

## Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015**

Agenda item:

Wards: ALL

### **Subject: The Use of Volunteers in Merton Day Centres**

Lead officer: Andy Ottaway-Searle

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People overview and scrutiny panel.

Forward Plan reference number:

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. For Members to note the report on progress in recruiting volunteers.
  - B.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The report is to update the Committee on the use of volunteers in Day Centres for people with disabilities provided by Merton. As part of savings agreed in 2014 from April 2015 Merton planned to reduce some permanent staff in day centres. It was proposed that the increased use of volunteers would mitigate some loss of choice of activities available to customers.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. As part of the Adult Social Care savings programme for 2015/16 staff savings were required across the department, including in Direct Provision. It was agreed that as well as changing the management structure it would be necessary to reduce a number of front line posts. The proposal would mean that day services continued to provide a safe and secure day time respite for carers but inevitably the range of activities on offer would reduce. It was felt that recruiting volunteers to help with activities in the centres would mitigate some of this effect.
- 2.2. As at September 2015 we have six people volunteering on a regular basis across the three centres. In addition we have four students starting work experience placements, and a Music Therapy student due to start an extended placement in October. Active recruitment alongside MVSC and Merton Mencap is continuing, but there appears to be a limited number of people available to assist in day time settings. Both of these groups report that demand for volunteers generally is exceeding supply at this time.

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## **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. As noted we are continuing to work with partners to recruit more volunteers and are considering alternative means of advertising such as using NHS noticeboards. Our recruitment process is necessarily strict and we require strong references and DBS clearance to allow volunteers to work with our vulnerable customers, so we need to continue to use agreed methods which potentially limits the number of volunteers available. We understand that day time hours can be an obstacle to some people who would volunteer their services, but this needs to be explored further. Our Libraries Service has successfully recruited many volunteers so managers will work with colleagues from that service to apply their methods.
- 3.2. Further work will also be done to ensure that potential volunteers are made aware of the opportunities on offer in day services. We recognise that most people do not have experience of these settings so would not think to offer their time, or might feel that they would not have the right skills to help out.
- 3.3. In terms of impact in day centres, staff are changing timetables so that although there are more large group activities, all customers have guaranteed small group time carrying out their chosen activities. We are reshaping how staff are deployed to focus on how customers receive personal care in order to free up other staff to run sessions. The main effect has been a reduction in small groups attending activities in the community.
- 3.4. Working with local colleges has been a good source of bringing in people to help run activities, and which provides the students with valuable experience in this field. Recently we have established an agreement with NESOT and are taking two students from there in the near future. We have recruited two apprentices who spend four days per week in two centres, and this has also been helpful.

#### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. The proposals on day services were part of the wider Adult Social Care consultation which took place in December 2014 and January this year. Carers are kept updated via a range of meetings including Adults First and the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

#### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. This activity is already in place, and will continue to be part of our Day Services offer.

#### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There is no direct cost although we will pay for DBS checks to be carried out, and provide supervision and support to all volunteers.

#### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None

#### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. None

#### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. None

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. All volunteers are subject to DBS checks and need to provide references. Managers of the services carry out any necessary Health and Safety induction.

**11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- None

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None

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