



Impact report: Improved access to day opportunity services in Birmingham

July 2023





Key impact

Following feedback about the positive impact day opportunity services have on the health and wellbeing of users, but also the difficulties they face getting assessments and accessing support, Healthwatch Birmingham investigated day opportunity services provided by Birmingham City Council (BCC) in 2022. Our report [*Experiences of day opportunity services in Birmingham*](#) revealed the value of these services, barriers to accessing them and how they could improve.

Taking into account these findings and following engagement with service users, their families/carers and staff, BCC has made a number of important improvements to day opportunity service provision in Birmingham. These include:

Improved quality of care and support provided by day opportunity services through quality assurance visits to day services. This should also have a positive impact on service user outcomes.

'It's important to be outcomes focussed, person centre plans, targets to measure progress no matter how small' – Day opportunity service staff member

Better communication about the day service offer following a refresh of how information about day centres can be found on Connect to Support, BCC's online social care information and advice guide, community directory and marketplace for citizens of Birmingham. A Day Opportunities webpage is under development with a booklet that lists and describes the wider day opportunities offer to follow. There is a dedicated Day Opportunities e-mail address that can be used if someone wants information. Dayopportunitiesvision@birmingham.gov.uk

More engagement and better involvement of patients and carers/families, through BCC's 2023 co-production programme, will create opportunities to engage with service users and families in order to gain insight on quality, continued provision of services and identifying areas of potential savings.

'The 2023 Day opportunities co-production programme will train more co-production volunteers who will then engage with a wide range of service users, and carer/families to gain insight on many issues about day opportunities. The opportunity to share views in a regular, open and transparent way will be established.' – BCC

Increased use of feedback as BCC actively seeks this from service users. Providers are now expected to ask, listen and respond to the views of their service users. Through engagement with Healthwatch Birmingham, six 'day opportunity services' have been visited with 170 pieces of feedback collected. This feedback is used by BCC to improve services.

'Being listened to and actually being offered help according to the young person's needs instead of generic advice that isn't relevant to the needs of the individual.' – Service user

Co-production with service users and families.

'In Spring 2022 Healthwatch Birmingham carried out a study of day centres and received responses from 147 users of day opportunity services, 86 completed the questionnaire and 61 voted in our poll on access to day services. The data was analysed, and a report was published in July 2022. The findings and recommendations from the report will be used to inform the co-production work.' – Report to BCC Cabinet, 6th September 2022

Service users have been involved in developing a commissioning strategy for external day opportunities services and a service improvement plan for internal day services.

The co-produced review mirrored the findings of our study and identified a number of issues to be addressed. In particular, we note:

- Consideration for increased access to, and choice of, day opportunity services that reflect the strengths, abilities and aspirations of people who need or choose to use them.
- Recognition of the value of day opportunities services as an essential service for older adults and those with a disability.
- Review of workforce training and development.
- Exploration of opportunities for providers to deliver more partnership focused delivery models.

A key outcome is that service users will be involved in the co-production of a commissioning strategy for day opportunity services and co-producing a service improvement plan for internal day centres. The findings of these reviews are to be presented to BCC Cabinet by December 2023.

Improved access to services that accommodate personal preferences, cultural and lifestyle needs by ensuring that future commissioning (external) and improvements (internal) to the provision of day opportunities is responsive to individual needs.

More choice and flexibility through the use of personal budgets through the application of an 8.3% uplift to all personal budgets for the financial year 2023/24.

'Personal budgets are a really useful way of increasing choice and control for citizens when choosing their care and support, and the Adult Social Care is currently reviewing the offer. Social workers will discuss options with citizens and their families/carers and provide information as requested. Alongside this there is work being carried out to improve accessibility to Personal Assistants so that those who need support to move around in their community can do so.' – BCC

See Appendix 1 for BCC's full response.



