

## **Consultation activity**

The public consultation on SBC's Provider Services was launched on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and closed on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021. There were three surveys made available:

- one for parents and carers of people who access services
- one for individuals that access the services themselves (in Easy Read format)
- one for Providers/Support Services (either SBC or other external organisations)

Questions were worded slightly different for each group but sought to understand what was important about the services that people access? what had been the impact of Covid-19? and how could services potentially be delivered differently?.

To support the survey 4 focus group sessions were organised. These were held over Zoom to reduce the need for travel, to take less time out of people's days as we are aware many families and carers work and also to minimise contact for those people concerned about Covid-19. The sessions were organised on the following dates.

- 28<sup>th</sup> July for parents and carers of people who access services
- 3<sup>rd</sup> August for people who access Respond
- 4<sup>th</sup> August for people who access Day Services
- 6<sup>th</sup> August for people who access Day Services

All sessions were attended by a representative from Slough Advocacy so that additional support could be offered both during the session and afterwards, should people need it.

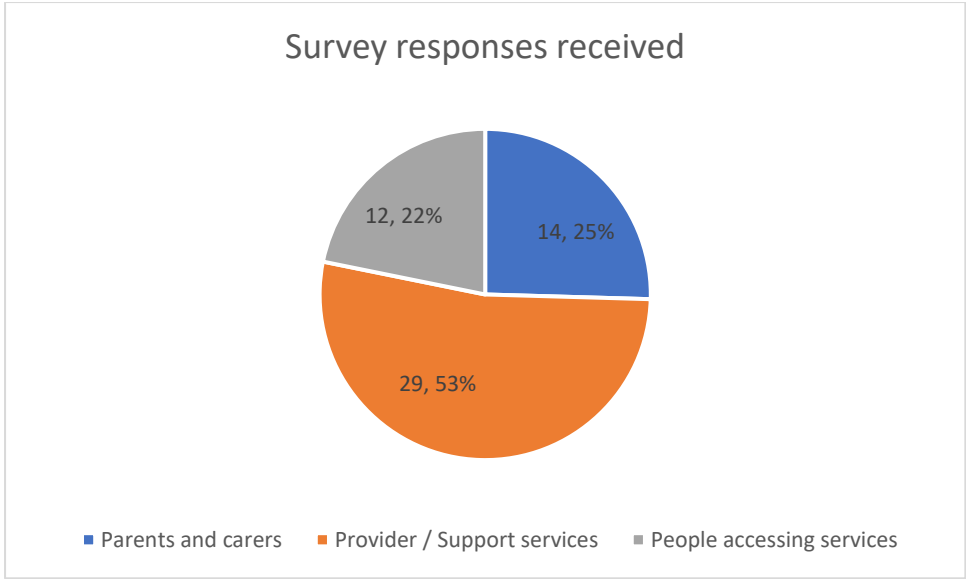
To ensure that as many people engaged with the consultation as possible a number of activities took place:

- An electronic version of the survey was made available on SBCs website
- People who access SBCs provider services were sent a letter to advise them of the consultation as well as a paper copy of the survey
- Telephone calls were made to people who access Provider Services to check that they had received the letter, the survey and they were also given the opportunity to feedback directly over the phone and / or to book on to a focus group session
- Follow up phone calls were made to those people we had not been able to speak with during the initial call

## **Survey Responses**

In total 55 responses were received to the online survey, no paper copies were received. 25% of responses were from parents and carers, 22% from people who access services and 53% from Providers / Support services.

