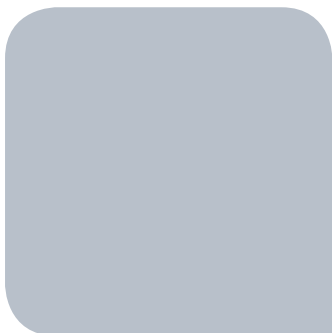
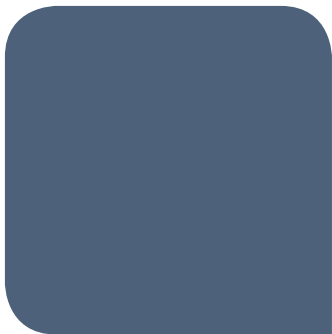


Having a good day? A study of community-based day activities for people with learning disabilities: A summary



Having a good day? A study of community-based day activities for people with learning disabilities

Introduction

The 'Having a Good Day' study was about services and support for people with learning disabilities to do things 'during the day'. This includes what people do at weekends and in the evenings.

The study was about what people are doing in ordinary community places. In the past, most people had a 'day service' and went to a day centre, but now many don't use day centres. Services are supporting them in:

- workplaces
- education classes and colleges
- sports and leisure centres
- local community centres
- around local villages and towns.

The government wants this change to happen. It talked about day services 'modernising' in Valuing People (2001).

The study was about how things have changed:

- what services are doing to help people to 'have a good day' using ordinary community places
- what services are finding hard, and the support they need.

It looked at what services are doing to help all people with learning disabilities, including people from black and ethnic minority communities, people with complex needs, and people whose behaviour is challenging.

Having a good day

Having a good day is about:

- doing things that have a purpose
- being in ordinary places, doing things that most members of the community would be doing
- doing things that are right for you
- receiving support that meets your needs
- being in touch with local people, meeting people and developing friendships.

What was found

Community-based services are changing and developing as they learn from doing. Many local councils are finding it hard to 'modernise' day services and replace day centres with community-based services. Things like the wealth of the local area, local politics, and

the make-up of the population effect local developments. There are more people with learning disabilities needing support and councils are finding it difficult to meet the demand.

More research is needed

There has been quite a lot of research about employment support, but not much about community-based day activities. Research is needed into community-based support.

Things that help, and some difficulties...

Partnerships are developing:

- people with learning disabilities and family carers are on management groups and advisory groups
- 'circles of support' (or planning circles) are getting people more involved, though it is not happening very widely yet.

Self-advocacy groups are leading some successful projects to improve people's social life and provide local information about what's going on – but many have short-term funding.

Some parents have started new services or organised direct payments and support for their sons and daughters. The concerns of parents have helped to shape community-based services. Some plans have been blocked and changed. Talking with families needs to be given time.

Leadership

Leadership can be seen through:

- the effect of Valuing People. Services seem clear about what they are aiming to help people achieve
- the work of local self-advocacy groups in organising social activities
- individuals who are determined to achieve community inclusion.

Leaders of council learning disability services do not always have the power to make decisions. This can be a difficulty. The way services are changed and developed in an area reflect local resources and political priorities.

Much more could be happening to develop people with learning disabilities and families as leaders.

Changing what people think and do

This is being achieved by:

- training staff in person-centred approaches
- services 'thinking like a business'
- people *experiencing* good community-based activities
- more focus on social businesses and self-employment

Most new community-based services have 'a base'. Many share their base(s) with others. There is a danger that these bases will become mini day centres. More services need to plan what they will do to make sure it doesn't happen.

There are some services especially for people from black and minority ethnic groups but general services don't seem to be including people better.

Services are not always as good as people say they are. Services need to be evaluated to make sure that people really are getting as good as people say.

Planning well with people

In practice:

- people in community-based services are talking about person-centred approaches and an 'ordinary life'
- people who have person-centred plans are changing the things they do, often with direct payments and family involvement. But, not many people have full person-centred plans
- supported employment schemes are very person-centred and are getting results for people
- some people are getting over travelling problems by using 'mobility' benefits to buy cars and pay drivers.

