



Orchard Close Engagement

October 2019





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Introduction

Orchard Close is a residential respite service, run by Hampshire County Council, on Hayling Island for adults with learning disabilities.

In autumn 2018 a public consultation was undertaken by Hampshire County Council on the future of Orchard Close respite service. Following this consultation, a recommendation was put forward to close the respite service at Orchard Close. The primary reason why Hampshire County Council Adults' Health and Care were recommending closure were that they have enough capacity in their existing services to close orchard close and still meet the demands of all of those in Hampshire who require a bed-based respite service. This has been made possible following significant investment in its other respite services as well reduced demand. It was also noted that the building on Orchard Close does not meet the need well for those with complex needs

However, at the Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care Select Committee this recommendation was not supported, and the Committee asked that the Executive Member look to other ways to make the savings. Healthwatch Hampshire were approached by Hampshire County Council's Adults' Health and Care to independently plan, deliver and summarise feedback from service users, parents/carers and staff using Orchard Close. The following report highlights key findings presented throughout the engagement activity and will inform a final decision relating to Orchard Close.



Service User Engagement

Speakeasy Advocacy were commissioned by Hampshire County Council to deliver the service user part of this engagement. Speakeasy Advocacy are an independent, community-based organisation that provide advocacy services in Hampshire.

Through informal sessions Speakeasy captured the views and experiences of 51 service users and have provided a methodology for the engagement.

Methodology

Questions were developed by the Voluntary Sector/Carer/Service User/ Officer Working Group using examples from similar engagement exercises that Speakeasy Advocacy and Carers Together had completed. The same questions were used for service users and carers, using positive language throughout.

Service User Engagement Sessions

Sessions were held at Orchard Close to avoid it becoming a theoretical exercise for service users, and so staff that know them well can support them to give feedback. Views were recorded anonymously, and everyone was given a copy of their completed questions in a sealed envelope. Two advocates were allocated to every session.

The engagement took a person-centred approach, with sessions differing to meet individual service user needs. To meet these needs the sessions involved;

- Advocates working with individuals on their own or in small groups
- Advocates being available in the entrance area or in the lounges or dining room to meet people
- Orchard Close staff supporting people who have limited communication with pictures or sharing views on their behalf

Views were recorded in 'real time' using people's exact words or participants sharing thoughts then agreeing on the words that would be recorded.

Who we spoke to:

51 service users took part in ten sessions at Orchard Close. The participants have a combination of learning disabilities, autism, and mental or physical health issues

Speakeasy also involved the Learning Disability Partnership Board service users representatives for feedback on the engagement questions



Mental Capacity Act and Consent

Speakeasy considered whether people had capacity to decide to take part in these sessions, following the Mental Capacity Act guidance on **assuming people do have capacity** unless advocates could see service users had difficulties understanding, weighing up, communicating or retaining the information.

Consent was broken into two separate issues:

- I agree to give my views about Orchard Close
- I agree my views can be used in a report for the Hampshire County Councillors to help them make decisions about what happens to Orchard Close.

Guidance was sought from Orchard Close staff, and if the service user lacked capacity, staff were consulted on making a best interest decision for the service user to take part in the engagement session.

Findings

What is important to service users about Orchard Close?

Service users spoke about what was important to them, and this highlighted three key areas; they enjoyed activities and trips out, they valued friendships and socialising, and they liked the staff, with whom they had good relationships.

Many service users also said that they liked the house and garden, the meals on offer and the seaside location.

Activities and trips

Activities and trips was mentioned by nearly all the service users when asked what was important to them about Orchard Close. They spoke about the variety of activities they enjoyed during their stay and said they got to choose what activities they took part in.

“I do archery, go bowling, have a disco, go to the car boot sale, nice cafes”

“Arts and crafts in the dining room. Trips like bowling, seeing the Lion King at the cinema, walks by the sea, car boot sales, Sealife Centre. Go out a lot when I'm here.”

“I really enjoy the activities like walking to the village. Going to the Portsmouth ships and dockyard. Going to the pub, going walking on Butser Hill, shopping.”

