



Details of visit

Service address:	Westmead Centre, Rances Lane, Wokingahm, RG40 2LH
Service Provider:	Optalis
Date and Time:	19 th and 20 th August 2015, morning visit
Authorised Representatives:	Jane Lord, Nicola Strudley, Nick Durman (19.8.15) Nick Durman, Dean Corcoran (supported by Sarah Griffiths) , Annette Drake (20.8.15)
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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough would like to thank the Optalis Management Team for being so open and willing to work with us, the service users that we spoke to and the Westmead staff for their contribution.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the dates listed above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

This report is written by Healthwatch volunteers and is meant to convey what users of the service said.



What are Healthwatch visits?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

What services does the Westmead Centre provide?

Westmead Centre caters for adults with physical disabilities, primarily those who have an acquired disability MS or a stroke. But there are other service users e.g. those who are blind.

They provide a range of services for the rehabilitation and respite care of people with physical disabilities. Westmead also provide access to health services such as specially adapted bathing facilities. The centre provides meaningful activities, trips out and prevents users being isolated and helps to improve their self-esteem and independence.





Optalis are commissioned for 15 Places by Wokingham Borough Council, one of these places is to be used for prevention, and therefore staff numbers are based on the needs of these 15 customers. If the need for the services grows above 15 per day then Westmead will recruit more staff to ensure they are able to meet the needs of the customers.

The Centre has a core group of 4 regular volunteers but also have placements from schools and colleges as well as from Supported Employment Services. They assist with activities as well as helping to maintain the grounds.

During the initial referral process the aims and wants of the individual are identified and recorded. These are then translated into the session aims for individuals and are reviewed at suitable intervals.

The Centre has a pricing structure or banding system that reflects the amount of support a customer needs whilst at Westmead. Through discussion with customers/Care managers this is reviewed annually or as changes to needs take place. The bandings are under review but at this time we have band A to C. A being minimal support needs and C being higher level support.

Executive Summary

All of the service users we spoke to on our visit clearly enjoyed going to the Westmead Centre, they were very complimentary about the staff and told us about how the centre had improved their independence and stopped them being isolated.

The Healthwatch visiting team saw how the centre does not just provide life skills and opportunities to try out meaningful activities – it provides something so crucial – a place where friendships can be formed.

Many of the service users spoke about how Westmead Centre meant they were not isolated *“if I didn’t come here I would not have anybody to talk to, I don’t have any friends and the only family I have is a brother that lives 2 hours drive away.”* Social isolation of people with physical disabilities is a real risk. One of the most powerful contributors to the establishment of friendships for persons with and without disabilities is regular, ongoing social contact with the same people.

A few years ago there was a move away from day centres fearing they institutionalised people, however after some years of “personalisation and individualisation” it would appear that there needs to be the opportunity for people to feel involved and included in social settings such as neighbourhoods, clubs and community organizations.

There was a sense that the centre was underutilised and that many groups would like to be able to rent space or hire some of the facilities in the evening –especially the pottery room and use of the kiln. Westmead does have a number of outside organisations/individuals who come to Westmead and use the space to run activities. For example, the learning disability day service, the Stroke group, Supported Employment and Occupational Health. The Centre is looking at other ways to use the space to benefit customers and the wider community both during core hours and weekends and evenings.



Purpose of the visit

We choose to visit the Westmead Centre as we had not been to a day service before. We hoped to engage with service users with physical disabilities to understand what impact using the Centre has on their independence and quality of life; To find out from users their suggestions for improving the service or expectations of the service.

Strategic drivers

This was a planned visit. Independence is central to the role of rehabilitation services. The Disability Rights Commission set itself the goal of creating “*a society where all disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens.*” We wanted to understand the value of this day service to individuals.

Methodology

This was an announced visit to Westmead Day Centre on 19th and 20th August 2015. The purpose of the visit was clearly explained and prior to the visit Nick Durman (Healthwatch Officer) took some leaflets to Westmead to be given to the service users, a hard copy of the Visiting process was given to Andrea Kumar, Manager.

The visiting team held a pre visit planning session to discuss details of how to carry out the visit. We also determined the questions we would ask those service users who agreed to talk to us.

Consent forms were used on the visit days for those service users who agreed to Healthwatch Wokingham using their names and their quotes in this report.

Several days after the visits the visiting teams held a debrief meeting, at which all visiting team members had the opportunity to discuss the visit and share their observations and findings.





Summary of findings

We found that the Westmead Centre offered a wide range of activities and some rehabilitation for people with physical disabilities.

One of the key services that is not advertised is the emotional support that individuals receive from staff and other service users.

