to what service was going to be available. There was much uncertainty in the period when the changes were first announced. We feel the council kept the service users and their families in the dark with the lack of information that they were giving out regarding the new set up for the proposed centres. It seemed to be very drawn out. As it has happened though, we and x are very happy with the service provided. We believe it is much better.

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### **Person with learning disability and carer. (Moved from a learning disability centre to Community Support Service)**

Daytime support enables me to mix socially and go out and about in the community whilst still having the care I need.

I have been able to reconnect with old friends from school and meet new people. I felt good going through the changes, I had been to the new centre quite often and staff moved with me and helped me feel safe. I enjoy going to new places if I have people, I know with me.

I did not feel my opinions were listened to during the changes and didn't understand information about what changes would mean for me. When I arrived in the mornings there wasn't anyone to support me because they were all out doing transport...its scary to come to a new place and not find anyone to support you when you arrive. We would ask the council to make sure there were enough staff to provide care for people arriving at the centre as well as doing transport. Some of the staff I hadn't seen before and it takes me a while to get to know people.

The new centre was much better, with more space, and better bathrooms, and a great sensory room. Now, my Community Support Service is good, I have lots of company and am well supported. I have lots of friends, and get to go out to the shops, and out on the bus, and like to be outside. I like to be part of the group and am really happy when we have music. Sometimes we can't do activities because there aren't enough staff.

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**Carer:** When the service started all the staff were out providing transport in the mornings so there were no staff to support users arriving by other means, which meant I needed to stay until they returned. Some of the staff who had previously only worked with older were not happy supporting learning disabled which was worrying. When there have been problems, most of the support staff have done their very best to help, often in difficult circumstances. There are some excellent people at the centre.

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### Older person with dementia and their carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to a voluntary sector centre)

Closure of HWBC was a huge disappointment, it was a marvellous centre with dedicated staff. I really looked forward to going. The cost was £15 from 10-3pm and £7 for a cooked lunch. I was offered a place at the Community Support Service for £88 four times the amount paid at the Health & Wellbeing Centre. We declined the offer as this was financially unacceptable. Eventually x found a place at a voluntary sector day centre, run by volunteers, on a Thursday. My carer has to drive me there and stay with me when I am there, as there are no trained staff to take responsibility for me.

We did feel listened to during the changes, but it made no difference. The council could have provided comparable alternative facilities to the Health & Wellbeing Centre. We were given one or two suggestions for voluntary groups in the area, but the ball was very much left in my carers court to follow up these. The only positive outcome was acceptance at one voluntary sector centre, run by volunteers. This centre, which provides a very welcoming environment, just about manages despite withdrawal of Oxfordshire County Council support, with the tremendous effort of volunteers to keep the centre running. Apart from one day a week at the new centre, and Singing for the Brain twice a month, x sits at home.

Getting out gives x some company and occasional entertainment and gets them out of the house. The new centre is only from 10-2pm, whereas the HWBC was 10-3, giving the carer a slightly longer break, and allowing for more activity...it would be an improvement to have that extra hour.

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#### Carer perspective

The closure of Health & Wellbeing Centre has been a blow. X went there two days a week from 10-3pm which gave me time to relax, meet friends, play tennis, Now has to go to the new centre from 10-2 which means lunch with friends, and tennis is no longer possible, as I wouldn't get back in time. I now have to accompany X to the centre to attend to any personal care needs, whilst it is quite enjoyable, and I am full of admiration for the splendid volunteers, it doesn't give me a break from looking after X. The Health & Wellbeing Centre was such a good centre with excellent staff, it was a shame that it closed'.

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### Older and carer perspective. (Moved from Health and Wellbeing Centre to Community Support Service, then to local support).

When I went to the Health & Wellbeing Centre it made my life more interesting, it was a happy jolly place which brought joy to my life. All the people were wonderful, they helped me solve small problems.

The changes to daytime support were terrible, I was really upset, it felt like I was losing something special. I did feel my opinions were listened to during the changes. I received support to help change my daytime support and found a new place at Community Support Service...but I hated it, so it was difficult to find something that I liked. Finally, I was offered some support at a residential home, and go there now for meals and can pop in there for specific events going on. I have got to know the staff very well and it makes me happy.