“They take me all over the place, depends on what people want to do.”



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It is evident that service users enjoy these activities as they provide opportunities for them to socialise and spend time with their friends. Several service users also expressed that being able to do these activities with friends and peers (rather than family or carers) was a unique part of their experience at Orchard Close. Service users also said:

“I can go to the cinema here with my friends but at home it’s with carers”
“I like going on trips with my friends.”
“Meet my friends here and I like going out with them”

Socialising and friendships

Service users value the friendships they have made at Orchard Close. Many focused on established friendships, highlighting that they book their time at Orchard Close to coincide with their friends, so they can spend time with them, as it’s the only time they saw them.

“Love coming here - come a few times a year. Like having my friends around me - this is the only place I see them.”

“My friend is here - I see him here not at home. I like seeing him here. See people when I’m here not at home - that’s a good thing”

“It’s good to be here with my boyfriend.”

“I’ve made friends here and enjoy having BBQ’s in the garden.”

“Like mixing with people - making friends and joining in activities”

“The people who stay here are very nice. I get on with everybody. We have a good laugh”

A Non-verbal Service User pointed to photos of their friends on the Orchard Close photo tree and was very happy when one of them arrived.

Service users also said they liked having the opportunity not only to see old friends, but to also make new ones.



Positive relationships with staff

Service users felt their relationships with staff were important. They said that staff at Orchard Close are friendly, caring and understand their needs. The importance of staff continuity was a recurring theme highlighted by service users during this engagement.

“Like the staff a lot - no problems with them, they make me laugh and I joke with them. I talk to them.”

“Staff - happy in their care”
“Staff listen to me”

“I get to talk to the staff. The staff are nice, and they help me enjoy myself.”

“The polite helpful members of staff”

“Staff are friendly, they help me with what I want... Staff are amazing.”

“I can talk to staff about my mum and when I feel sad.”

“Great relationship with staff”

“I go with staff to activities and they support me. I love the staff and they support me to take stuff to my bedroom.”

The Seafront location

Service users said they liked the seaside location and some of the activities mentioned are situated on the seafront; such as the funfair and the arcade.

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“I like to look at the sea and boats and I like the train on the seafront.”

“I like going to the seafront in the minibus and they help me look at the boats”

“I love Orchard Close being by the sea, I like to walk by the sea and take photos.”

The House and gardens

The building and the gardens were mentioned positively by many service users. Some said it was a homely environment, that they liked their bedrooms and facilities, such as the sensory room.

Having access to a garden was also spoken about as a positive aspect of their stay at Orchard Close. Service users said they liked stroking the rabbits and having BBQs in the garden.

“It’s like a family home...it’s like being at home”, “I like the garden and the rabbits.”

“It’s like a second home...see friends and make new friends...I feel like I’m going to have a good time every time I come. Doing shows and discos most important...”

“Picked up picture of sensory room twice...looked for picture of Beryl the Bunny smiling and pointing.”

“I really like having BBQs...I can go to the massage room. I like to come out into the garden and play games.”

“The bedrooms are nice; we watch TV together.”

Meals

Commenting on the food was a popular response when asked about what was important at Orchard Close. All service users who mentioned the food were very complimentary about the meals provided.

“I’m Gluten Free - they get me gluten free food - they are clever!”

“The foods nice, they let you choose”

“The meals are great. I like it when we have Chinese”



What could be done differently?

The most popular answer from service users was that no changes needed to be made.



“I’m happy the way it is, nothing needs changing”

“I like it as it is. The food is delicious”

“No, it’s fun here”



Some service users mentioned having an interest in doing a specific activity or more activities.

“Want to go to the zoo. Don’t want to change anything else”

“I would like to see different activities and trips being offered. They don’t do enough trips. I like to go out. There’s nothing to do here and I get bored.”

Others asked for a slight alteration to their routine to allow them to do more activities



“Leave it exactly as it is. Be more involved in the program whatever day you arrive on”

“We don’t go out in the mornings as the staff are busy.”