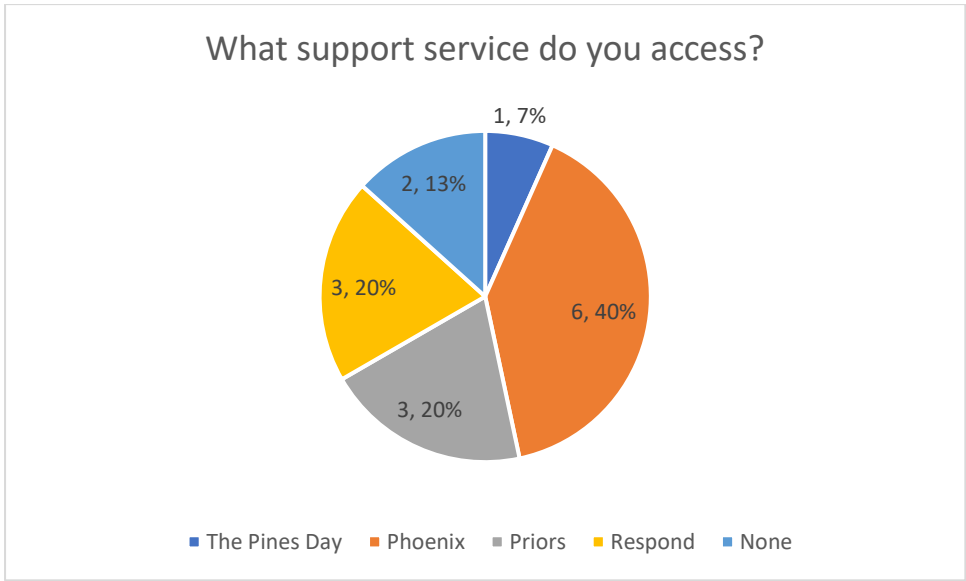
### Survey responses received



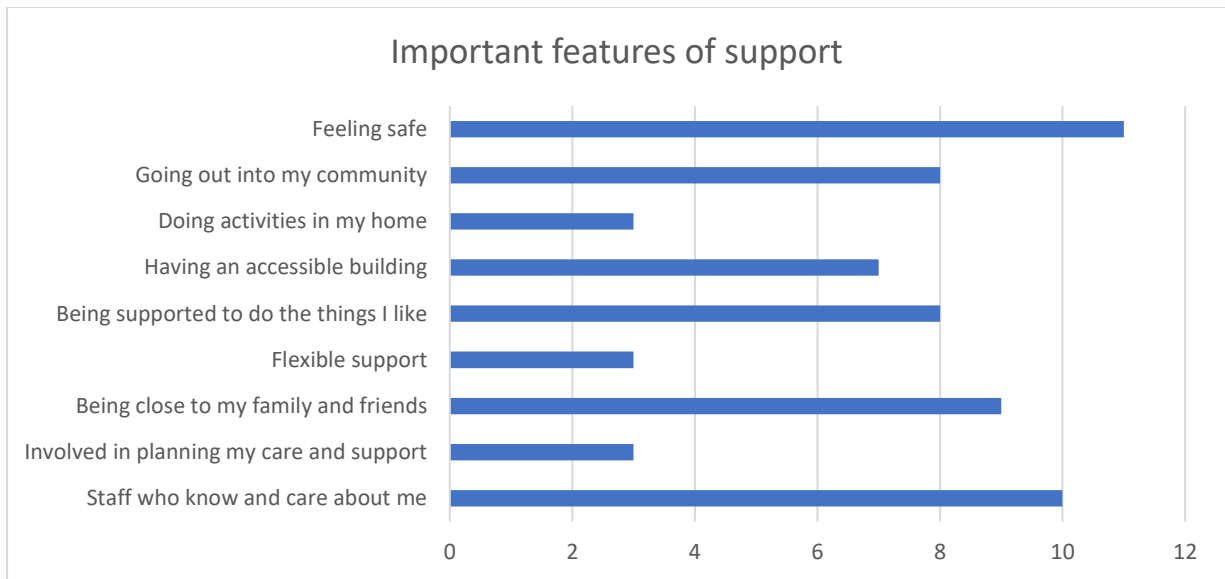
### Survey responses - Individuals who access services

Of the 12 people who accessed services, 40% attended the Phoenix Day Centre, 20% attended Priors Day Centre, 20% accessed Respond, 7% accessed the Pines and 13% accessed none of those listed.

### What support service do you access?



People were asked to choose 5 things that are most important to them about the care support they receive. The top 3 identified were *feeling safe* with 11 votes, *staff who know and care about me* with 10 votes and *being close to my family and friends* with 9 votes. With the lowest responses (3) received for *‘being involved in planning my care and support’*, *‘having support that is flexible to me’*, and *‘doing activities in my home’*.



When asked what people liked or didn't like about their support and what they would like more support with a number of key themes came through:

- Socialising with friends

*'I enjoy taking part in group activities with my friends'*

- Doing a range of activities, including developing skills and increasing independence

*'Going to phoenix day centre allows me interact with friends who I otherwise would not see. It stimulates me, gives me exercise and helps with my social skills'*

*'I'm bored with the online meetings. The activities are always similar'*

- Having a routine was important and inconsistent support was seen as a negative

*'During pandemic I have PAs, bubbles and online meetings. I like my PAs but they change, which I don't like. I like people in my bubble but it's only 2 hours'*

- Feeling safe

*'.....having great care staff a familiar environment safety and routine'*

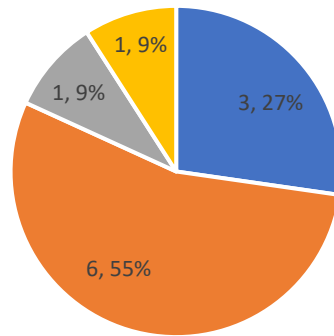
- Returning to services

*'I am supposed to get respite (Respond) once a month but not had any in nearly 3 years so some of that again would be very helpful'*

*'Going to the day centre ASAP so I can see my friends'*

When people were asked about the choice of activities to do during the day 55% reported that there was not much choice, 27% said there was lots of choice, 9% said there was nothing to do and 1% was unsure.

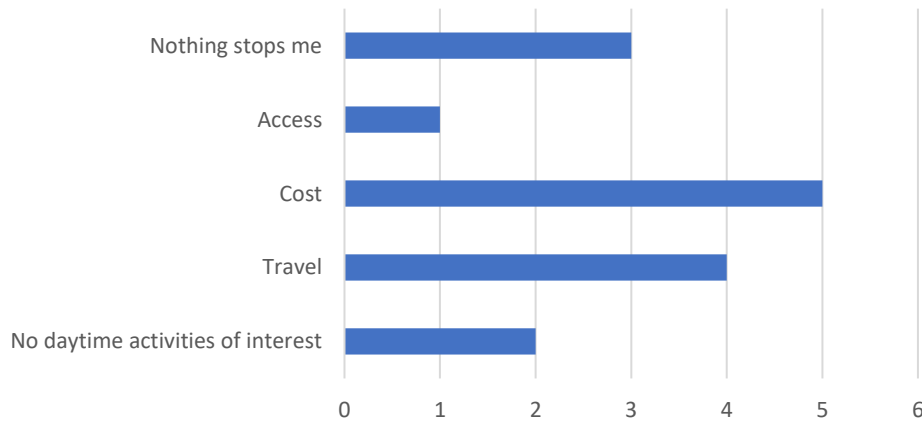
### Are there lots of things to do during the day?



