
Draft report

(Version 1)

Day Care Centres for Older People in East Kent

Kent LINK Project no: K4.08.02

August 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In April 2010, the Kent LINK commenced a project looking at people's knowledge, experience and perception of day centres for older people in Kent.

The aim of the project was to identify the views and experiences of current and potential users of day care centres to see whether services meet local need, identify areas for improvement and to make recommendations to both the voluntary sector organisations running services and to Kent County Council (KCC) who support and fund older people's services in Kent.

There were three elements to the project:

- One:** A series of focus groups were carried out across East Kent in Age Concern day centres to give current users of their services the opportunity to share their experiences, views on the services and facilities currently being organised for them and ideas for the future.
- Two:** 'Mystery Shoppers' from the LINK visited the day centres from the perspective of a prospective recipient of day care services to look at a variety of points such as the reception they received, cleanliness and standard of facilities and the variety of activities and services on offer.
- Three:** A survey was carried out to gauge the views of both current and perspective users of day centre services across Kent. The survey was available both in hard copy and online, was distributed through KCC, the LINK and at the County Show in Maidstone.

The information gathered through the three elements of the project has been collated and produced in this report. The recommendations that are documented here are based on the information gathered throughout the project, through all three elements so they truly reflect the wishes of people in East Kent.

The project involved eight people on a project group, 188 people participated in the focus groups, 14 LINK Mystery Shoppers and 170 people responded to the survey.

Recommendations to Kent County Council

- One:** To consider how further support can be given to day centres which provide vital services for their current, perspective clients and local communities.
- Two:** To actively support centres to develop their services in order to meet the needs of prospective service users in the future in line with the Older Persons Strategy.
- Three:** To allocate appropriate resources to facilitate and support day centres to carry out the following recommendations, to ensure they can continue to function in a way that supports local people in the way it benefits them most.

Recommendations to Day Centres

- One:** To review the physical environment of centres, in all areas, to ensure it is conducive to a relaxed and friendly atmosphere so people can take full advantage of the centre and the services and facilities on offer at the centre.
- Two:** To review the variety and accessibility of activities, services and facilities available to ensure as many people as possible can take them up and they encourage new and perspective centre users to attend. To help ensure that a consistent range of facilities and activities are available across centres by sharing best practice with other centres, eg more talks about subjects of interest or 'exchange visits' with other centres for those centres who do not currently offer these. This could be done through forum meetings or surveys of existing clients to ensure that the services meet their needs and consider ways of establishing the needs of future clients and younger pensioners.
- Three:** To review current opening times and establish if there would be demand for Saturday or Sunday opening and if this could be met.
- Four:** To review signage to the centre, entrance access and internal signage to ensure the centre is easy to find, easy to enter and easy to navigate around.
- Five:** To review the condition of facilities and furniture to ensure it provides a comfortable, modern and safe place for people to visit.
- Six:** To consider the standards of customer care offered by staff and volunteers to ensure visitors and centre users feel welcome, engaged and encouraged to visit again or to recommend the centre to others.
- Seven:** To look at the opportunities available to centre users to socially interact with others, to ensure people are not left un-stimulated, in forced silence and unable to interact with others.
- Eight:** To consider physical accessibility to centres via use of minibuses and other means of transport available.
- Nine:** To ensure effective promotion of the centre is carried out locally to ensure people understand what is available, to whom and to help reduce the stigma currently attached to day centres. This needs to include the harder to reach groups within the catchment area eg housebound, black and ethnic minority (BME) groups, disabled, to ensure the services are well publicised to these groups.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all Age Concerns in East Kent who took part in this project, to the project group, to all the volunteers who took part in focus groups, the participants who acted as Mystery Shoppers and to those who responded to the survey.

Focus Groups

Introduction

Focus groups and interviews were carried out at 16 Age Concern day centres across East Kent between April 2010 and July 2010.

The Age Concern centres visited were as follows:

- Eldercare Day Centre, Stanhope Road, Ashford
- The Day Centre, Church Road, Tenterden
- 65 Shaftesbury Avenue, Folkestone
- Pierremont Gardens, Broadstairs
- Everist Court, Station Road, Lyminge
- Deal Centre for the Retired, 3 Park Street, Deal
- Randolph House Day Centre, Zion Place, Margate
- Heather House Day Centre, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne
- Sandwich Centre for the Retired, Sneller House, 19-21 Cattle Market Street, Sandwich
- The Centre, Castle Row, Canterbury
- Connie Packington Day Centre, Vulcan Close, Whitstable
- Forget-Me-Not Centre, 2 Middle Row, Faversham
- Hampton Pier Avenue, Herne Bay
- Rosemary House, 43 Trinity Road, Sheerness
- The Riverside Centre, Maison Dieu Gardens, Dover
- Sanford House Day Centre, Stade Street, Hythe.