The consumers were unanimous in their praise for the Westmead Centre. Everybody said that they enjoyed coming and that the centre had enhanced their independence

Many of the consumers spoke about how Westmead Centre meant they were not isolated

Results of Visit

On both visit days the representatives arrived at Westmead at the agreed time of 10:30, were pleasantly greeted by the assistant manager Andrea Kumar and Bradley Bond, Service Manager.

Wokingham Borough Council own the Westmead site. Since 2013 Optalis, the Council's trading arm, lease and run the centre. In 2009 the Centre faced the possibility of closure and a public consultation was undertaken. There are currently discussions about Westmead moving to a new, more modern site, however there does not appear to be any concrete possibilities.

Whilst Westmead is an older building it has some very large useable rooms, feels light and airy and has a very large well maintained garden area with sheds and places to grow vegetables that are used in the cookery activities. The garden also has a pond, part of the pathway surrounding the pond was cordoned off as repairs are required to the wall.

There is a computer room which we were told by the manager wasn't used as much as it could be. A large art room that is obviously well used, apart from art work it is used to make pottery and for woodwork also.

There is a very large room that can be used for various activities and groups, it is used by the stroke group on Fridays. There is a very large dining room with two kitchen areas. There is a bathroom, also a room where rehabilitation activities can take place for example standing frames and an exercise bike. Finally there is a rest room with several beds.

We observed a service user in the art room doing some art work and being assisted by a Westmead staff member. We observed a service user in the large room playing a Wii computer game and assisted by a member of staff.

We spoke to six service users, four of them on the 19th August, Janet, Ernie, Mandy and Christine and two on the 20th August, David and Stuart. All gave their permission for Healthwatch Wokingham to use their first names in this report and to quote them in the report. The service users' ages ranged from 50s-70s. The service users were unanimous in their praise for the Westmead Centre. Everybody said that they enjoyed coming and that the centre had enhanced their independence one service user told us

"I had a carer come visit me at home every day when I first started coming here, now I don't need any carers and am able to manage myself"



On both visit days we observed service users departing on the bus for an outing. We also observed service users taking part in cookery, art work, table games and computer games.

On the visit on 19th August 2015 we observed 4 service users involved in cooking activity supported by 2 of the Westmead staff. The staff were observed to be caring, considerate and assist the service users with the cooking activity when required. All 4 service users agreed to talk to us.

When we visited on 20th August 2015 we were told that some of the staff, who supported the cooking group we spoke to on the 19th August 2015, felt that there may be some issues around confidentiality with individuals disclosing things in front of others they may normally not do so. Healthwatch discussed this and felt that the group discussion was more a more relaxed approach, less formal and less intimidating as opposed to talking to people individually. We did not want people to think we were interrogating them but more there to listen to their stories. However we agreed to speak to the two service users on 20th August individually in the computer room.

When asked about how long each service user had used Westmead the responses were 2 years, 3 years, 9 years, 10 years and 17 years and one person couldn't remember but said a long time.

When asked what activities the service users take part in we were told, cookery, art, play lots of games, we get our finger nails painted, we have outings and day trips, Today a group have gone to South Hill Arts Park to take photos, we use computers and go on the Wii. We have BBQs or go and sit out in the garden by the pond. David told us *"I do painting and cooking. I have helped people who wanted to paint, I helped a lad who had cerebral palsy. Anyone can paint even if they think they can't"*

Staff explained that Ernie had made a close friend that also uses the centre. They play computer games such as the Wii together. Ernie does not have a computer at home.

When asked if there were any activities they would like to see introduced Janet said *"the only thing I'd like is a hairdresser to come in, the one we usually have is on maternity leave. I can't afford the prices the salons charge in town,"*

With regards rehabilitation Mandy explained how she used a special exercise bike for people that were in a wheelchair. *"My MS is in my legs and keeps spasming. As soon as I go on the exercise bike it stops spasming. I do half an hour at a time – 15 minutes pedalling forward and 15 minutes pedalling backwards,"*

We asked the service users what impact would it have on them if this service didn't exist or it moved elsewhere? Janet said *"If this was not here I would have nowhere else to go. The only other place would be WADE but that is for old people. I get on and do things."*

Christine said *"2 of the places she looked at have been closed down."*

Mandy said *"I don't have any friends at home so it's nice to meet people all the time. I would be so isolated if I didn't come here. I have a brother in Warwickshire that I see once, maybe twice a year"*

Stuart said *"I would go to Westmead wherever it is"*

We also asked the service users if there was anything that they would improve about the Westmead Centre? Janet said *"nothing we are happy here!"*

Mandy said *"I use the Chiropodist because I have a toe nail that used to bleed. She doesn't come into the centre. It would be good if she did as the staff are not allowed to cut my toenails"*



We also asked the service users what they thought of the staff at Westmead. Without exception they told us how good the staff were at Westmead. What David told us summed up the responses of the other service users, he said *“Staff are generous, kind, helpful, focussed, nothing is too much for them, I’m not lacking anything here”*

We also wanted to know if the service at Westmead had a positive effect on the service users quality of life. All service users said in one way or another that the service had improved their lives. Stuart told us *“It has improved the quality of my life”*, whilst David said *“I came here almost totally dependent and now I am independent”*

Joining a club or group where members interact regularly, such as playing cards or working together on community projects, is much more likely to result in the development of social relationships than attending single passive community events such as sporting events, going to the gardening centre, or other settings in which more substantial and meaningful interactions are not regularly occurring. Research has been undertaken to show how being connected to a community enhances both physical and mental health, resulting in fewer colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, depression, suicide, and premature death (House, Landis & Umberson, 1988; Kawachi, Kennedy & Glass, 1999).