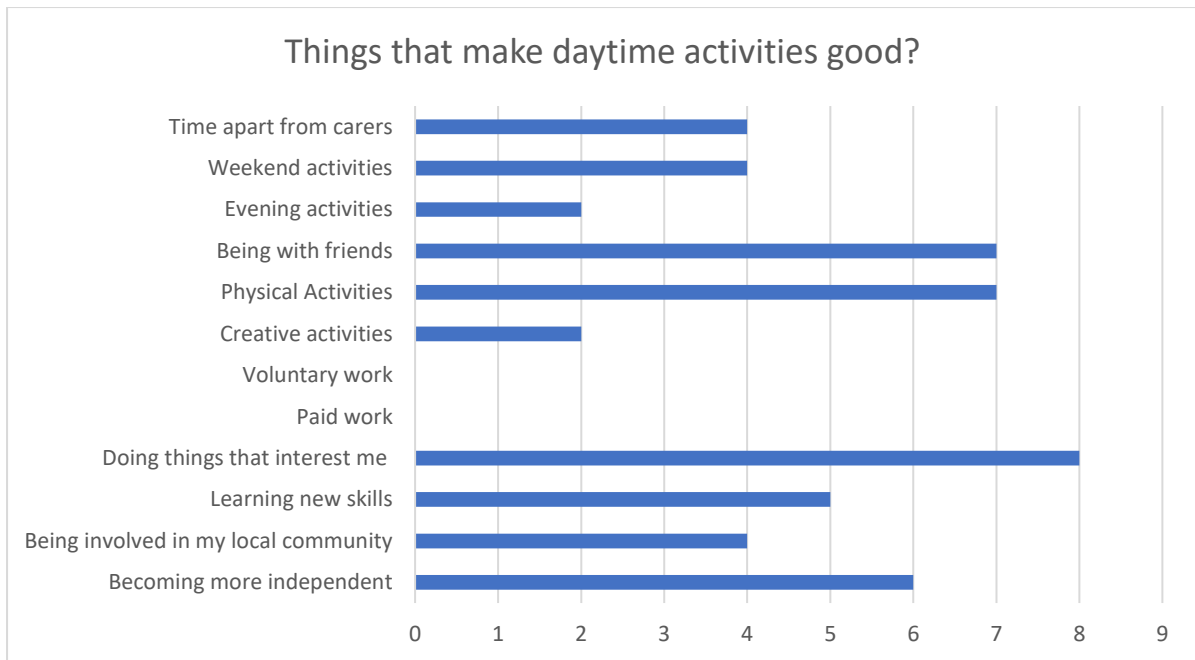
■ Lots of Choice ■ Not much choice ■ Nothing to do ■ Not sure

When asked what stops people from accessing the activities they want to do 13% of people were concerned about cost and 26% were concerned about transport. For those individual's who selected 'other' comments were focussed on the need to have support with them and how this can sometimes limit what they do, *'As my carers are home carers they do not have any idea what to do with my days out. They need to know where the activity are and how to access them'*.

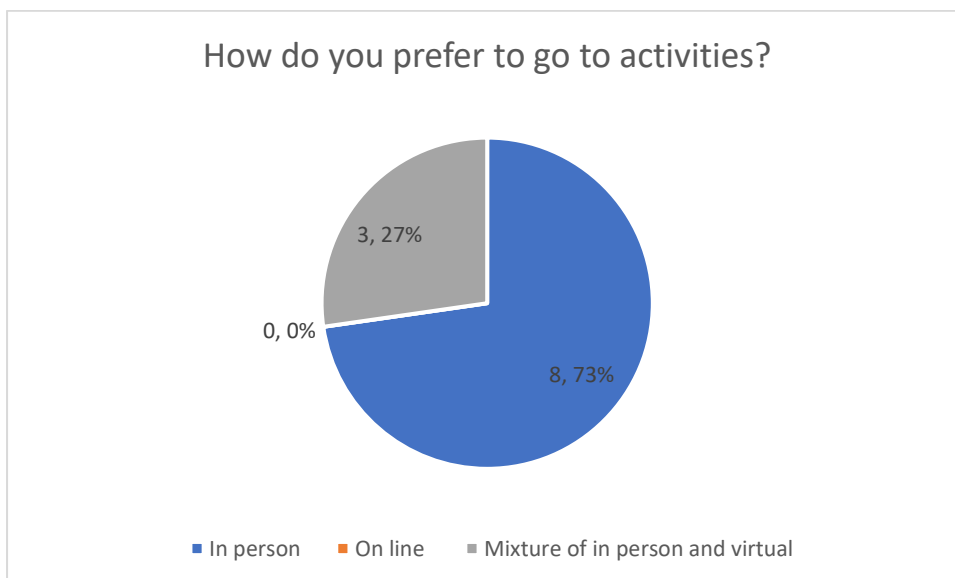
### What stops you from doing the activities you want to do?



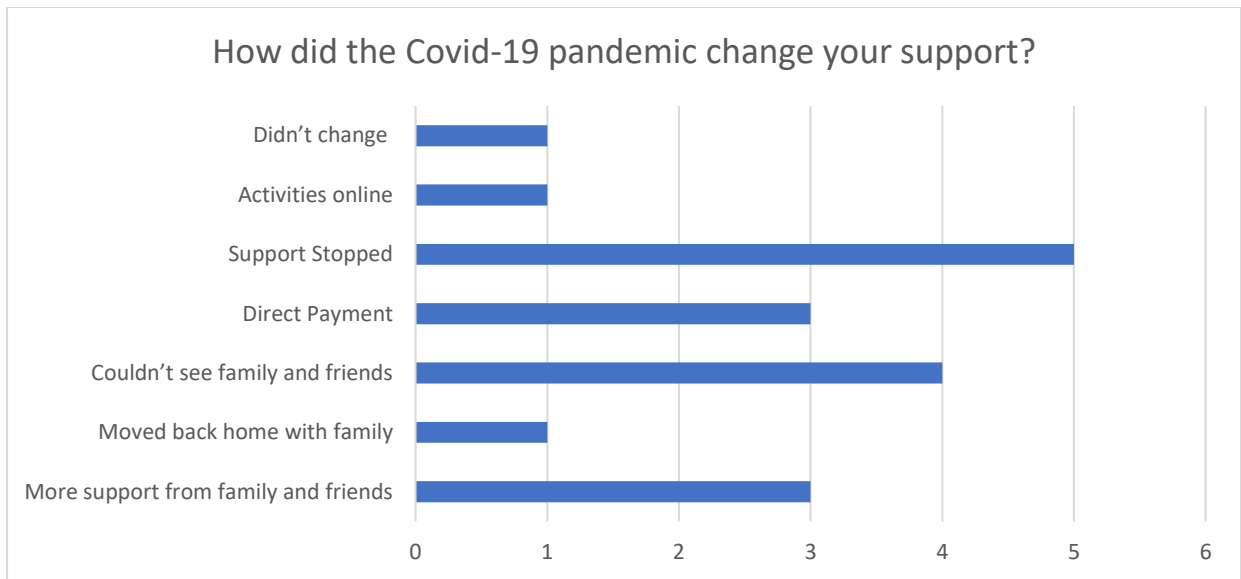
When asked to tick 5 things that make daytime activities good, as with previous comments the top three things picked were *doing things that interest me, being with friends and doing physical activities*. Voluntary work and paid work were not selected by anyone.