Methodology

The focus groups were formed on the day, with a random selection of people who were using the centre on that day and who were willing to take part and answer the questions. At some centres it was possible to bring together a group of clients away from the general hustle and bustle of the day centre in order to ask the questions. At other centres, the questions were asked to individual clients or groups of clients in the main room(s), where possible this was done without the presence of Age Concern staff to encourage clients to be as open about their experiences of the centres as possible.

The groups all had a facilitator and note taker and at some centres the discussions were also taped using a digital audio recorder. Permission was sought from all clients, whether individually or a member of the group, prior to taping, and for those who did not wish to have the discussion recorded the recorder was not used.

All groups were asked the same key questions:

1. How did you hear about the centre?
2. How do you get to the centre?
3. What do you like most / least about the centre?
4. What help / support have you seen the centre giving others?
5. Do you go to other activities during the week? If so what, and what do you like / dislike about them?
6. If you weren't able to get to the centre, how would that affect you/your family / carer?
7. Are there any other services / activities that the centre does not currently offer which you would like?

Results

A total of 188 people were consulted as part of this element of the project across the 16 sites aged between 58 and 99 years old.

The discussions took place with a cross-section of clients in order to represent a real breadth of experience. Some of the clients had only been attending the centre for a short time, a couple of months or less, and at one centre there was a lady whose first day it was. Some of the people we spoke to had been coming for up to twenty five years, illustrating that the centres can be a really positive long-term support mechanism for many older people. For some people, the purpose of coming to the centre had changed over time, for example some came with a spouse or sibling initially, who subsequently passed away, but had continued coming as it offered them support at a time of grief and bereavement.

The responses for each question were collated under the headings of the questions which were asked of clients and an overview of all the responses are documented here.

❖ Finding out about the centre

Feedback from clients suggested that there were a variety of ways that people found out about the centre. Some people came to attend the centre as a result of a change in circumstances eg death of a spouse or having been in hospital, others came of their own accord. Very few people we spoke to actively enquired about the centre, the majority had come to find out about the centre through another means, as outlined below.

The main ways that people found out about the centres were as follows:

- *Family* – either through sons and daughters making suggestions, or from siblings having attended the centre previously.
- *Friends or neighbours* – accompanying somebody who was already a client, or them informing the person about the centre.
- *Professionals* – for example Social Services, doctors, police, hospital staff, physiotherapist or residential care staff.
- *Moving from outside the area* – if they used to attend a centre in a different area then they looked up the centre in their new area.

- *Accessing services / facilities provided at centre* – some clients spoke of attending the centre initially to make use of a service such as hairdressing or nail care, and then going on to use other facilities eg meals at the centre and attending on a more regular basis. Others started off by using the centre to have a coffee when in the area and then began to attend more frequently.
- *Through other day centres or over 60s services* – some clients attended other centres.
- *Through the ‘grapevine’* – in some places the centres were well known in the town / village or publicised in the local newsletter.
- *Ex-volunteer / member of staff* – some clients had worked at Age Concern previously, for example as a cleaner or a minibus driver, and subsequently had become a client once they had got older.
- *Living close by* – for example in sheltered accommodation close by or part of the complex in which the centre is housed.
- *Through the church* – this was also common.

There were also several examples of clients we spoke to having acted as ‘ambassadors’ for the centre and passed on their experience to others having found the centre to be of use to them.

Although many clients reported having had a visit from Age Concern staff prior to coming to the centre for an assessment, this was usually as a result of them already knowing about the centre. It was clear that very few clients found out about the centres through publicity distributed by the centres themselves. At some centres discussion took place as to what happens to those people who do not know about the centres, for example through being house-bound and not being in a position to find out about the centres through any of the above methods. It was generally felt that these people would be missing out on the valuable support of the centres and that more should be done to reach out to these people.

“I am really surprised more people do not come to the centre”

- Client, Sandwich Centre for the Retired

Preconceptions about the centres were also mentioned and several clients described needing some persuasion as they thought the service was ‘for old people’, such as the client below:

“We all thought we weren’t old enough!”

- Client, the Day Centre, Tenterden

All of the clients who described being apprehensive went on to say that once they had attended the centre and experienced what was on offer, they continued coming. This may illustrate a wider issue about the public image of an Age Concern day centre, or day centres for older people generally, which may prevent some people who might well make good use of the support offered by the centres attending.

“I was very sceptical about it due to my wife being in and out of residential homes, but when I came here after my wife of 67 years had died, I was made to feel very welcome. I now feel part of the fittings”

- Client, Riverside Centre, Dover

❖ Getting to the centre

At the majority of the centres transport was provided to pick the client up from home, take them to the centre and then home again.

“Most of us couldn't get here if it wasn't for the minibus”

- Client, Forget-me-Not Centre, Faversham

In some of the more rural areas, clients reported that they would like to be able to attend the centre more often than they did at present but were unable to as the centre transport followed specific routes and only visited their area on certain days.