Recommendations

- Optalis to consider how the centre could be utilised by other groups or organisations e.g. Make the fantastic facilities like the Art room more accessible to others
- Optalis to look at alternative arrangements to cover the hairdressers maternity leave
- Residents spoke about the chiropodist not coming to the site – this would be a service that would be utilised.
- Get local groups who are interested to help maintain the garden and make use of facilities e.g. the ‘incredible edible’ group
- Making the cost of attending more transparent. The Westmead Centre is a mixture of self funders and those in receipt of a personal budget. One of the service users told us *“ if I could afford it I would come more”*

References:

House, J.S., Landis, K.R. & Umberson, D. (1988) Social relationships and health. *Science*, 241, pp. 540-545.

Kawachi, I., Kennedy, B.P., & Glass, R. Social capital and self-rated health: A contextual analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 89, 1187-1193.



Service Provider response



Date of response: 23 September 2015

General feedback

Optalis welcomes the report and is keen to work with Healthwatch in an open and transparent way for the benefit of customers. We acknowledge feedback provided on the observations made during the visit, and appreciate the opportunity to respond in advance of the report being published.

Response to suggested areas for improvement:

1. The council to consider reviewing the lease arrangement to allow Optalis to rent out parts of the centre

Optalis response: As noted below, Optalis already provides access to Westmead by local community groups, without charge, where their primary purpose is consistent with the aims of our service. There may indeed be further opportunities to engage with the local community, and Optalis will explore this with our landlord, Wokingham Borough Council.

FURTHER UPDATE: Optalis Managing Director has investigated and taken advice and found that Optalis can let rooms with certain conditions attached so we will be looking at opportunities over the coming months.

“It seems the team at Westmead was labouring under a misapprehension so we're glad to have had that cleared up. “

2. We wondered if a replacement hairdresser had been sourced to cover maternity leave?

Optalis response: A mobile hairdresser has been out to visit a customer at Westmead since the Healthwatch visit. She is now booked to make further regular visits.

3. Residents spoke about the chiropodist not coming to the site – this would be a service that would be utilised.

Optalis response: We encourage individuals to make their own appointments with Chiropodists and we signpost and support individuals to source support from other health care professionals such as Chiropodists, O.T's, Physiotherapists and Speech and Language Therapists. We are always happy to accommodate these visits taking place at Westmead.



4. Make the fantastic facilities like the Art room more accessible to other local groups and organisations

Optalis response: The Westmead service already has other groups and organisations using the building alongside the PD service. This has mainly been during the day however the Out and About Service use the building at the weekends. We are actively looking at other ways to increase the use of the building outside of our core hours, which will benefit our customers and the wider community.

We are always keen to develop and work in partnership with other local organisations and recently we have made contact with the More Arts charity to investigate how we can work with them in the future.

5. Get local groups who are interested to help maintain the garden and make use of facilities e.g. the 'incredible edible' group

Optalis response: We have regular volunteers doing block placements from the Supported Employment Service. We are also in the process of taking on a permanent volunteer from Supported Employment Services to cut the grass each week. We have had local companies come in and do one off visits to help with the garden. We will always welcome any volunteers to come and help with our garden.

6. Making the cost of attending more transparent. The Westmead Centre is a mixture of self-funders and those in receipt of a personal budget. [One of the service users told us "if I could afford it I would come more"](#)

Optalis response: We have a clear pricing structure attached to bandings, which are based on the needs of the individual. When a customer is referred to Westmead, we will inform the Broker/Care manager of our prices. They will discuss financial matters direct with the customer as part of their assessment process. During the annual review or as needs change we will discuss the level of support needed with the customer and their Care manager/ Broker. All but one customer comes under our contract with Wokingham Borough Council. We are currently reviewing our prices and we will consider, in consultation with customers, whether greater transparency around pricing would be useful.



Your feedback

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is keen to find out how useful this report has been to you, and/or your organisation in further developing your service. Please provide feedback below or via email.

We found the report to be:

Useful / Not useful
(please circle your choice)

Why do you think this?

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We have made the following changes since reading this report:

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Please mail to:

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