The majority of respondents (73%) indicated that they prefer activities that are in person, which corresponds with comments highlighting the importance of being with friends. 27% people responded to say that they would like a mixture of online and face to face.



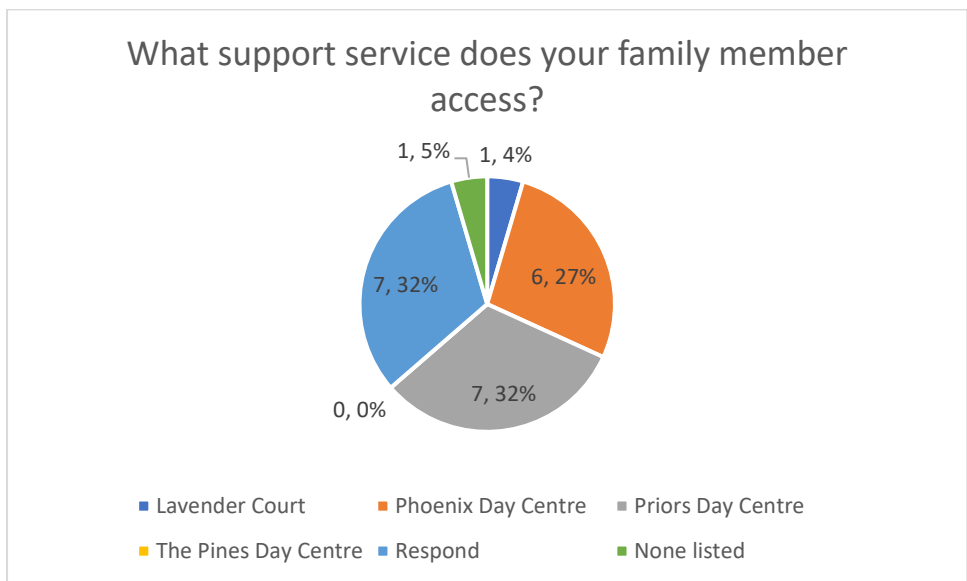
Other free text questions asked, focused on the impact of Covid-19 and how it had changed people's support both for the good and bad. The majority of people (28%) commented that their support had stopped, 22% indicated that they had been unable to see family and friends, 17% had received a Direct Payment and 17% had received more support from family and friends.



People's responses were unanimous in that covid-19 had not improved their support in any way and comments highlighted the negative impact that the changes and loss of routine had had on people's mental health and well-being. For example, *'The routine changes often. The support from bubbles and PAs changes. I feel lonely and isolated staying more time at home. I can't see most of my day centre friends and carers in person. I miss interactions with my friends. I miss my wider family. I miss stable routine of day centre. There are more days I feel anxious and upset'*. People also commented that they would like services to reopen and know what will happen next, *'I would like to know when my day centre opens'*.

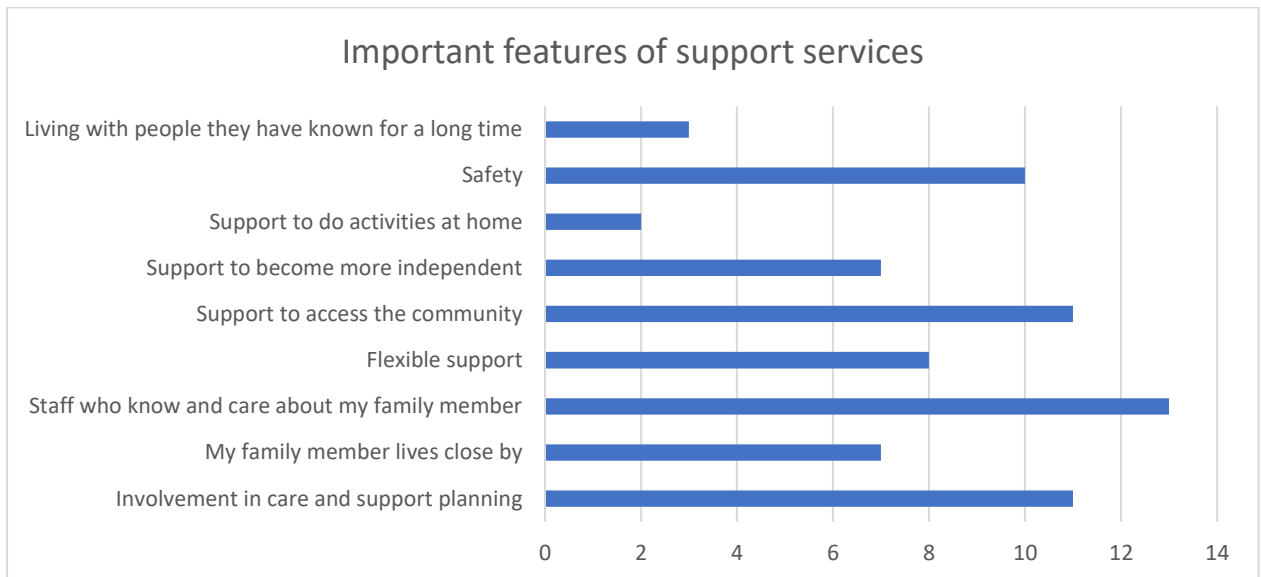
#### Survey responses - Parents and Carers

Of the 14 parents and carers that responded to the survey, 32% of their family members accessed Priors Day Service, 32% Respond, 27% Phoenix Day Centre, 5% Lavender Court and 5% stated none of those listed. There were no responses for the Pines Day Service.