Other methods of transport used to attend the centres included:

- Mobility scooter
- Walking
- Public transport
- Getting a lift with family or friends
- Taxi (subsidised by the centre in areas where a minibus was not available)
- Bicycle.

❖ What clients liked most about the centres

Social Interaction:

“The idea of elderly people sitting around the room drooling does not exist here, it's not allowed”

- Client, Everist Court, Lyminge

Overwhelmingly, company was one of the key reasons for attending the centres. Clients said that they liked being able to meet new people and have a coffee and a chat with friends. Many said that they enjoyed having a laugh and ‘banter’ with other clients. The centres provide a social network, and many said that the staff and clients at the centres were like a family to them.

“The centre has been a lifeline to me. Without them I would not be alive today, I have no other family and they have been like one to me”

- Client, Margate

Some clients had been able to reconnect with old school friends that they had previously lost touch with. For others, the centres were a real lifeline which helped to prevent loneliness and isolation. It was also important to clients that they were known by name at the centre. For those clients who had come to Kent from outside the area, or even those who had moved from one place within East Kent to another, the centres provided a support network to enable them to meet people.

During the discussions it was also mentioned on several occasions that they liked it when the seats were not ‘reserved’, and wanted to be able to feel that they could sit anywhere they liked without fear of taking somebody else’s preferred seat. This added to the feeling of inclusion.

The atmosphere at the centres was also mentioned by many as being a positive aspect, which was described by most happy and friendly.

Activities:

“We have a very full life here at Age Concern”

- Client, Stanford House, Hythe

Many clients listed the activities and entertainment at the centre as being amongst what they liked most about it.

These varied from centre to centre, but included:

Tai Chi	Bingo	Jigsaws
Knitting	Arts and crafts	Playing cards
Quizzes	Raffles	Exercise sessions / Keep fit
BBQs	Singing	Lip reading classes
Cooking classes	Library	Dominoes
Computer classes		

Some centres arranged outings for the clients, including transport. The outings including visits to Bybrook Barn, Teapot Island, to see the bluebells at Wye, meals out, cream teas, fish and chips and trips to garden centres. At one centre clients talked of the holidays that they had attended in the past which had been arranged by the centre.

Many of the clients spoke of the trouble which the centre went to mark celebrations, such as parties at Christmas, a glass of wine with dinner for somebody’s birthday or a ‘do’ at Easter. Some places also marked particular sporting events like the Grand National with a themed day.

Facilities and support:

The services provided at the centre (as outlined in question 4) were one of the most well-received aspects, for example being able to have a bath safely. The fact that the support does not stop at the door and that clients were helped on and off the bus to their door, or checked up on if they do not attend the centre was also mentioned.

“They always make sure when they drop me off at home that I get in safely”

- Client, Margate

In terms of the staff and volunteers, the sentiment “Nothing is too much trouble” – was echoed at every centre.

“The staff are committed to caring for us”

- Client, Rosemary House, Sheerness

Many enjoyed the meals, which most said were good quality and excellent value for money (under £4 at most places for two courses). All the centres catered for special diets, medical requirements and varied portion sizes depending on appetite and in some centres there was more than one sitting so clients could choose what time to have lunch, not having to cook and wash up.

“The food is good, there’s a lot of choice, they cater for special diets and it’s perfectly cooked”

- Client, Eldercare Day Centre, Ashford

“I am on my own and get three fresh meals a week at the centre, otherwise I would have microwave dinners”

- Client, Heather House, Sittingbourne

Some of the clients commented that the centre made sure that they were involved.

“If you sit here and do nothing then it’s your fault”

- Client, Tenterden

Many clients commented on the excellent facilities available. Services such as hairdressing were very reasonably priced compared to the high street and this was noted. Many of the centres have a shop on the premises and this was commented favourably on, with the centre offering everything an older person might need – almost like a ‘one stop shop’.

“Where we live there are no shops and the shop at the Centre has most things that we need”

- Client, Canterbury

Some centres had a garden or outside space, and this was commented on. Clients liked sitting in the garden when the weather was nice. There was quite a strong sense of loyalty and community and many clients felt that their centre was 'better than any others'.

"I've heard that other centres are strict but we're lucky here, there's a really relaxed atmosphere"

- Client, Hampton Pier Avenue, Herne Bay

❖ **What clients liked least about the centres or wanted more of**

This varied from centre to centre. Many clients could not think of anything else that they would like to do at the centre. Some felt that more activities were required but acknowledged that other clients might not join in with these if they were provided. At several centres there was a 'forum' for clients to discuss new ideas or make suggestions for improvements.