Several mentioned updating the decoration or facilities, such as; installing a lift, better Wi-Fi, a PlayStation and more pictures upstairs. Two service users said changes to the garden but did not specify what changes they would like to see.

“Building could do with a bit more colour - more pictures. Umbrella in the garden, more cushions. New stereo.”

“Wi-Fi isn’t fast enough”, “Have a PlayStation”

“More cupboards in the bedrooms with stronger key. More repair work - cracks everywhere.”

Some service users left this question unanswered and others said that they did not know.



What difference has Orchard Close made to you?

Lots of service users focused on their enjoyment of the activities on offer, being with friends and socialising. In addition, an important theme emerged around independence and confidence building, with many service users taking pride in the level of responsibility they have for themselves while at Orchard Close. Some spoke about their stay as being like a “holiday”, while others said that it enabled their parents to have a break or go on holiday.

Activities and trips with friends

Service users focused on seeing friends and doing activities that they enjoyed, with some saying they only did these activities while at Orchard Close.

“I like going to laser quest - I don't do it at home I do it here”

“Only do shows when at Orchard Close”

“I go to different places that I wouldn't see at home.”

“[Name redacted] is my special friend - I see him here. This is my holiday - my mum can't walk far. I like coming here. I came here for my birthday treat - I like seeing the same people”

Independence, confidence and learning new skills

Many service users spoke about their time at Orchard Close as an opportunity to learn new skills, take on a level of responsibility and show independence. Staff said that some service users had been very anxious when they started attending, but over time had grown in confidence and settled in well.

“I've become a lot more confident in myself since coming here as the staff are helpful. I feel uncomfortable meeting new people because of my anxiety, but I can meet people safely here. No one gets treated differently here and I like that.”

“Coming here has given me more confidence. I meet new people - This is where I come for my holiday.”

“Staff - happy in their care”

“Staff listen to me”



Orchard Close Engagement

“Learnt how to wash my hair here with staff.”

“I have some responsibility and I get on with the staff. I am grown up now”

“I get to go out on the bus on my own to old Portsmouth. I have made friends.”

“I’ve been on a diet since I’ve been here, being healthier. I know a bit more about sign language.”

One staff member commented: “She was very quiet when she first came and wouldn’t leave a staff members side. She is now more confident and will do her own thing and socialise.”

A Holiday

A recurring response from service users, when talking about their time at Orchard Close, was that they considered it their holiday.



“It’s a beautiful place at Orchard Close to come for a holiday”

“You get a holiday out of it as well”

“It’s a holiday for carers and a holiday for me”



A break for carers and service users

Many service users said their stay at Orchard Close gave their families a break from their caring responsibilities. In some cases, service users also said it gave them a break from their routine as well.

“Mum has a break when I am here. She knows where I am. I am happy to make new friends here. It is excellent to see old friends here too”

“Orchard Close is a place I can have a break and rest from my routine”

“Gives my family a break and me a break from my family.”

“I’m giving my family a break by coming here because they provide all my care and support. I don’t really want to be here; I would rather be at home. It is okay here, but not home.”



What would you want from Orchard Close in the future?

Service users found this question more difficult to answer, with some leaving this question as they did not know how to answer it. However, of those who did answer this question, the two key phrases used were that they wanted to ‘keep coming’ and for it to ‘stay the same’.



“Stay as it is - nothing to change. I don’t want the staff to leave, if they left, I would be really upset”



“Stay the same”, “I want to keep on coming here”

“Keep it open. I love all the staff here - Keep them going. I’d like to keep it going”

Some service users did identify ways that the service could respond to their needs in the future, these were primarily centred on wanting to try a certain activity or do more activities. However, some service users did mention installing a lift and changes to the bathroom areas.



“A lift upstairs would help, then I could have a view.”



“A lift to get upstairs. Wet room”

“Bars on wall - especially in bathroom upstairs”

How would you feel about another provider running Orchard Close, possibly including parents/family carers?