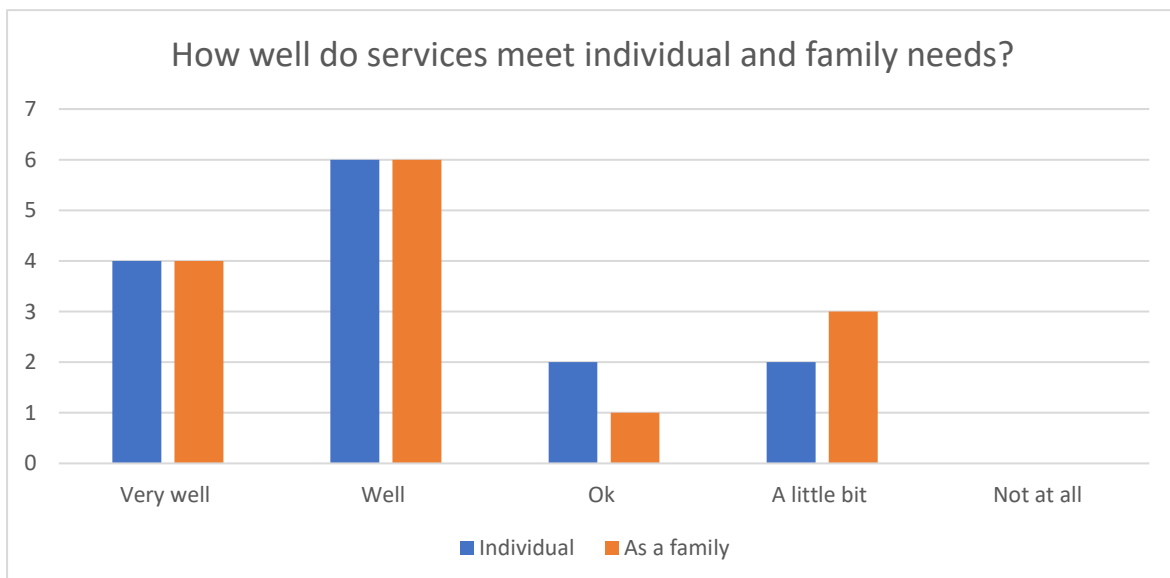


Families and carers were also asked to choose the 5 things that are most important to them about the care and support that their family member receives. The top three identified were *'staff who know and care about my family member'* with 13 votes, *'that my family member is supported to*

*access the community*’ with 11 votes, and *‘being involved in care and support planning for my family member’*, also with 11 votes. *‘That my family member is supported to do activities at home’* received the fewest votes with 2.



When asked about the quality of services and how well the services a) meet the needs of their family member who accesses them and b) meet the needs of their family as a whole. The majority responded well or very well for both.

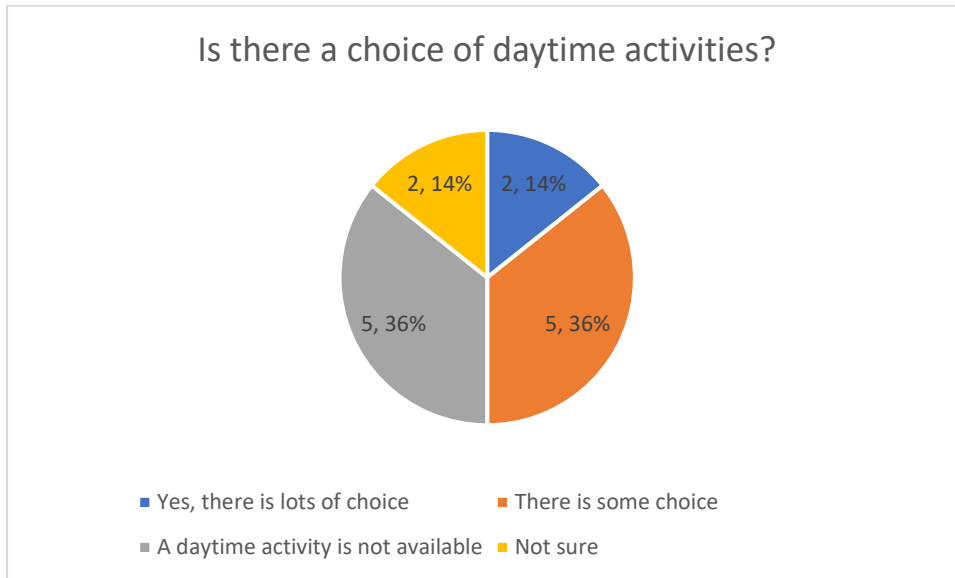


This was supported in the free text comments, that asked parents how services could be changed to provide the right opportunities for their family member and their family as a whole?