The following points were raised in response to this question:

- Other clients could be territorial about chairs.
- Personality differences with other clients.
- Staff shortages for example, clients in wheelchairs could not go on trips as they needed a carer with them or that they could not go out on as many trips at the centre.
- Wanting more opportunity to make decisions about what to do rather than being told.
- Some said they wanted more activities at the centre eg arts and crafts, others said more opportunity to talk to each other rather than do activities, this also applied to wanting more singing at one centre, when another one did not want to have to do singing. This was a matter of personal preference.
- Feedback was given from one client that across the board centres needed to be thinking more about how to encourage younger pensioners to come along to the centre.
- New vehicles – in centres where the minibus was out of action or in need of an update.
- More outings.
- For the centre to be open at weekends – some centres were open on Saturdays and even Sundays, but not all were able to do that. For those which were open Monday to Friday only many clients said the weekends felt very long and that they would like to come over the weekend.
- To be able to come more often than they were able to – for those who were in rural areas for which the bus did not pick up every day of the week.
- For some centres, clients said that they wanted more opportunity to talk to others, this was due to the layout of the room or the need for more activities to encourage clients to talk to each other, not just to their particular friends. There were also concerns that clients were segregations of clients eg men sitting separately to women.
- More hired entertainment, but it was acknowledged that this can be expensive.
- Exchange visits with other Age Concerns (This did happen at some centres).

❖ **Help and support available to clients at the centres**

“It is a lifeline for the people in Deal”

Client, Deal Centre for the Retired

This varied from centre to centre, with some offering more than others, but included:

Personal care

Bathing	Support with personal care eg going to the toilet
Hairdressing	Support with eating eg cutting up food
Nail care	

Medical

Chiropody	Being accompanied to doctors appointments
Hearing aid service	Support Massage
Picking up prescriptions	Reiki Healing
District nurse visits	

Practical

- Help obtaining a mobility aid.
- Shopping service.
- Laundry service – this varied from centre to centre, but some were able to do laundry for clients attending the centre, others delivered to the wider community.
- Transport to and from the centre – including help on and off the vehicle.
- Meals on wheels or taking ready made meals home – again, this varied from centre to centre.
- Help finding a particular service eg plumber, solicitor.
- If a client was unwell and unable to attend, centre staff would make a home visit to check on them.

“I have Meals on Wheels and when I did not answer the door they contacted Matthew and he came round and immediately contacted the ambulance. I ended up in the High Dependency Unit in London. So I would not be here today if Mathew had not taken the trouble to come and check up on me”

Client, Everist Court, Lyminge

Advice and guidance

- Advice on eligibility for Pension Credits and other benefits.
- Help with insurance.

- Appointment with Social Services, Inland Revenue and District Council representatives.
- Help with bills and other paperwork.
- Support with bereavement.
- Visits from the Church.

❖ **How clients spent their time when not attending the centre**

Due to mobility issues or lack of transport, many clients were unable to do any other activities during the week apart from attending the centre. Others said they were hardly at home.

Those that were able to get out and about mentioned a wide variety of activities including:

- Spending time with family
- Shopping
- Going to tea dances
- Walking
- Other over 60s activities eg lunch clubs
- Playing golf
- Support groups eg, diabetes and falls
- Member of a committee eg retirement fund, residents association
- Going to the cinema
- Gardening
- Playing bridge
- Bingo
- Supporting a local football team
- Going to church
- Going out and about on the bus using bus pass
- Some lived with relatives and went out with them
- Going to the theatre
- Visiting the local community centre

Other pastimes mentioned were:

- Watching TV
- Hobbies like calligraphy, water colour painting, needlepoint lace, card making, crosswords
- Staying with relatives

- Activities arranged at sheltered housing

❖ **The impact of not attending the centre on the clients and their family / carer**

“The centre opens a lot of doors”

- Client, Everist Court, Lyminge

Amongst the clients, the prospect of not being able to attend the centre had both a practical and emotional impact. The extent of the impact of not being able to attend the centre varied from client to client, depending on their support network outside the centre.

Emotional and mental impact

When this question was put to the groups, many said that they would not even want to think about it. For many, the centres formed a support network and a routine which it would be devastating to lose. Many said that they would be lonely, depressed and miserable if they did not attend the centre.

“I go to bed at night happy knowing that I can come to Age Concern in the morning”

- Client, Forget-Me-Not Centre, Faversham

At virtually every centre the clients said that they looked forward to coming and that if they were not able to attend they would miss it. Some said that they would end up watching more television if they could not get to the centre.

“Who wants to spend all day watching TV? You’ve got all night to look at that!”

- Client, Eldercare, Ashford

For clients living on their own, the centre offered a place for them to get out, have a ‘change of scenery’ away from the same four walls. They gained a great deal of reassurance from attending the centre through being able to talk through and share their worries, and in the absence of that they would be isolated and having to deal with their problems on their own.

“I live on my own and have no family left; I need the centre for friends and company”

- Client, Connie Packington Day Centre, Whitstable

Many commented that their family would have to provide more support or would worry that they did not have a safe place to go during the day, and this would be particularly difficult for those who worked. The centres were also an opportunity for carers to have a break.