Original report synopsis

In July 2022, Healthwatch Birmingham published a report [*Experiences of day opportunity services in Birmingham*](#) highlighting service users and their carers/families' overall views on the day opportunity services they access. The report revealed that:

- The main reasons people use day opportunity services are due to personal loss, isolation, poor health and wellbeing, to maintain health and wellbeing and to support carers.
- Day opportunity services have an impact on social and preventive outcomes by supporting continued independence of service users, supporting their health and daily living needs and enabling family carers to have a break and/or continue with employment.
- Attending and participating in activities at day centres has a positive impact on people's mental health, social contacts, physical function and quality of life.
- The challenges faced by carers/families and service users during the pandemic, when day opportunity services were closed, further highlights the important role that day opportunity services play in supporting emotional and physical health. The pandemic has left many carers/families exhausted and emotionally drained.
- The importance of people having the choice to access services they want.
- Use of personal budgets and direct payments might be useful for enabling people to access varied services but are not appropriate for everyone.
- There is a perception among the people we spoke to that personal budgets and direct payments are being used to mask cuts to day service provision.
- There are inadequate services in the community that people can choose from, meaning limited 'choice and flexibility'.
- There is inadequate information available on day opportunity service in the community.
- Day centres need to be better regulated for the quality of care they provide.

Users of day opportunity services and their families said they wanted to see the following improvements:

- More variety of activities for service users.
- Improve availability and ensure continuity of services.
- Improve the skills of staff.
- Tailor day service provision to individual needs and aspirations.
- Increase the number of sessions that people can attend.
- Improve involvement of service users and carers/families.
- Improve access to social workers at day opportunity services.
- Improve communication with service users who access the services.
- Introduce day opportunity services to young people.
- Provide reliable transport to these services.

Healthwatch Birmingham made the following recommendations to BCC:

- Reinstatement the quality monitoring system for day opportunity services.
- Ensure feedback about services is used make improvements, including engaging with Healthwatch Birmingham to provide an independent voice for service users and carers/families.
- Continue to offer services that accommodate personal preferences, cultural and lifestyle needs.
- Reinstatement monitoring visits to day opportunity services to ensure that service users can access varied activities.
- Improve communication and information about services.
- Ensure clear discussions with service users and carers/families about choice, flexibility and the use of personal budgets (i.e. how the use of personal budgets reflects a move towards wider access rather than cuts to services).
- Engage with service users, and carer/families to gain insight on quality, continued provision of services and identify areas of potential savings.
- We are pleased that since the publication of our report BCC has used our findings and recommendations to inform the co-production review of day opportunity services in Birmingham. BCC engaged a wide range of people, from service users to providers and other professionals, to hear what people value about day opportunity services.

Next steps

We will continue to listen to the experiences of Birmingham residents who are trying to or are accessing day opportunity services. We will share this feedback with BCC to inform service change or improvement. Through engagement with BCC, we will play a role in the development of a commissioning strategy for external day opportunity services and an improvement plan for internal day centres.

You can share your experiences by:

- Visiting our online [Feedback Centre](#).
- Calling Healthwatch Birmingham on 0800 652 5278
- Emailing info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Who are Healthwatch Birmingham?

Local Healthwatch were established in every local authority area across England following the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Our key role is to ensure those who commission, design and deliver health and social care services hear, and consider, the public voice. Healthwatch Birmingham listens to and gathers public and patient experiences of using local health and social care services such as general practices, pharmacists, hospitals, dentists, opticians, care homes and community-based care. We hear these experiences via our Information and Signposting Line, our online Feedback Centre, and through our community engagement activity led by staff and volunteers. [Read more about the work of Healthwatch Birmingham.](#)

Appendix 1: Birmingham City Council response

BCC statement July 2022

Birmingham City Council thanks Healthwatch for undertaking the study and engaging with users of day opportunity services, their carers and providers. The findings reinforce the importance of engaging with service users and involving them in improving the quality and choice of services across Birmingham. The report demonstrates the valuable role of day opportunity services for our citizens in reducing social isolation, improving physical, emotional and mental wellbeing as well as providing opportunities for building friendships. In our Day opportunities update report to BCC Cabinet in December 2021 we acknowledged the approach taken during Covid 19 to keep citizens and carers safe and recognise that there is more work to do to improve the quality, breadth and choice of day opportunities provision for those that need it now and that will require services in the future. It is for this reason, 1) that we sought Cabinet's approval to commission an independent co-produced review of day opportunity services in light of the pandemic. 2) This work will take place during 2022. Your findings and recommendations will be reviewed alongside the independent co-produced review of day opportunity services, and we 3) will ask Healthwatch to engage with us as we embark on this journey. In the meantime, already established work programmes will continue including 4) quality assurance visits to day centres, 5) planning for day time support for younger adults who are eligible for support from the Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood Service, and a 6) refresh of how information about day centres can be found on Connect to Support, the Council's online social care information and advice guide, community directory and marketplace for citizens of Birmingham.