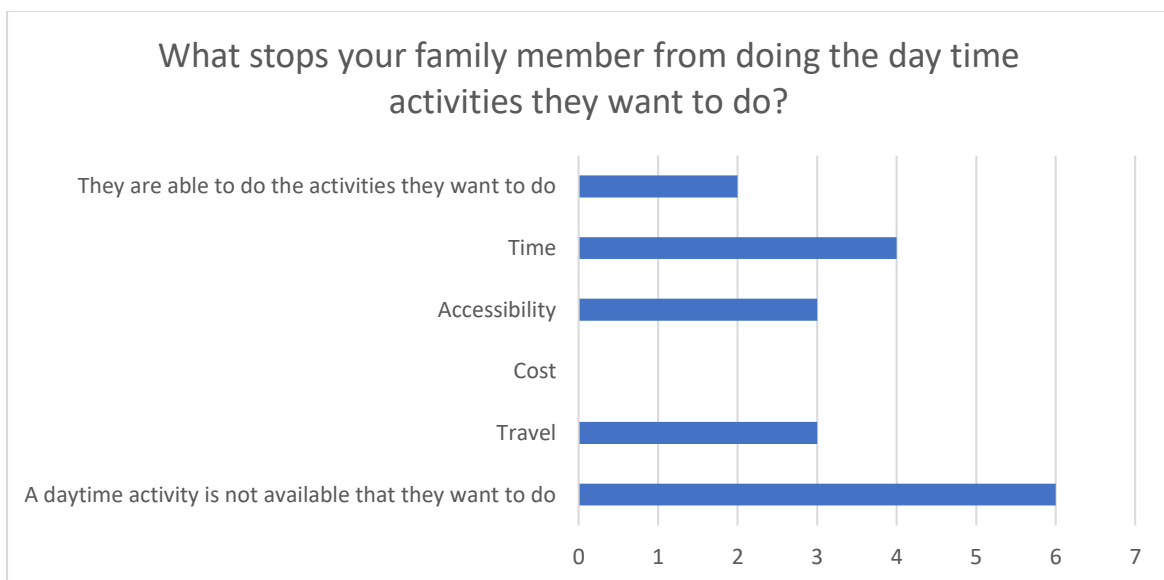
*‘The Phoenix and Respond provided us with reliable, consistent, predictable care and support. This was the best care package in terms of meeting their and our family needs’*

*‘The day service that was used by my family member is very vital for the social integration with their friends. Also when they are at the centre we as a family get a break. Even a few hrs means a lot.’*

Parents and carers were asked to comment on what their family member does during the day and if there was a choice of day time activities. 36% felt there is some choice and 36% said a daytime activity is not available. 14% responded that there was lots of choice. This demonstrated an inconsistency of awareness of services and activities available in the local area, similar to the responses from people who access services themselves



When asked what prevents their family member from doing the day time activities they want to do. The majority of responses (33%) said that an activity was not available, 22% commented that activities were not available at a time that suited them, and 17% responded that accessibility both in terms of the building and transport was an issue.



For those parents and cares that responded 'other' use of PAs was mentioned but it was highlighted that they cannot always support people to do the things they want to do or support activities with friends. *'Access to day centre where our family member can take part in activity with their friend (as oppose to be taken alone with PA).,Some PAs cannot swim, some other cannot drive, which makes access to the community activities limited or impossible'*. In relation to Lavender Court specifically, the requirement of additional staff was commented, as additional support is required to facilitate access the community and to take part in activities.



Other questions asked of parents and carers focused on the impact of covid-19 and the availability of services. The key themes that came through the responses received were:

- Services have stopped, placing additional pressure on families

*‘Caring for family member 24/7. No break at all. No where to go. No public services open. No support given. Only service is emergency respite but all the way in reading, which is not local at all’*

- Respite and day services were closed prior to covid-19 and families have been without a suitable alternative for a long period of time which is also increasing pressure on families

*‘Short breaks are an absolute lifeline for families of young adults with learning disabilities’*

- Family members who access services have lost the opportunity to socialise with friends and engage in activities

*‘My family member has learning difficulties. Staying home so much is very lonely. They are losing their socialising skills that a group setting gives’*

- Parents and carers want services to re-open and better communication about next steps

*‘Local services to reopen Clear communication with dates. Everytime you speak to someone it’s different. A newsletter’*

- There are not enough alternative services to access, covid Bubbles provided some respite but were not always appropriate or reliable and PAs are not an adequate solution

*‘Not all places in Slough have hoist changing facilities. Where can people with disabilities safely socialise with their peers on a regular basis and access a range of activities.’*

*‘The alternative of bubbles are inherently unpredictable and insufficient. They are often late and cancelled at short notice. They often last only about 2 hours at a time. All this doesn’t allow us to plan around them’*

*‘The PA can never assure this level of support the day centres offer. There is very little scope to change the PA system to achieve comparable level of reliability, stability and diversity of activities provided by day centres.’*

### **Focus Group Feedback - Summary of themes**

All focus group sessions had people sign up to attend apart from the session on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August which was aimed at people who accessed Respond. On the day, less people than anticipated joined in the sessions, however, there was often more than one person from each family and individuals who accessed services were either represented or accompanied by a family member.

Focus Group Session	Parents & Carers (28 <sup>th</sup> July)	People accessing Respond (3 <sup>rd</sup> August)	People accessing Day Services (4 <sup>th</sup> August)	People accessing g Day Services (4 <sup>th</sup> August)
No. of people signed up	10	0	11	10
No. of attendees	5	0	6	7

As with the survey the focus group sessions considered what was important for people and what had been both the negative and positive impacts of Covid-19. People engaged fully in the sessions and provided valuable feedback that gives a greater depth of understanding and support for many of the

points raised in the written survey. Following the session, the information gathered was sorted into key themes in response to the questions asked:

## **1. What is important for the people using these services?**

### **Theme A - Structure:**

- Having somewhere to go, out of the house with a structure, purpose, and routine.
- Familiarity and trust with activity, location, and people.
- Reliability to allow carers to have a routine too and work – this is critical.
- Easy to access wraparound support (transport)
- Adults want to do things independently, in a safe environment.
- Safe, secure and accessible (facilities and all-weather)

### **Theme B - Activities:**

- Social Interaction and face-to-face contact.
- Spending time with peers of similar abilities.
- Variety of activities, matched to individual ability to build self-esteem and confidence.
- Physical activities/Exercise to help with weight management.
- Stimulation & relaxation

### **Theme C - Support Network:**

- Interacting with friends and carers, building relationships.
- Qualified, approachable staff with experience.
- Parent/carer support network. “Knowing that you’re not alone, and seeing other families, is invaluable.”
- Parents / Carers worked on things with staff and achieved things together – good, steady progress.
- Great source of information for more than just the care.
- Opportunity for carers to recharge batteries, otherwise they feel drained.