"My daughter would have to get my grandson to come round and help me to go out. Otherwise I would not get out"

Client, Shaftesbury Avenue, Folkestone

Finally, not attending the centre would have a further impact on many of the clients in terms of the mental stimulation and interest that the centres provide. Activities varied from centre to centre but all offered some activities from bingo to cookery classes which were very well received by clients, and many may not get the chance to do these activities otherwise.

"I don't think I would live much longer without the centre"

Client, Sheerness

Practical impact

Several clients equated being unable to attend the centre with losing their independence and some even went as far as saying that they would have to go into a residential home if they were unable to have the support provided by the centre.

"It keeps me active; if I couldn't come I would probably be in a worse condition"

Client, Forget-Me-Not Centre, Faversham

Other practical support such as filling out forms and advice on benefits would also be missed.

"There is a list of contacts at the centre, numbers for gardeners, electricians and other odd jobs. The centre gets us in touch with them for us and it is good because we know we can trust them"

Client, Connie Packington Day Centre, Whitstable

Those who relied on the transport provided by the centre said that they would not be able to get out and about at all if this was not available.

Finally, as many clients relied on the centre for a hot meal and support with personal care such as bathing, being unable to attend the centre would have particularly serious consequences for them. This was particularly true for the gentlemen who had lost their wives, many of whom said that they had always relied on their wife to do the cooking and so was unable to cook for themselves. By coming to the centre they were still able to get a good meal during the day, at a very reasonable price. At some centres it was also possible for clients to purchase meals to take home and others provided a Meals on Wheels service.

"I would have to cook a dinner for myself, which wouldn't be much good, cooking for one"

- Client, Sandwich Centre for the Retired

For those who had a greater support network or who enjoyed their own company outside the centre, the impact was not as great, but on the whole.

❖ **Other services or activities which could be offered at the centres**

“Apart from a young man to dance with, I don’t think there is anything more they could do!”

- Client, Stanford House, Hythe

Many people echoed the sentiment that the centre offered everything that they wanted.

There were some suggestions made, as follows:

- Talks
- More exercise sessions (eg chair aerobics)
- More space at the centre
- More funding for the centre

Conclusion

Overall, the clients attending the centres could not speak highly enough of the service provided and most felt that the centres could not do any more to accommodate them.

Although we observed a great deal of variety in terms of the services and facilities available across the centres, for example the activities available, opening hours and the provision of therapies, the importance of them to the clients in terms of the support they provided in allowing them to maintain their independence was the same across the region.

In all, the key aspects which the centres offer to clients are:

- Transport
- Social network
- A variety of activities
- Hot meals
- Practical and emotional support

The strength of feeling which the question asking what clients would do if they were unable to attend the centre was met with is testament to the value of the centres to the clients who attend.

Many clients acknowledged limitations in terms of funding available and on more than one occasion clients expressed concern that the centres might have to close or make cutbacks during the difficult economic times.

“If the Government even thinks of closing these centres there would be great trouble from all of us. They would have a battle on their hands”

- Client, Sanford House Day Centre, Hythe.

DRAFT

Mystery Shopper

Introduction

The mystery shopping exercise carried out as part of this project involved 11 individual LINK participants who visited 17 Age Concern day centres across East Kent as Mystery Shoppers. The purpose of these visits was to gain a first impression of centres from an independent point of view.

This summary is an overview of the impressions the mystery shoppers gained during their visits. The information gathered, therefore, is only to be used as an indication of how an individual perceived a centre on a particular day and may not be indicative of the usual standards of facilities and customer care.

The summary is broken down into six key areas: environment, variety of activities, accessibility, standards of facilities, customer care and social interaction opportunities.

Environment

The mystery shoppers felt that the physical and ambient environment of centres was important in providing a calm and relaxed atmosphere to enable people to enjoy the centres and all that they offer. There was mixed feedback on the environment within different centres. Some centres were bright, cheerful and airy whilst others appeared to be dark, solemn and in need of better lighting. One mystery shopper commented that the centre they visited was 'welcoming, cheerful and bright with noisy chatter and laughter' which they found very encouraging.

Although some perceptions of the ambience in centres is warm, stuffy and uncomfortable this did not appear to be accurate on the days that visits took place even though they took place during a warm spring season, most centres had doors and windows open allowing fresh air to flow through them ensuring people were comfortable.

In some centres the atmosphere appeared quiet with minimal chat and interaction between staff and clients and no background music to break the silence. In some centres users were seen to be sitting alone staring with no or little interaction or activity to stimulate them which wasn't helped by the silence. Some centres seemed to appreciate that a variety of environments is needed and provided opportunities where people could participate in noisy activities such as bingo but also had TV rooms and quiet rooms where they could go to read and have quiet time if they wished.

Variety of activities

The variety of activities available varied from centre to centre although most offered hairdressing, chiropody, bathing, bingo and trips out with some centres offering more such as hearing aid services, dinners, dancing, reflexology and gardening. It was said that a wide variety of activities is important to potential users of centres and there appeared to be disappointment in centres where limited activities are offered. It was also apparent that in centres that offered little in the way of stimulation for centre users people were more likely to be seen just sitting quietly, staring into space or with minimal chat and interaction with other centre users.