BCC statement June 2023

BCC commissioned RedQuadrant following an open tender exercise to undertake an independent co-produced review of day opportunities services. During 2022 Red Quadrant trained 14 lived experience co-production volunteers, established a peer review team and Empowering People Team, held 35 engagement sessions and interviewed 429 people. The findings of the review have been presented to BCC Cabinet on 25th April 2023 and the findings were shared with the Health and Social Care overview and scrutiny committee on 20th April. RedQuadrant produced a report 'My Daily Life, My Choice' which has been shared with all day centres and individuals who contributed to the review.

BCC Cabinet has sought to ensure the voice of service users, their families and carers shape the future plans for day opportunity services. In April 2023, they agreed recommendations to co-produce a commissioning strategy for external day opportunity services and improvement plan for internal day services.

Healthwatch participated in the 2022 co-produced review, and we will now be seeking your continued engagement in the 2023 co-production programme.

Healthwatch Birmingham also made the following recommendations:

1. Reinstate the quality monitoring system for day opportunity services to gain assurance that delivery of outcomes is central to service provision.

Adult Social Care Commissioning Officers developed a Quality Assurance programme in 2019 to be used with providers of day opportunities external to BCC. This was suspended until June 2022 because of the pandemic lockdowns and rigorous infection control measures being in place for the first year of reopening. A programme of visits is scheduled each month that looks at all aspects of the services provided.

2. Work with providers to ensure that feedback about services is actively sought and used to make improvements, including engaging with local Healthwatch to provide an independent voice for service users and carers/families.

The recent review of day opportunities post-pandemic gave citizens, carers, providers and other stakeholders the opportunity to share their views about day opportunity services. This will be continued with the Cabinet approved co-production of a commissioning strategy for external day opportunities and a service improvement plan for internal day services. There will be ongoing opportunities for people to be part of the co-production activity in many ways.

Providers are expected to ask, listen and respond to the views of the people who use their services.

The Council will continue to actively engage with Healthwatch Birmingham over the co-production programme and into the future to ensure that there is an independent voice for service users and carers/families.

3. Continue to offer services that accommodate personal preferences, cultural and lifestyle needs.

There is already a range of day opportunities on offer for people with different support needs, ages, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The 2023 planned co-production programme will create opportunities to respond to the findings of the Healthwatch report 'Experiences of day opportunity services in Birmingham' and the review of day opportunities post-pandemic to ensure that future commissioning (external) and improvements (internal) to the provision of day opportunities is responsive to individual needs and interests.

4. Reinstate monitoring visits to day opportunity services to ensure that service users are being supported to access varied activities.

See response to question 1.

5. Ensure that there is improvement in communication and that information on services is available.

BCC publishes information about day centres on Connect to Support <https://birmingham.connecttosupport.org/>

A Day Opportunities webpage is under development and a booklet that lists and describes the wider day opportunities offer will follow.

There is a dedicated Day opportunities e-mail address that can be used if someone wants information. Dayopportunitiesvision@birmingham.gov.uk

6. Ensure that discussions with service users and carers/families about choice, flexibility and the use of personal budgets is clear (e.g. how does the use of personal budgets reflect a move towards wider access rather than cuts to services).

Personal budgets are not used as a means of cutting services. BCC has applied an 8.3% uplift to all personal budgets for the financial year 2023/24.

Personal budgets are a really useful way of increasing choice and control for citizens when choosing their care and support, and the Adult Social Care team is currently reviewing the

offer. Social workers will discuss options with citizens and their families/carers and provide information as requested.

Alongside this there is work being carried out to improve accessibility to Personal Assistants so that those who need support to move around in their community can do so.

7. Engage with service users and carers/families to gain insight on quality, continued provision of services and identify areas of potential savings.

The 2023 Day opportunities co-production programme will train more co-production volunteers who will then engage with a wide range of service users and carers/families to gain insight on many issues about day opportunities. The opportunity to share views in a regular, open and transparent way will be established.



Healthwatch Birmingham
Cobalt Square
83 Hagley Road
Birmingham
B16 8QG

www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

t: 0800 652 5278

e: info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

 @HWBrum

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchBirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBirmingham)

 [Instagram.com/healthwatchbirmingham_](https://www.instagram.com/healthwatchbirmingham_)

 [Linkedin.com/company/healthwatch-birmingham](https://www.linkedin.com/company/healthwatch-birmingham)