This question was challenging for service users with many leaving this question unanswered or saying that they did not know.

Staffing

The most important issue for service users when asked about other providers delivering the service, was that the staff stay the same. Service users showed concern about staff losing their jobs and spoke about the positive relationships they had with staff members.

“I want the staff to carry on, I don’t want them out of a job”

“The staff are my friends and they know me really well.”

“[Staff Name] must stay! All the staff to stay.”



Orchard Close Engagement

Other providers running the service

Some service users said that they would not mind if another provider delivered the service, but many clarified they would only be happy with this option if staff remained the same.

"I am fine about other people running Orchard Close. Thumbs up to different organisations or parents/ carers."

"If the staff are the same, I'm okay about change."

"So long as it stays open I don't mind who runs it - but I would like the staff to stay the same."

"All right, I suppose - I'd like them to keep the staff and keep the rabbits too."

Several service users showed concern about families and carers taking on the running of the service, they were worried about the extra pressure it would place on them and about their level of expertise.

"I don't want this place to close down - Think Hampshire County Council have done a good job running this place. Family carers would need training in looking after people, being on time, medication and they would need to have the skills"

"I don't think family would work, because they wouldn't get a break because they'd be organising too much and worrying about it."

Concern about change more generally

As well as concerns about changes in staffing, some service users said they found change challenging, whether this be new places, new people or changes in their routine.

"I don't like anything new - want the same staff - don't want change in my routine"

"Nervous about change"



Do you have any other comments you would like to add about carers breaks and carers support?

When answering this question service users focused on two themes; firstly, that they would like to keep coming to Orchard Close and secondly, that they wanted their carers to be able to have a break.

“Mum needs a break because she works hard”

“Dad needs a break. I need a break. Dad gets jobs done and I have fun.”

“It gives my parents a break and my mum knows [that] I’m safe here, and I can talk to staff. Staff are here for me.”

“I like it here - I don’t want to leave here - I want to keep coming back”

“I want Orchard Close to stay open forever. Without this place I would be lost.”

“Coming to Orchard Close gives my mum and dad a break ‘they need it’...”



Parents, Carers and Families Engagement

Carers Together were commissioned by Hampshire County Council to deliver the parent/ carer and family part of this engagement. Carers Together is a carer led organisation, which provides support to carers across Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton.

Methodology

Questions were developed by the Voluntary Sector/Carer/Service User/ Officer Working Group using examples from similar engagement exercises that Speakeasy Advocacy and Carers Together had completed. The same questions were used for service users and carers, using positive language throughout.

Parent, carer and family member engagement activity

Carers Together reached out to parents, carers and family members who use Orchard Close. Information was made available by letter, on the Carers Together website, Facebook page and via existing networks.

The engagement activity took part over nine sessions which were attended by 39 people in total, these events were held on different days (including a Saturday), in different areas and at different times.

One-to-one interviews, in person or via telephone call, were also available and a questionnaire was sent to carers of relatives who use Orchard Close.

71 parents, carers and relatives of those who use Orchard Close gave feedback in the activity.

Ethical considerations

The briefing for session facilitators reflected the sensitivity of the process and the perceived anxieties of participants. It was felt important to clarify the impartiality of the process and the importance of taking part. Assurances were given that the process was to listen and record. This was reflected in the briefing for facilitators.



Briefing for session facilitators

We must ensure the people coming to the engagement sessions understand that we are here to listen and record - not to influence or instruct. The options currently for consideration are included in the questions. We will record responses to the questions and other options, or issues raised by participants.

Information shared with participants at the beginning of each session included:

- Carers Together is an Independent organisation run by carers, with carers, for carers. All our trustees are carers or former carers
- We are not here to tell you what to say but to listen to you
- We are using the questions that were sent out to you, only as a guide for the conversations
- You are free to say whatever you wish to say including any concerns you wish to raise
- We will record everything you would like us to record
- All your answers will be anonymous, when we send them in for the report
- It is important that you do say what you think, want or need to make sure it goes into the report
- We are not here to judge in anyway, we are only here to record what you say and then send it in to be included in a report
- It is your opportunity to influence what goes into the report
- The engagement process is to look at the options for Orchard Close going forward. to vote on the options on the table. During the last three sessions, the options increased to include a 'Friends of Orchard Close'.