Accessibility

Accessibility to centres is absolutely vital not just for centre users but also for visitors, staff and carers. Positive reports were received from visits to centres that had sloped approaches with automatic doors. Most centres were easily accessible for people in wheelchairs but their entry into buildings could be compromised by heavy, non-automatic doors. Parking was raised as an issue at nearly all centres visited. Although some parking is available at most centres there is limited disabled parking and the majority of visitors have to use public pay and display car parks. Most centres provide a good transport service for its users with their own minibuses able to pick people up and drop them home again which provides a vital link for people who would otherwise be unable to attend the centre and may remain housebound.

Another key point raised by most mystery shoppers was the amount of signage both leading up to the centres from the roadside or pavements and also internally once visitors have found their way in. Clear signage is important to ensure people know where the centre is, where they are going and where key areas are such as the reception and toilets.

It was also raised that written information about the centre is crucial in promoting the centre, its services, activities and other services available to people using the centre from external organisations and support groups. The information needs to be readily available and easy to read and understand.

Standards of facilities

It is important that centres have a high standard of facilities to ensure people are encouraged to use the centre, in safety and comfort. The quality of furniture is important both visually but also for the comfort of people using it regularly. Some centres were reported to have old fashioned furniture and chairs that didn't look particularly comfortable for people to sit in. One mystery shopper said "the furniture all matched but unfortunately all chairs are in lines with blankets on them and look more like a nursing home". It is this visual appearance of furniture and layout that makes the difference between people feeling at home and comfortable or not and therefore plays an important role in how people perceive the standard of facilities within the centre. It also impacts on how people interact with each other which is often the reason people go to day centres.

Most centres were clean, tidy, light and airy which is important for first impressions as it shows high standards of care and maintenance. However, it was also commented that some centre buildings and furnishings were in need of updating and improved standards of maintenance to ensure they are fit for purpose, make a good impression to potential users of the centre and are comfortable for the people currently using the centre.

Customer care

As with any business customer care is important especially when people visit for the first time, looking for somewhere to either attend themselves or to send loved ones. If the reception they receive does not meet their expectations they could quite easily be discouraged from attending and using the centre and its facilities. It is apparent from the mystery shoppers that it is important that visitors and centre users are met at reception by friendly and knowledgeable people, who can show them around facilities, make them feel welcome and help people to access the facilities and services available. Generally the centres visited through this project did have someone to meet visitors although not all demonstrated a high level of customer service, leaving people standing in reception, with no welcome, no offer of a tour of the centre and in an uncomfortable environment in the reception area.

Friendliness of staff and centre users was also important in making people feel welcome and encouraging them to come again but this didn't always happen.

However, the centres provide essential services and facilities for large numbers of people within their local communities and are often seen by users as a lifeline both socially and for their personal support. Generally the LINK mystery shoppers felt that the users of the centres were happy with the service they received and continue to access the centres because they enjoy the opportunities on offer.

Social interaction opportunities

A large number of people using the day centres do so in order to meet people, make friends and socially interact with others. It is, therefore, essential that centres provide as many opportunities as possible for people to mix with others in a relaxed and friendly manner. Many centres have considered this when designing the layout of social rooms and have taken a 'coffee table' style approach where small tables with chairs are set out in a way that encourages interaction between centre users as well as with staff. The mystery shoppers generally supported this informal layout as it enabled people to sit in small groups and chat. This also helped prevent regular users of centres to lay claim to certain chairs. One mystery shopper commented that in the centre they visited, nobody 'owned' a chair.

However, in some centres the layout is restricted to rows of chairs making people sit opposite each other, with a large gap between them, or against the wall around the sides of the room, making it difficult to interact with other people. It was often in this scenario that regular users of the centre claimed a chair that meant they sat in the same place each time and spoke to the same people with little opportunity for other interaction. This also appeared to be where centre users were found sitting alone with little or no interaction either with each other or staff.

Conclusion

The mystery shoppers carried out this exercise in order to see from an independent perspective how day centres could be perceived by new visitors or potential users. It was clear from their reports that the six key areas detailed in this report were the most important to them. It is important that additional support is given to day centres to help support them improve their services and facilities for the future.

Survey

Introduction

The survey was sent out 650 people over the age of 50 at random across East and West Kent, 15 people from the LINk database and an online version was made available to everyone with internet access. The survey sought to find out why people use day centres and if they don't why not. In total 170 surveys were completed; 153 postal surveys, seven completed at the Kent County Show and 10 were completed online.

Monitoring overview

Further statistics are available at the end of this report.

	Total returned	Male	Female	Disabled	Not Disabled	White / British
East Kent	148 (90%)	42 (28%)	106 (72%)	63 (43%)	68 (46%)	143 (97%)
West Kent	17 (10%)	8 (47%)	9 (53%)	4 (23.5%)	9 (53%)	14 (82%)

East Kent Survey Summary

Question 1 asked if people were aware of the variety of services and activities available and where those services were located.