Its not easy to find new activities locally as I have difficulty with transport, not much for me to do in my area. Its great on the days I go to the home, I enjoy the food and activities, but I can get bored on days I don't go. The only thing is its very limited time wise and I would like to stay longer, I can only go for a meal for half an hour and the odd activities, so that's maybe an hour a week. I would like to be able to have more support, more time and different things to do.'

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**Carer:** The staff at the HWBC offered lots of emotional and practical support to X. We have had to step in with these tasks, as well as support with personal care. X was very upset with the changes, it wasn't a good time at all, X got very worried about all the people who used the centre and still thinks about what they are doing.

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### Older person dementia - carer perspective. (moved from Health and Wellbeing Centre to a voluntary sector centre).

Due to her Alzheimer's my mother was unable to remember anything was changing. As her carer, I felt very concerned about the changes to daytime support services. During the changes, my mother was unable to express any opinion, but I did not feel my opinions were listened to.

We did receive some support to help with the changes to daytime support, Age UK Oxon phoned and sent a list of alternative voluntary led day centres, but none of the centres I contacted provided transport. Now, my mother feels less secure and more lonely being at home, rather than at the Health & Wellbeing Centre.

As a carer it made me feel that the council did not appreciate the efforts I make to care for my mother at home and cuts like this make it less feasible for me to continue. I now have to make alternative arrangements for things like chiropodist appointments which used to be done at the Health & Wellbeing Centre this is not easy to fit in with work commitments. She attends a voluntary sector day centre,

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which provides good support on the days it is open...but the hours open are not long enough, and we have to do the transport.

Losing days at the Health & Wellbeing Centre had a detrimental effect. I know she is more lonely at home, and she is less likely to eat when on her own.

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**Carer perspective:** I feel less supported as someone who tries to combine work with the care of my mother and feel if the council cuts services in this way it makes it harder to continue care at home and more likely that residential care will be needed. This will cost the council more in the long run.

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It increased my stress levels and I now need to use more of my limited non-work time to take my mother to appointments. I have temporarily reduced my hours so I can be with my mother, and of course this has a financial impact.

### Older person with dementia and carer. (Moved from dementia centre to a voluntary sector centre).

Daytime support gets X out of the house, provides stimulation and things to do...enjoys meeting people and musical activities and games. X badly missed all the things provided for at the day centre, and it was well over a year before we found another suitable day centre.

We did not feel listened to during the changes, although we did understand the information about what changes would mean and did get support to find new activities. Age UK Oxon and others told us what day centres might have room, but these were unsuitable...the problem was not solved, as we need a local day centre. It was a difficult time, as we felt left on our own to try and find a local day centre...had to rely on personal contacts to discover what was going on in the area. Very long wait before something turned up...as a new day centre opened up locally in the end.

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The council made no provision for dementia day centre in changes after the centre closed...and X had to stay at home. The new centre is good but not as local to me as the former day centre, and I have to drive.... but it has good leadership, a variety of activities and lunch provided. As a carer, I very much missed one day per week break to have freedom and relaxation. It also increased my stress levels always being concerned not to leave X alone too long (has dementia). Always on the look out and waiting for something like the new day centre to start where I live.

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### Person and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to one activity).

Daytime support made me happy to be with likeminded people, and I enjoyed my days at the centre. It makes life easier I had a cooked meal, so didn't need to cook those days. I enjoyed the craft activities.

The changes were terrible, there was a lack of communication letting me know what was happening, apart from snippets of information which I could not rely on. I was upset and confused and this had a great impact on my life at home and the day centre. The new costs were very expensive, charging for meals, morning/afternoon sessions and the transport was going to make it very expensive for me. We did not feel our opinions were listened to, and did not understand the information about what changes would mean for us.

We did get some support, information verbally and some paperwork from Age UK Oxon person who visited the day centre, this gave me other choices of things to do during the day. The information was interesting and informative so I could choose new groups and activities rather than going to the day centre. Without information pack from Age UK and family helping me to find new activities I would be very lost.

I was very confused when I had my interview about the new pricing and could not understand why I could not go any more. It was difficult having a change of routine, and not being able to see friends I had made. I felt sad and lonely as if no-one apart from my family cared about me. The process to reapply to the day centre was confusing and to me complicated. Oxfordshire County Council should have been more open and communicative about the changes from the start. I have now joined a knitting group which meets once a month, I do more crafts at home on my own. I go to Bingo locally. I no longer go to a daytime support service.