## **2. During COVID, what did you miss?**

- Huge impact on mental health due to lack of routine and stimulation, missing friends and staff, and being isolated at home.
- Also, physical health impact mentioned by quite a few people in terms of lack of exercise, weight gain and other weight-related health issues.
- Communication was poor. Lack of contact from Council or support services was mentioned in 2 groups and carers felt abandoned, alone and forgotten.
- Hard to explain to someone with learning disabilities what is happening when the routine goes. Social interaction out of the home, in a familiar friendship group was very much missed by all.

- Key point that COVID was not an opportunity for new experiences. Carers, and people accessing services previously, just coped...this was not a positive experience for most.
- Bubbles were not consistent, long or regular enough for people's reliance on routines, including to support parent/carer working arrangements, or to be able to plan around them.
- Online sessions ok for some for socialising, "would send parents out the room for her own time with friends!".
- Bubble activities were outside so; weather/transport/carer reliant and didn't always feel it was safe.
- Huge issues with toileting on a day out and for safety, in terms of mobility.

### **3. What is it people enjoy and want to do?**

- Sports (Ball games, Trampolining, Horse riding)
- Arts and crafts
- Games (Bingo, Snooker, Darts)
- Gardening and planting things
- Photography
- Group outings (Bowling, Picnic, Shopping, Garden centre visit)
- Life skills – Using the computer, learning to make tea and sandwiches
- Dance, Music, Singing, Sensory sessions
- Massage
- Socialising with other people
- Full day out with lunch and tea, return at the end of a full day, happy.
- "My son's happiness is interacting with other people of same abilities".

### **Views on Direct Payments / PAs**

- Limited faith as knowledge is so limited and 'finding right person is a job in itself'. Perception that you don't get the same level of care from agencies.
- "Come into our world and see what it's like. No good giving us the money, we don't know where to find options and or have time or energy or health left to find it."
- Very few examples where family found it quite helpful as had same carers for years and they are more flexible and can work together. Depends on the relationship with carers. It does give more flexibility and has worked quite well. Continuity of the carer is important. Can work for some people, everybody is different.
- Not enough info available on this, to encourage the usage or expanding the options and particularly around non-home-based care options.

- Some tried but had poor applicants and couldn't get assurances on reliability, safeguarding, personal security and safety.
- Consistency of care is less, so behaviour can deteriorate, and it is really hard for parents with jobs.
- Confusion over impact on benefits and if you can't find the help, you lose the money.
- Value for Money is questioned.

Other feedback captured, that was recurring in each session was also grouped in to themes:

**Communication:**

- Communication over the last 18 months has been perceived as very poor.
- It is not understood why the centres have not re-opened if they are covid-friendly or why no reasonable alternative is offered now?
- An explanation of what is happening, and the options is needed in simple terms. Not the inconsistent message from various points of contact and lots of rumours creating uncertainty and anxiety.
- People want to work collaboratively to work out a sustainable solution. "This has been coming for longer than covid in Slough".
- People need to understand what SBC's plan is, so they can make their own plans.
- Very vulnerable people in the community don't feel they have a voice.

**Financial Position**

- "Where is the financial accountability from SBC?" "Why refurbishing the centres to close them?"
- "The Council needs to stop spending money on roads, houses, etc and taking facilities from the vulnerable people with no voice to pay for it." Why is this a business decision to economise, over prioritising a vulnerable person's needs?
- How is this efficient long term when it will create bigger issues further down the line for more complex care for the vulnerable, caring for elderly carers, people having to give up work, etc?

**Alternative Options:**

- People's needs may have changed considerably over the past 18months, how do we know what's available to support these new needs, both now and in the future?
- What the alternatives the Council Leader suggested in his letter to the family who raised the petition?
- What does 'in the community' mean?
- What if the alternatives don't cater for your needs?

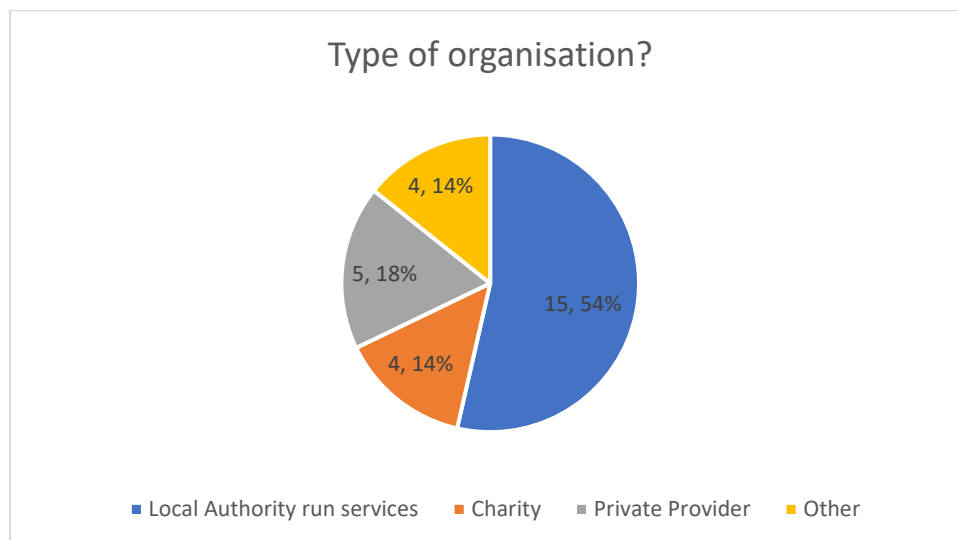
**Welfare:**

- Where is the equality consideration when closing the centres increases inequality for vulnerable people?