90% of people who responded were aware of day centre services in their local area, 13% weren't aware and for those that did it was fairly evenly spread across East Kent.

Question 2 asked if Age Concern specifically provided these services locally to them.

82% of people did know that Age Concern specifically provided services in their local area and 14% didn't.

Question 3 asked if it was the person completing the survey or a friend / relative that had attended the day centre, which centre, which services or activities they participated in and if they met their needs. It also asked if they knew if people from black and other minority groups attended those day centres.

This question caused some confusion amongst respondents in that they put whether they had attended a centre in the past as well as if they currently attend.

45% said that they did currently attend a centre, 7% had a friend or relative who currently attended a centre, 10% had attended in the past, 11.5% had a friend or relative who had attended in the past and 19% said they had not attended at all.

The centres named by respondents were evenly spread across East Kent and the list often reflected the centres named in question 1b.

The most popular services and facilities used by those attending were:

Lunches	40.5%
Activities	33%
Hairdressing	21%
Advice / information	13.5%
Chiropody	13%
Bathing	11.5%

65% of those who had attended a centre themselves or their friend or relative said the centres did meet their needs with the majority wanting a hot lunch and social interaction with other people. Other comments included the importance of transport, socialising, a well run centre with friendly staff, the reduction of isolation and the provision of vital services such as bathing, cooked meals, chiropody, hair etc.

When asked if they knew if BME groups attended the centre 30% said yes they did know, 16% said no, they didn't know, 31% said they didn't know.

Question 4 asked if they hadn't attended a day centre whether they would do so in the future, if that would be regularly or for a specific service or activity and if not why not.

Some people used these questions as an opportunity to let us know that they already attend a day centre, that they rely on the services and facilities provided there and that they plan to continue to access the centres on a regular basis in the future. 47% said yes they would attend (or continue to) in the future, 6% said no they wouldn't, 7% didn't know and 19% said may be. Following on from that 50% said they would attend regularly with 30% attending for a specific activity. An additional point made by approximately 32% of respondents was that they wanted additional, more varied, activities other than the standard / traditional bingo.

When asked why they would not attend day centres the most popular responses were about the stigma and perceptions associated with day centres that they are for the very old. Some people felt it wasn't the right time for them yet as they were still active and able to look after themselves and others said there was a lack of information about what centres actually provide and for whom which often contributes to the common perception that they are for very old people who sit in chairs all day.

Question 5 asked for any other comments or suggestions people may feel would add value to day centre services.

Comments included:

- Better promotion of centres.
- The need to overcome image / stigma issue to encourage younger people to take advantage of the services and facilities on offer.
- Some centres need expanding or upgrading as they seem overcrowded.
- More outdoor facilities and activities such as a garden area to relax.

- Extend the opening hours to include bank holidays and weekends.
- More stimulation needed in some centres.

Some respondents shared their experiences of day centres such as:

- Our experience of a day centre is a place where Nan went to give Mum a rest, she sat in a room with chairs around four walls, a TV and all people except Nan were asleep with their mouths open, not pleasant for Nan.
- Great service, otherwise I can't get out to meet new people.
- Cannot fault our centre (Sandwich) for everything they offer and for care and consideration.
- Deal centre provides very good service for most.
- Stanhope Road, excellent service.
- Deal Centre actively considers changes that it considers may be needed to meet future pensioners' needs.
- At the Lyminge centre the staff do everything possible to make clients comfortable, take an interest in activities and nothing is too much trouble. They have an excellent variety of activities and services, with a good atmosphere and friendliness from both the staff and management.

West Kent Survey Summary

Question 1 asked if people were aware of the variety of services and activities available and where those services were located.

59% of people who responded were aware of day centre services in their local area, 23.5% weren't aware and for those that did mainly talked about Gravesend and Tunbridge Wells.

Question 2 asked if Age Concern specifically provided these services locally to them.

47% of people did know that Age Concern specifically provided services in their local area and 23.5% didn't.

Question 3 asked if it was the person completing the survey or a friend / relative that had attended the day centre, which centre, which services or activities they participated in and if they met their needs. It also asked if they knew if people from black and other minority groups attended those day centres.

12% said that they did currently attend a centre, 12% had a friend or relative who currently attended a centre, 6% had a friend or relative who had attended in the past and 59% said they had not attended at all. Again Gravesend and Tunbridge Wells centres were listed as centres they had visited.

The most popular services and facilities used by those attending were:

Lunches	17%
Activities	12%
Hairdressing	12%
Advice / information	13.5%
Bathing	12%

47% of those who had attended a centre themselves or their friend or relative said the centres did meet their needs with the majority wanting a hot lunch and help with some form of personal care. Other comments included the importance of transport to enable them to actually attend the centre to receive the support and help they needed.

When asked if they knew if BME groups attended the centre 18% said yes, 12% said no and 29% didn't know.

