



Focus Group report

Report of the information gathered in the focus group held to discuss the adult social care cost saving proposals.

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Introduction to Healthwatch Bury

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Bury. The Healthwatch network consists of 152 Healthwatch organisations across each of the local authority areas in England. It also has a national body called Healthwatch England based in London. We are all independent organisations who aim to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience. We are the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care in Bury. As a statutory watchdog, our role is to ensure that local decision makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care so that those who buy (commissioners) and provide our services (NHS Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector and independent providers) can benefit from what Bury people tell us.

Our reports on various elements of health and social care in Bury can be found on our website at the following link: healthwatchbury.co.uk or by contacting us directly using the details on the back cover.

Executive Summary

The focus group included mainly providers of social care services, including carers, although some participants did not indicate their status and could be service users, family or some other relation to the process.

The session was led to look at the main proposals of the consultation, then allowing for any further comment around the consultation in general. No position was taken by any of the staff facilitating the session and no judgement of anything people said. Simple rules were laid out for participants to ensure anyone that wished to be heard was given their chance and not be interrupted, and that all should be respectful of one another.

The responses from the group were noted, and most were eager to voice their thoughts, opinions and experiences, although some were less forthcoming.

Below are our records of what was said, as well as questions that were asked for which participants wanted to have answered. We have committed to share any answers that are returned to us. We have attempted to capture the sentiment from each contributor and report them succinctly rather than relaying verbatim as there would be too much to transcribe.

Day care centre proposal

Attendee A: Really concerned about the first proposal. People are not receiving the services they need.

Attendee B: My clients use Persona facilities. COVID-19 pandemic has put people off from going to day care centres.

People are still getting diagnosed with dementia but due to the pandemic can't plan their care package as usual and therefore numbers of people who require the day care service appear lesser than they actually are. If this facility closes there will be more people who can't access the services. There will be a problem in 2 years when people need facilities to go to. Bury MBC might be saving money short term but will cost more long term. Have they got an alternative to day care?

The COVID-19 pandemic is hiding the real numbers of service users as it is making people scared of using the services.

Attendee C: Pinfold Day Centre and Grundy Day Centre are both well used. Grundy Day Care Centre will not be big enough to accommodate these people who use the services. People are shutting themselves away during the pandemic, but will need the services once again after thing return to normal. Dementia sufferers need support, I really feel for them. I don't know what the answer is.

Questions posed:

What is the criteria used to limit the numbers that can use the day care centres?

Has Bury MBC got an alternative to day care?

Short-stay proposal

Attendee B: Our clients require short stay services and have also been underused due to COVID-19. Patients will end up in different care homes and there will be an extra cost attached to this.

Attendee D: In the long run the Council will end up using private homes for people who need Spurr House. Reducing the beds is not an answer.

Questions posed:

What are the 'special arrangements' going to be, will they be adequate?

An all age disability service

Attendee B: I am a registered CQC provider and it costs money to provide for over 18s but costs a lot more money to provide services for children's services. There is a different legislative framework for children and young people. Children's sector is too costly for adult service providers to adapt and train-up to.

Attendee A: Concerned about this proposal because special skills needed for children and young people, I don't think it's a good idea.

Attendee D: You need specific and different skills and qualifications to deal with children compared to adults etc. So their care will need to be provided by different people anyway - what is the point of bringing the service together.

Alternative Options

Attendee A: Alternative option would be to get rid of more managers of departments. Spend less on management and bureaucracy.

Attendee B: There are different ways of providing care in different boroughs. What is the comparison with the rest of the Greater Manchester? How many social workers and social worker managers per head? How much are short stay prices per head? Where does Bury fall within this and where is the evidence we are not already cut the most?

Attendee C: Spurr House/Elmhurst can't advertise for places and let other providers know what's available, so of course it looks like they are not being used enough. They could easily be full with the demand that is out there. There needs to be more connectivity.

Attendee D: Back in 2011 when the council was closing other care homes due to savings. Where have those savings gone? We were assured that was all the cutting that would be necessary to care, now this?

Attendee A: There are different contracts and services. Are we getting good value for our money or are we paying for other borough residents?

Attendee B: Covid is just hiding the real demand, post pandemic, this arrangement will end up costing far more as the private profit making sector will be providing and the council will still have to foot the bill.

Transport

Attendee A: I am really concerned. We were trying to get people who have mobility allowance to day centres, where will they go now?

Any other comments

Attendee A: I am really concerned. Day centres are underused because of the pandemic. What will be the waiting list for the service once the pandemic is over?

Attendee D: We took people in to free up NHS beds. Elmhurst is a smaller bed service. In the long run it will affect the bigger picture. It will cause suffering, unemployment and people being stuck at home. It is bigger than saving money.

Attendee B: Is the Bury MBC consulting with private care homes?

Attendee C: As far as Spurr House is concerned, it has a lot of history behind it. Fred Spurr offered the home to the local community. What will happen to Spurr House when it gets closed? Do local people know what it will mean to them?

Attendee D: I'm a carer and that is why I have heard about this consultation. Does Bury MBC not have a duty to let local people know about the consultation? Not everyone are online, needs more promotion than social media.

Attendee A: Does community own Spurr House? Is it legal to close it and what will happen to the building?

Attendee C: This will have an impact on people in the future when looking after their family members.

Questions posed:

Is the Bury MBC consulting with private care homes?

What will happen to Spurr House building when it gets closed?

How has the consultation been promoted to people who are not online?

Does community own Spurr House?

Is it legal to close it and what will happen to the building?

Additional feedback

After the focus group, we received an email from a person that had attended the focus group but had not contributed to the discussion. Shared below is a summary of what they said, with some details changed or removed to protect their identity.

“As only three areas were covered in the online meeting, am I right in thinking that all the required savings will be made from the current short stay, day care and learning disability facilities?

My partner has carers twice a day - no mention was made of these agencies. We make a contribution towards the costs of this service, which was means-tested. In April the cost was increased - only noticeable when the invoice came for payment. Is the Council proposing to sneak in further increases ? The April increase was more than the increase in our state pensions.

On a completely different matter - if the Council would like to achieve considerable savings which affect vulnerable people, why is it still dithering to make a decision regarding the future of the Civic Centres, all of which have been losing money for years. Their closure will not affect those in need, or indeed huge numbers of Bury residents.”.

Contact us

If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact our office via the details below.



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