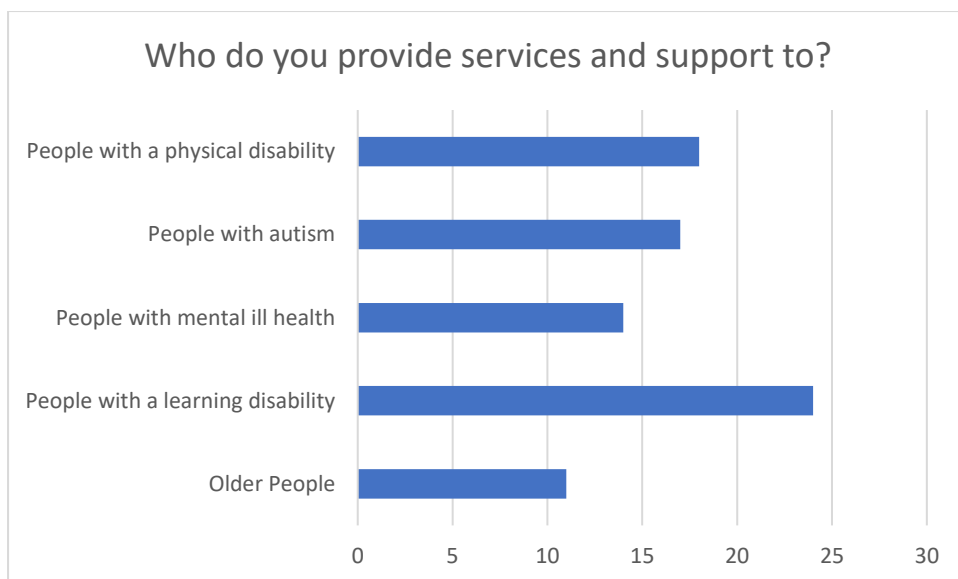
- How are the mental health needs of these vulnerable adults being considered and understood? You are compromising their quality of life.
- The places in the day centres were given based on people’s assessments so you should open the day centres and give them what they need.
- What happens if a carer can’t help if they have their health issues? There is no supporting infrastructure.
- What help and support is there for carers, mentally, physically, and financially?
- “Respite care is impossible to get now so we only have the day centre. If the Council take that away, we have nothing.”

**Survey responses - Provider / Support Services**

Of the 29 responses received from provider / support services, 54% were from Local Authority ran services, 18% were private sector providers, 14% were from a charity and a further 14% were classed as ‘other’ which included the NHS.



When asked who they provide support and services to, the majority of responses were for people with learning disabilities, however, from the supporting comments it was clear to see that many of the support services that responded provide support across a range of client groups.



The types of support that were described in the free text included supported living, residential and nursing care, emergency respite, homework, employment service for adults with disabilities and day centres. The support provided to access activities included activities coming in to settings and supporting people to go out into the community and the opportunities described included arts and crafts, music, horse riding and developing life skills and reflected the offer that SBC Day Centres provided pre-lockdown.

As with the surveys for parents and carers and people who access services, a number of questions were asked in relation to the impact of Covid-19 both positive and negative and how services could be changed, to provide the right opportunities for the people they support. From the free text responses a number of themes were identified. The negatives included:

- The impact of Covid-19 on the health and wellbeing of staff, service users and families

*'The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic affected many service users, their families were concerned about the reduction or removal of support since the beginning of lockdown; amongst people with learning disabilities increased social isolation was reported. This was compounded by digital exclusion, and the mental health impact this is having on people with learning/intellectual disabilities. Emerging evidence of the impact on staff mental wellbeing led to staff feeling tense and uneasy or worried'*

- The reduction in opportunities and limited resources in Slough

*'The day centre being closed has provided no positives for the people I support, there are no activities and facilities in the community for the people I support who have profound disabilities and very little for the more able people.'*

*'The lack or limited availability of community services (including face to face lunch clubs, day centre and other regular and structured activities for individuals and groups) has had a huge impact on their physical and psychological/mental, well-being as well as on their family carers' well-being (with increased experience of stress and distress)'*

- The shift to on-line

*'virtual sessions are not accessible for all as some people do not have the necessary equipment to be able to join in. They are also very difficult to maintain engagement in the session. You need to have a*

*family member available to set up the session but to also remain present so they can help encourage the engagement throughout'*

- The challenges to adapting services and the importance of a building base

*'We do not have enough buses for everyone and not all staff can drive the larger minibuses. Community sessions have been limited due to weather. Throughout the pandemic we were not allowed to go indoors, so our only options were parks which is not ideal in the rain. Moving forward I don't feel that there enough places in Slough that are suitable for adults with disabilities. Building based day services really is the best way forward.'*

The positives included:

- Engaging people online who wouldn't usually use technology

*'Older Adults have shown us that they can learn about and engage with digital solutions, often with kind input from their Carers/Family Members'.*

Suggested changes and alternative offers included:

- Reopen services and / or ensure that services are available for people who need them

*'To reopen day services to allow us to continue to provide a service for vulnerable adults'*

*'Provide more outreach work, provide 1:1 support for the elderly, provide social settings for the vulnerable to attend like day centres and lunch clubs'*

- Utilise existing SBC resources for the wider community, income generation as well as expanding the current offer

*'Maybe the (SBC) building could be opened up more as a community facility, with the rooms being rented out. It would be a tragedy and a crime if such a fantastic building is not used. Time and a lot of money has been spent on this project, it needs to be used and treasured'*

*'.....Opportunities for volunteering, training within the Day Service need to be more explored...'*

- Ensure that changes are underpinned by a person centred approach and based on individuals needs

*'Person Centred Planning needs to be at the very centre of the service and consequently and consistently be the basis for all planning and actions'*

*'Many need to be re-assessed as their conditions deteriorated eg mobility, personal care support etc'*

- Have virtual and face to face options but be aware of those without online access

*'Virtual activities have been a real lifeline, as have more virtual/techology focused support. We do not believe this should or would ever replace face-to-face contact but a blended approach actually provides more engagement opportunities for those supported'*

- Better communication with people affected

*'....clients, families and carers need to have a clarity of the situation and to be able to make an informed choice based on true and realistic facts'*

A number of Providers also provided their organisational details:

- Grin Care Services
- Apple Hill
- The Riders
- Proactive Life South
- Kharis Solutions
- Beecholme
- Clean Conscience

Berkshire College of Agriculture was also referenced as an alternative solution identified during the pandemic.