Question 4 asked if they hadn't attended a day centre whether they would do so in the future, if that would be regularly or for a specific service or activity and if not why not.

Again these questions provided an opportunity for respondents to let us know that they already attend a day centre, that they rely on the services and facilities provided there and that they plan to continue to access the centres on a regular basis in the future. 18% said yes they would attend (or continue to) in the future, 12% said no they wouldn't, 6% didn't know and 41% said may be. Following on from that 41% said they would attend regularly with 18% attending for a specific activity.

The most popular reasons for attending a centre were 35% for activities and 18% for lunch. However, it was clear that the respondents felt it was not appropriate for them to attend at the moment as they were still quite active and independent.

Question 5 asked for any other comments or suggestions people may feel would add value to day centre services.

Concerns were expressed about centres closing and the impact of people in the area and that more funding needed to help keep centres open and benefiting the local people.

Day Care Centres for Older People in East Kent

Survey Analysis for East and West Kent

Key: **East Kent** **West Kent**

1a. Were you aware there were such services available?

Yes **133** **10** No **19** **4** Don't know **1** **2**

1b. Where are those services located in your area?

Sheerness, Ramsgate, Sittingbourne, Cliftonville, Whitstable, Tenyham, Tenterden, Hythe, Herne Bay, Deal, Ashford, Folkestone, Broadstairs, Lyminge, Margate, Faversham, Cheriton, Broadstairs, Sandwich, New Romney, Dover, Canterbury

Northfleet, Tunbridge Wells, Gravesend, West Malling, Hawkhurst, Greenhithe

2. Do you know if Age Concern provides such services in your local area?

Yes **122** **8** No **1** **3** Don't know **21** **4**

3a. Have you or a friend or relative ever attended a day centre?

Yes in the past You **15** Friend / relative **17** **2** No **28** **10**
 Yes at present You **66** **2** Friend / relative **11** **1** Don't know **5**

3b. Which centre?

Birchington, Sheerness, Hythe, Deal, Faversham, Herne Bay, Margate, Cheriton, Lyminge, Dover, New Romney, Sittingbourne, Ramsgate, Canterbury, Broadstairs, Sandwich, Whitstable, Ashford, Tenterden

Northfleet, Hawkhurst, Tunbridge Wells, West Malling, Greenhithe

3c. Which services / facilities did they use?

Lunch	60	3	Chiropody	19	1	Outings	5	1
Activities	49	2	Bathing	17	2	Transport to / from centre	5	
Hairdressing	31	2	Bingo	12		Health/hearing aid	2	1
Advice/info	20	1	Socialising	6	2			

3d. Did the services / facilities meet their needs?

Yes 96 8 No 10 Don't know 3

Transport, socialising, well run, friendly staff, reduced isolation, vital services provided eg bathing, cooked meals, chiropody, hairdressing

Good food, friendly, transport made it accessible

3e. Do you know if people from BME groups attended the day centre?

Yes 44 3 No 24 2 Don't know 46 5

4a. Would you consider using a day centre in future? (if answered no to Q3a)

Yes 69 3 No 9 2 Don't know 11 1 Maybe 28 7

4b. Would you attend on a regular basis or for a specific service / activity?

Regular 74 7 Specific 44 3

4c. What services, activities, facilities would you like offered at day centres?

Additional and more varied activities, welfare and health information, additional outings, day trips and holidays

Lunch, activities, outings, hairdressing, bathing, information / advice

4d. If you would not attend, why not?

Physically unable, lack of information about centres, not right time (age) no need at the moment due to independence, stigma / perception that the centres are for the very old, clicky groups / individuals set in their ways

No time at the moment, not required due to current independence, unable to physically access a centre

5. Other comments, suggestions

Better promotion of centres needed, need to overcome image / stigma issue to encourage younger, some centres need expanding or upgrading, seem overcrowded, more outdoor facilities, garden areas to relax and sit in at some centres, extend opening hours to include bank holidays and weekends, more stimulation needed in some centres

More funding needed to help continue services

Diversity Monitoring

Not completed: 5

	Male	Female	50-55	56-60	61-64	65-70	71-74	75-80	81-84	85-90	91+	Disability		
												Yes	No	No Resp
East Kent	42	106	9	6	11	18	20	21	26	25	13	63	68	16
West Kent	8	9	1	1	2	1	2	2	4	4	0	4	9	4

	White	British	Irish	White French	Black British	Religion								
						Church of England	Methodist	Anglican	Unitarism	None disclosed	Roman Catholic	Salvation Army	Christian	Chaple
East Kent	43	14		1	1	78	7	1	1	30	9	1	12	1
	White British 86													
West Kent	4	1	2			1	3			2	8		1	
	White British 9													

	Report	Info on LINK	Prize Draw	None	Postal	County Show	Survey Monkey
East Kent	68	53	102	32	133	5	10
West Kent	5	5	8	3	12	2	0