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**Carer:** This was a very worrying and stressful time for me as a carer. X was very tearful and upset and could not understand what was happening and why. I tried to find out, but to no avail as no one seemed to know what was happening. X became quite ill and depressed. The prices were very high for the new ...after a while we decided to leave the centre and try and join some different activities. At the present this has been one new activity.

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### Older person dementia and carer

Daytime support when it was more local, made a huge difference to my life, it was my social life. The changes were terrible, it has made my life so much more isolated. We did feel our opinions were listened to during the changes, and did understand the information.

We had support to help change the daytime support and find new activities...local support was taken away. They listened and I understood... but they can't offer

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something that is not there. I now have to rely on my daughter to transport me to a voluntary sector group, which means I can only go one day a week instead of three, as it's too far. It's not easy to find new activities in my local community... everything on offer is only for about two hours and involves someone coming with me. If I had more local support provided, or transport things would be better... I would be able to go more frequently.

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**Carer:** When X went to the centre it gave real peace of mind knowing X as having a happy day with friends in a safe environment and being fed and watered. Caring part-time for X is affecting my income, future job opportunities and my pension for the future.

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### Older person and carer. (Moved from a Health and Wellbeing Centre to a voluntary sector centre).

My daytime support stopped when Health & Wellbeing Centre closed. This made me feel lonely as I missed the company and the fact that I had something to look forward to twice a week. It also meant a hot meal was provided twice a week. After a considerable amount of time, I found out myself about a new centre (voluntary sector) and contacted them. Initially they had no vacancies but luckily did find me a place.

I go once a week and enjoy it, and I look forward to the company. The changes to daytime support were bad, as it meant I had nothing to look forward to. I missed the company of the friends I had made; the staff were also very helpful and kind. I am not sure I felt my opinions were listened to during the changes, but I did understand information about what the changes would mean.

I received '50:50' support to help me change my daytime support and find new activities. I had a meeting to explain Health & Wellbeing Centre was closing, I was told there was nothing else available for my needs...there was no alternative available...I had to source my own day centre. Before I found the new centre, I stayed in with just contact from my family, sometimes a visit, sometimes a telephone call. I had no interaction or stimulation with anyone of my own age. At least I go out once a week now - I enjoy the company and I get a meal provided.

---

**Carer:** when there was talk of the Health & Wellbeing Centre closing X was upset and it was on their mind constantly. I felt upset that X was missing friends...when X went out twice a week it meant I didn't go and visit as I knew X had the company. When it did close X was upset and difficult to motivate. I normally go every day to see X so it meant I could go out or do my work knowing X was ok. We would talk on the phone and X would have lots to talk about. This made such a difference to us all.

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## Appendix A

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### Background

From March 2016, Oxfordshire County Council embarked on a **review of daytime support for people aged over 18 in Oxfordshire**. This review looked at understanding the needs of vulnerable people for daytime support, core support needed to meet eligible care needs and ways to prevent care needs escalating-ensuring sustainability into the future.

This work was set within a challenging financial context and need to find savings of £69m across the council by 2020. This included identification of £1m savings in daytime support following the county council joint budget in February 2016, and the need to continue to provide statutory services to the most vulnerable groups (Oxfordshire County Council, 2017).

The work was underpinned by the vision of Oxfordshire County Council's core strategy. Now encapsulated in the Corporate Plan (Thriving Communities for Everyone in Oxfordshire 2018-21) this recognises the value of community-based support, and its role in offering choice and independence.

Not only was the change about a drive for savings, but for the council it represented a process of *cultural* change, a redefining of the relationship between local authority and community, and of roles and expectations. The wider vision put forward was one in which there would be a move towards embedding delivery of local services in local communities, sustained and delivered where possible, by those communities.

For adult social care, the council also recognised emerging cultural and demographic changes in the way people made choices about how to spend their time. They saw for example, that there was a shift taking place in the way older people wanted to spend their time, with choice by some to move away from 'traditional centres' to access a range of activities in the community (Oxfordshire County Council 2010). Use of personal budgets also drove this move towards wanting more 'choice' and need for more tailored support to meet individual needs. This, called for new ways of looking at daytime support.

The review was also set against a backdrop of national policy and legislation, including underlying principles outlined in a range of documents such as the Care Act 2014, NHS Five Year Forward View, and NHS Transforming Care Programme.