Findings

What is most important to you about Orchard Close?

Parent/carer/family members said that what they most valued about using Orchard Close for respite was that was 'safe' and 'trusted'. They were able to "switch off" during their respite, as they knew that their loved-one was being cared for by knowledgeable and experienced staff, at a centre that was well run.

"We know our son is SAFE and enjoying his stay. This allows us to enjoy our respite", "Continuity of staff, who are lovely"

"As a family, everything. We know when our child is at Orchard Close she is happy plus we know she is safe with the caring and experienced staff"

"Very welcoming staff and continuity of staff. Staff are fantastic. Run very well as it is. Friendly and homely"



Orchard Close Engagement

Many participants commented on the positive experience that their family member had while staying at Orchard Close, saying this “gave them peace of mind” while they took a break. They said it was a “homely environment” which gave service users the opportunity to meet up with friends and participate in the activities on offer.

“Most important thing is the home from home atmosphere and the dedication of the staff. It has an almost family feel...”

“Our daughter loves staying there and looks forward to going. She enjoys being with the staff who are always so caring and enjoys meeting up with old friends.”

“So much to do funfair, friends, going out to different places, going to the pub, arcades. Staff make it like a holiday for the service users, as staff give service users a choice”

“Safety of my child, homely environment, experienced, caring staff who understand and know my child's needs. Unique, quiet, calm situation for someone with autism - suits my child's needs perfectly.”

Carers and family members also spoke about the facilities on offer at the centre.



“Respite homes in some other places don't have the same type of respite...Lovely sensory room and gardens...Orchard Close is like a hotel it is not institutionalised”



“My son always has room 14 they have put a double bed in it for him. Very accommodating he even has the room with a garden view”

Some participants pointed out that their family member had been attending Orchard Close for a long time, in some cases many years. They said that it had taken time for them to settle, which is why familiarity with their environment was important.



Orchard Close Engagement

“Many of the staff have been there a long time and my son knows them very well. It is not too far from where we live so is in familiar surroundings for him and it feels very comfortable leaving my son there”

“[Name redacted] has taken many years to settle at Orchard Close, only just happy to stay a week, we finally feel happy to leave her there. The break is vital to us as we care for her 24/7 and it gives us precious time together”

“Having respite for myself as a fulltime carer to my daughter. My daughter looks forward to going and has been going for 30 years”

“Orchard Close has for many years (50) been the only respite my husband and I have had over the years, it has given excellent service and we have had peace of mind to know that our daughter is safe and well cared for with staff she loves and trusts.”

What could be better or done differently at Orchard Close, if anything?

The most frequent response to the question of what could be done differently at Orchard Close was that no changes needed to be made.

“Nothing could be done differently we are very happy with the service.”

“We do not believe that it could be better or done differently than what is being done now.”

“Nothing, Orchard Close is definitely the perfect place for us”

Some participants said more flexibility around the duration of stay and collection/ drop off times would be useful for them.

“More flexible booking system, more flexible arrival/departure times”

“The ability to have an overnight stay or a 2 night stay rather than a minimum of a 3-night stay. Some more flexibility with check in and check out times. i.e. being able to check them in during the mornings e.g between 10am and 12 and able to collect them during the afternoon between 2.30pm and 4.30pm”

“More flexibility around booking. More flexibility around drop off and pick up. More info back to home about what he has been up to whilst there.”

“We wish we could have more, and all 4 weeks there... he gets about 2 - then 2 where they have space, we accept this as we love it so much.”



Orchard Close Engagement

Wheelchair accessibility was also mentioned as a problem at Orchard Close and recent upgrades to the facilities had not addressed this issue. Some felt a lift or stair lift would be a beneficial modification to the premises. Others said not all respite centres needed to offer facilities suitable for people using wheelchairs.



