

Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service

Subject: Update on Consultation with Service Users on Learning Disability Day Services

Date: 6th March 2012

Background: Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service (LAAS) provides access to independent advocacy services for people with learning disabilities in West Dunbartonshire. The service also facilitates a range of collective advocacy forums, aimed at ensuring the views of people with learning disabilities are taken into account in relation to the planning, delivery and development of the services they use, including day services.

LAAS has been closely involved in consultations with service users directly affected by changes in day service provision resulting from the closure of the Auchentoshan Centre in Clydebank.

Consultation Feedback: During 2011 LAAS facilitated a number of consultation events involving people with learning disabilities to seek feedback on their experiences of day service provision. A total of 42 service users participated in focus groups, augmented by less formal discussion with individual service users. The majority of people directly affected by the closure of the Auchentoshan Centre have participated in these events.

Over the course of 2011, people were asked to consider how the day service they currently receive compares with the service they received five years ago. 74% of people said that they felt the service they currently receive is “better” than that they received five years ago. 12% of people felt it was “about the same”. Only 2% of people described the service as “worse” and 12% of people were “unsure” or “didn’t know”.

People were asked how they rated their day service in relation to a range of key outcomes, earlier identified by service users as priorities. These included things like: feeling safe; promoting independence; maintaining friendships; doing something worthwhile and learning new skills. Feedback was generally positive (with people rating their service “ok”, “good” or “excellent” in relation to 12 of the 13 outcomes identified). Only in relation to “accessing a job or college”, was feedback negative (with 56% of people rating their service as “poor”).

People were also asked about their priorities for day services. “Feeling safe”; “flexibility (including evening and weekend support)” and “good relationships” rated most highly. People were specifically asked for their views on “the location of their day service”. Only 7% of people felt the location of their service was “very important” to them, 22% felt it was “quite important”, while 71% of people felt the location of their day service was “not important” to them.

In late 2011 LAAS were asked, at short notice, to seek the views of service users on a proposal to develop a “learning disability campus” at Skypoint in Faifely. A consultation event was arranged and service users notified by letter. LAAS noted that the response to the event was lukewarm, suggesting an element of “consultation fatigue”. The planned event, however, had to be abandoned due to severe weather and flooding, which led to the closure of the venue. During December 2011 and January 2012 LAAS sought the views of service users on the Skypoint proposal via existing service user forums and networks. Advocates found little support for the proposal among service users, including those who had previously attended the Auchentoshan Centre, with a majority expressing the view that investment in existing services was more important to them. Several service users expressed concerns about the disruption which further changes in day service provision might cause, most notably in relation to established friendships and relationships. Reservations were also expressed about the location of the proposed Clydebank campus. Feed back, including direct quotes from service users, was reported to the Auchentoshan Steering Group in early February 2012, which informed a report from the Steering Group to West Dunbartonshire Council.

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