People's lives have improved because they are doing things in ordinary community places and the support they are getting is more person-centred.

Controlling the money

Direct payments give people more choice, and more people now have them. Most community-based services get paid a 'block' of money. The money is not linked to individuals: most services cannot say how much the service costs for each person.

There are difficulties:

- managers are finding it hard to move money around so that more people can have money to buy the services they want
- most new community-based developments have not been given any extra money for staff.

Having an overall plan, and making it happen

In practice:

- there is not enough employment support in most areas. Community-based day services need to be clearer about what they will do
- extra money has mainly been used for new community 'bases'. Some have used it to make sure there are good changing facilities in community places

- there needs to be better planning so that the opportunities and support in an area meet everyone's needs
- some services support people at home *and* outside their home. If they use person-centred planning people's lives can really improve. Not many services do this yet: local areas may need to 'grow' them.

Most people with profound and multiple learning disabilities seem to be using small but 'special' services with their own base and equipment. Few employment schemes are serving people with high support needs. They get unequal opportunities. It is a major concern.

Staff development

There are many positive and enthusiastic staff in community-based day and employment services. We can see that:

- many are working in new types of job with new responsibilities, and others are working differently through good will and good team management
- it helps when everyone in the service believes that people have the right to an 'ordinary life'
- more staff are getting training from people with learning disabilities and family carers.

Getting and keeping staff is difficult for services and for people with direct payments. Some services are using agency staff as a deliberate

way of reducing costs. The effect on quality of service is not clear.

Services need to plan what they are going to do to help people with learning disabilities to meet other local people and make friends. Staff need training and then support to put the plans into practice. Staff in community day services should also learn more ways of helping people to develop skills. Staff in supported employment services could help.

Building a welcoming community

Some things are helping:

- developing services and support that's local to where people live
- building partnerships with community organisations. Much of this is happening by chance rather than in a planned way.

Some of the really good work is going on in small projects and employment schemes that have short-term funding. This is a big concern.

Getting support organised so that people can do things in community places, including at college, is one of the biggest problems. Services are finding it especially difficult for people who need high levels of support.

Local staff and services need to talk with each other more and work together better. There is too much competition between services.

Good information

People need good information so that they can make choices. Hearing about other people's experiences, trying things out, and 'what's on' information really help. Some self-advocacy groups are really good at this.

Starting early

Helping young people to find work really helps. There is not enough employment support for young people who are preparing to leave school. A few community-based services are supporting people who find it difficult when they have nothing to do during the day. They cannot get help through social services. More of this support is needed.

The support of politicians

Without this community-based support and services will be slow to develop.

Skilled team management

This is really important in community-based teams. Managers need to make sure that staff focus on what people with learning disabilities want to achieve, support them to do it and monitor how well it is being done.

What's needed?

We need to know how good community-based day services are and whether people being supported are 'having a good day'. What's happening for people from minority ethnic groups, people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, and people who present challenging behaviours? Are they getting the same choices as anyone else? We also need to know more about what's happening in further and adult education services, and about the costs of community-based support.

People working in community-based services want to help people have good community-based lives. They want guidance and information that will help them to do it.

This study was commissioned by Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and undertaken by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (FPLD) and Norah Fry Research Centre (NFRC).

Other publications available from SCIE

SUPPORTING DISABLED PARENTS AND PARENTS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Jenny Morris and Michele Wates

November 2006

Online only

MAKING REFERRALS TO THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS (POVA) LIST

Julie Barnes

June 2006

Order code PG07

Please visit www.scie.org.uk for all of SCIE's
publications

Having a good day? A study of community-based day activities for people with learning disabilities: A summary

This knowledge review addresses a specific question: What has, and what has not contributed to the successful provision of community-based day activities for all people with learning disabilities?

All SCIE publications and resources are free.

This publication is available in an alternative format upon request.

Social Care Institute for Excellence
Goldings House, 2 Hay's Lane
London SE1 2HB
tel 020 7089 6840
fax 020 7089 6841
textphone 020 7089 6893
www.scie.org.uk