“Maybe put in a lift or a stair lift”, “Sometimes it has problems due to people in wheelchairs”



“Adaptions - didn’t make it accessible, did not future proof it at last upgrade. Make changes to suit service users. Changes to Service Users 2001 - 2003 not suitable for wheelchair users. Not every building is accessible for everyone”

“If wheelchair users are the problem don't offer Orchard Close, use one of the other respite centres”

A few responses suggested asking people to contribute financially towards the cost of their respite, for example buying extra days or selling unused occupancy.

“Some carers are happy to contribute towards the cost of respite care.”

“Be able to pay for extra days if there is room available. Allow others to pay if rooms are available so extra income”

Participants said that they would like more information about how the service was run and how they could be involved. They suggested it would be beneficial if parent carers/family members had the opportunity to act as “extra trustees” or be involved in a Parent Carer Forum to assist with the governance of the service. They also highlighted that service users should be asked their views on ways to develop the service.

“Need parents/carers on Charitable Trust. A parent/carers forum to engage in future.”

“Parent carer and family carer as extra trustees. Used to get newsletter and would like that to come back”



“Parents could have a little more say in some things at Orchard Close. To send out questionnaires to parents, to see if anything could be done differently and for the service users. Would like some feedback.”





The service users maybe need a say in what happens at Orchard Close.”

What difference has Orchard Close made to you?

Every parent carer/family member who took part in this engagement felt that respite at Orchard Close had made a big difference to them and the person they cared for. They said that it gave them the opportunity to have a break from the pressures of their caring responsibilities, to have a holiday, go to appointments, do tasks at home, spend time with their partners and other family members, whilst knowing the person they cared for was safe and happy.

“I can have a break knowing our young people are safe. Catch up with the decorating at home. Just have a rest with no stress”

“Gives me a chance to focus on other family members/siblings. Allows us to relax have family holidays without worrying - knowing they are in a safe environment... Gives us time to catch up on things around the home. Recharges your batteries for when they come home.”

“I can have a break and know that I won’t get a phone call to bring them home early and can go away for the first time ever.”

“A great deal of difference, I can trust he is being looked after in good faith and do not worry about him at all. As my son is 55 years old it is getting harder, as I am now a widow and have all the responsibility of looking after him.”

Being able to go on holiday abroad with my husband, knowing my daughter is being well cared for while we are in another country. “

“We know he will have a wonderful time going out and enjoying himself in the community and that he is safe and much valued. We can therefore relax and enjoy the limited time we have to be a normal couple doing what other people take so much for granted!”

Having access to good quality respite was essential for emotional well-being and parent carer/family members questioned whether they would be able to continue with their caring responsibilities without the respite they received.

“We could not survive without it. We would undoubtedly be in crisis and in all likelihood unable to continue caring full time”

“I could not survive without Orchard Close. We all need respite - the impact of this on parent/carers mental health and wellbeing. We struggled to get a place at Orchard Close. When we were given nights, we went to Orchard Close”



Orchard Close Engagement

“It enables us to look after our son at home. Without it we couldn’t do it. He would have to move to supported living or residential care with associated stress and worry for us and our son, and huge financial implications for HCC”

“I honestly don’t know what I would do without it, there is literally nowhere else like it. My 21 year old son, absolutely loves going there especially because it is like being home with his friends. This means I can leave him and even go on holiday myself without worrying how he is.”

What would you want from Orchard Close or other respite in the future?

Participants were unanimous in saying that they wanted Orchard Close to be kept open and to offer the same level of service.

The same "Gold star" and unique service it provides. Trained staff, good food, good location for Hayling Island Seafront and other attractions on the island and further afield, providing opportunities for my brother to go out and socialise with others and interact with them and the staff.”

“We are very happy with Orchard Close and just want it to stay open in the future without the threat of closure all the time “

“Secure, safe respite - same carers - no reduction in nights, local to us. With peers in an area he knows - trips out - able to be social- not be mucked about or worried that it will be closed anyway a year down the line.”