It also looked at examples of good practice and wider evidence including ways of supporting choice, independence, and ways to improve wellbeing, reducing loneliness and isolation as well as ways to prevent escalation of needs (Oxfordshire County Council 2016, New Economics Foundation 2008).

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It was also set within a national picture of increasing pressure on local government, cuts to public services, and concerns about impacts including rising isolation and loneliness, particularly on older people and those most vulnerable in society (Davidson and Rossall, 2015; Mencap 2016; HM Government 2018; Local Government Association 2018).

### Service change process 2016-17

In 2016, Oxfordshire County Council Engagement Team undertook an initial engagement process (**May-June 2016**) with adult daytime support service users, carers, community groups and interested parties, listening to views of over 600 people.

The aim was to find out about what daytime support means to people, what they need from this support and to inform ideas about future provision. They did this through workshops, and focus groups set at venues across the county (See Oxfordshire County Council 2016).

From information gathered, key themes arose about what people valued in daytime support- this included the social value of daytime support, and ability to take part in meaningful activities. For older people, value was given to reducing isolation and loneliness, and for adults with learning disabilities, learning new skills, getting a job and being independent was important.

Carers valued daytime support for valuable respite, and support to continue caring (for full report see Oxfordshire County Council 2016). These views reflected recognised evidence and understanding of the benefits of daytime support for health and wellbeing

Further work was carried out by the county council with a working group of 18 service users and carers to help shape the future of daytime support. This considered information from the engagement, and enabled deeper discussion issues such as transport, mixed provision, and focus of activities in more depth. A new model of daytime support was drawn up, with further consultation through 2016. More than 1,000 responses given on the proposed new model.

The following changes were agreed;

- Establishment of a new **Community Support Service** that would replace Health and Wellbeing Centres and Learning Disability Support Services (22 building based services). It would be available to everyone based on need, bringing together older people, people with learning disabilities, and physical disabilities to gain the right support. Transport would be provided
- **'Option A'** for this Community Support Service model was adopted: giving a centre-based model delivered from eight buildings across the county, with mixed-use- combining service users with different needs, including older people and those with a learning disability
- Wider focus was placed on **'support for living well in the community'**, enabling provision of daytime support and activity within the community,

## Review of changes to adult daytime support in Oxfordshire

through local groups and voluntary sector provision, and support to access community networks.

- County council funding to 47 community-based day services was to be replaced with grant pots through a newly established **Sustainability, Innovation and Transition** fund. Capacity building and fundraising support was to be given to existing groups to support a transition to more self-sustaining model.
- Other themes included continuation of ‘**open access tailored support**’ for vulnerable people (Dementia Support and Wellbeing and Employment Service) and continuing to provide choice for people with eligible needs through **personal budgets**.

Implementation of these changes took place between April and October 2017.

### Healthwatch Oxfordshire research

We wanted to find out about people’s experience of:

- The *process* of change to daytime support in 2017
- The *impact* of these changes on service users and carers
- What was going well *now* and what could be better
- What *lessons* could be learned, for the county council and Oxfordshire as a whole

We wanted to be able to reflect the comments and voices of those affected across the county; service users, family members and carers. In all during this process, we spoke to more than 300 people, including service users, carers and family members, staff and volunteers. To reach people, Healthwatch Oxfordshire used the following methods

- Initial desktop survey and meetings with key stakeholders
- Develop, pilot and disseminate a questionnaire in a range of accessible formats to over 800 service users who had been affected by the changes, with 154 returns to date
- Visits to eight voluntary sector day centres across the county, plus additional phone interviews and questionnaire
- Visits to all eight Community Support Services to speak with service users and families informally and at ‘coffee and cake’ events
- Engagement of support from an ‘expert by experience’ through My Life, My Choice

This report reflects what we heard from these encounters, where comments have been used anonymously, and grouped to illustrate the themes that came to light.

### What we heard

People told us that daytime support made a difference to their lives, and valued daytime support for

- Social connection and friendships
- Meaningful activity
- Independence
- Reduced isolation and loneliness
- Support for carers to continue caring

Healthwatch Oxfordshire carried out the research between May and October 2018.

We have made sure that all the comments we received, have been passed onto Oxfordshire County Council (with permission).

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The Old Dairy

High Cogges Farm

High Cogges

Nr Witney

Oxon OX14 5PD

Tel 01865 520 520

Email [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

[www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)