

**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 JANUARY 2026**

OUTCOME OF REVIEW OF DAY OPPORTUNITIES & FUTURE COMMISSIONING PLANS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present to Scrutiny the outcome of a review of Day opportunities in Adult Services.

Summary

2. Day opportunities (also known as day services) provide a range of services and activities available to adults with an eligible social care need. They can include social, educational, practical or physical activities, as well as more specialist support such as counselling, physical therapy or help with personal care. Day opportunities meet a range of needs including older people, people with physical disabilities, people with learning disabilities and/or Autism, young adults with SEND preparing for transition to adulthood.
3. Day opportunities play a key role in promoting independence and control in people's lives and are an essential element in the Council's preventative offer. Prevention is referenced in the Council's Market Position and Commissioning Strategy (2024-27) in the tiered care continuum of care from prevention to more specialist support. Day Opportunities assists the Council to discharge its Care Act (2014) duties to "reduce, prevent and delay" the development to more acute care and support needs.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members: -
 - (a) Consider the outcome of the Council's review of Day Opportunities
 - (b) Note the next steps for development.

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Background Papers: Healthwatch Engagement Report

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Council Plan	This work contributes to the priorities agreed in the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	There are no implications arising from this report.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Key aims with Adult Services is to deliver efficient, effective and person-centred care which supports a strength-based approach aligned to the requirements of the Care Act and includes effective use of resources,
Health and Wellbeing	This work supports the priorities set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report.
Wards Affected	All wards.
Groups Affected	All groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The purpose of this review is to consider how the Council can continue to meet assessed eligible need in the most efficient and cost-effective way that promotes independence, social inclusion and positive outcomes for individuals and carers. The aim is to put forward recommendations on future options for the delivery of day opportunity services in Darlington informed by determining:
 - (a) If the Day opportunities offer for Darlington residents meets assessed eligible needs both now and in the (forecasted) future.
 - (b) The current balance between building based and community-based services.
 - (c) The future role of in-house services in providing day opportunities.
 - (d) If commissioned Day Opps Services meet assessed eligible needs now and in the (forecasted) future.
 - (e) If we could further maximise Direct Payments or self-directed support.

- (f) If other funding models could be used i.e. Individual Support Funds.
- (g) Value for Money Opportunities with no future MTFP pressures.

Outcome of Consultation

- 6. The review has indicated there are inter-connected tasks and priorities covering short and longer-term options for in-house provision, external commissioned day services; other community daytime opportunities; education and skills opportunities; training and work opportunities/supported employment; and social enterprise development opportunities.
- 7. The outcome of the review identified a strong case for change and the requirement for a co-produced Darlington Strategy for day opportunities which builds on Healthwatch's Engagement Project. The implementation of this strategy and associated recommendations would need to be incorporated in the Adult Services Transformation which has been accepted by the People Group.

Commissioned Services & In House Services

- 8. One of the key areas that the Strategy would need to address is the interrelationship between any future reconfiguration of in-house services to future commissioning intentions. For example, in-house services could be reconfigured to meet complex eligible need for people with comorbidities and physical disabilities thereby offsetting the requirement for relatively more expensive out of area day opportunities.
- 9. The People Group's expenditure on "off contract" spot purchasing day opportunities in 24/25 was £820, 011; **£389,395** was spent on 26 placements off framework within Darlington (an average unit cost from £190 to £1,090 day per person per day) and **£430,616** was spent on 23 OOA placements (an average unit cost of £98.00 per person per day).
- 10. In 2024/25, a further **£102,443** was paid to two VCSE contracted providers who supported 29 people.
- 11. The review identified that the in-house services were operating at 80% of their capacity (i.e. Capacity 92 with an occupancy of 74). Average costs range from £95.34 per day (Community Arts Project) to £194.44 per day (Foundations).

Re-tendering of Day Opportunities

- 12. The Day Opportunities framework must be re-tendered by 1.4.27 under procurement regulations and no further extensions are allowed. An indicative timetable requires an agreed model and specification to be completed by March 2026. Consequently, the Day Opportunities Strategy is required to be completed by this date in order to inform the new specification.

Building based services and Community Offer

13. The review has recognised that the day opportunities provision is traditional and has remained unchanged, being predominantly building based. It does need to make the transition to a more flexible and person-centred model aligned with the strength-based practice and ethos in the People group. The Day Opportunities Strategy will provide the scope for determining whether the current eligible cohort is correctly placed (including exploring whether out of area placements can be returned to Darlington based provision including in-house services). A review of the community offer, as set out in the LivingWell Directory. In addition, forecasting future demand for community-based services and building based services and the appropriate pathway.

Next Steps for Development

14. Several recommendations have been agreed by the People Group regarding day opportunities which will form part of the Adult Services Transformation Programme and includes the future model of day opportunities commissioned arrangements:
 - (a) The development of a day opportunities strategy to determine the level of need and inform future commissioning intentions.
 - (b) A revised service delivery model for in house services and future commissioning intentions.
 - (c) Investigate the potential to remodel the in-house day opportunity service delivery model.
 - (d) Agree and implement Commissioning and Procurement arrangements for external day opportunities services.
 - (e) Review current charging arrangements for day opportunity placements.
 - (f) Review high-cost placements in Darlington and out of area.
 - (g) Review the transport policy/strategy.
 - (h) Review the function of the Brokerage Team to support day opportunity placement arrangements.