“We would want exactly what Orchard Close provides and had provided in the past.”

Some participants said in the future Orchard Close should be more accessible to carers by expanding the types of services it offered. Their suggestions included, introducing day services, allowing the purchase of extra days and opening the service to Shared Lives users and carers from a wider geographical area.

**“Look at day services.
Saturday clubs”**

“May be open it up to group homes again, contribute towards the cost for extra respite.”



Orchard Close Engagement

“Block booking - to sell to other authorities remaining amount for Hampshire”

“Change of language from ‘holiday home’ to ‘Parent Carer respite’ to be used. To raise extra funds, offer extra nights to carers for a contribution”



“To be able to pay for extra days if needed and availability. Open up to more Family Carers, extend across to include Portsmouth and Southampton. Open it up to carers of Shared Lives (some continually live with them came for 3 weeks has been with me for 16 years)”



“Better use of Trust Deed - says covers all of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton”

“We have gone over to Direct Payments, thinking of my daughters future, but it would be lovely knowing that my daughter could still use Orchard Close and pay from the direct payments, so myself and my husband could still go away for 7 days”

“Direct Payments could be used to pay costs towards Orchard Close. Carers willing to pay towards the cost of extra care when needed”

Several participants also spoke about ways of generating income by carers contributing additional payments towards the cost of using Orchard Close.

“Allow people to contribute towards the cost. Take Shared Lives. If not, all rooms are booked out put a notice up on the website so people can have the space, but charge for it”

“The majority of parent carers would happily contribute towards the cost or pay for extra respite”

“I don’t understand why no charge is made for Orchard Close. Future viability - users to contribute towards running costs”

In one of the group sessions participants focused on adding to the facilities and activities on offer at Orchard Close. They said that they would like to see a “swimming pool... a gardening club... life skill lessons... TVs with DVD players in every room” and “better WIFI”.



How do you feel about the different options being explored as an alternative to closure?

HCC Adult's Health and Care continue to run a service at Orchard Close in its current format

The preferred option for all participants was that HCC Adults Health and Care continue to run the service in its current format, with all those who stated a preference choosing this option.

They said that;

“Orchard Close needs to be run by professionals. It needs continuity of staff. This is best achieved through HCC.”

“HCC to continue to run would be best and provide continuity for current Service Users.”

“My son feels safe and happy at Orchard Close. The staff understand him, he trusts them and so do I... This is the only option that we want, we are happy with how it is run, why change it? Orchard Close to be run by HCC and continue to be the jewel in HCC's crown”

One response said:

“We would be happy if Orchard Close continued to be run in its current format, as it works. We would also be happy if Orchard Close was run by a charitable trust. But do not want it to be run by a private company.”

Somebody else runs a service at Orchard Close e.g. private or voluntary organisation

No-one said that another organisation delivering the service was their preferred option. Many felt strongly that a private provider or voluntary organisation would impact on the quality of the service.

“A private organisation/business would be “in it for the money” and would always be looking to make a profit for the business at the expense of the vulnerable. I feel a voluntary organisation would not have the expertise or knowledge to run such a place, with its challenges of Service Users etc.”

“If any private company were to run Orchard Close it would be for the benefit of profit, which no doubt would result in job losses and incurred costs.”

“No, as private people would place profit first”

“Private would only be in it to make money, the care might not be as good, may be a high turnover of staff”

Carers/parents/family/staff have control over the running of Orchard Close through a charitable trust or community interest company

When discussing Orchard Close being run by carers/parents, many said that they did not have the time or expertise to make this option effective. Some highlighted that they already have fulltime caring responsibilities, employment, and in some cases, felt their age and health issues would make such a commitment impractical. Others were concerned that they lacked the expertise to operate the service effectively. As one respondent explained we are *“not able to do a lot due to age - both myself and my family have enough to do...This option doesn't give carers the respite!!”*

“Very dubious about this. Few have the necessary skills or knowledge of the legal implications involved”

“Becoming a “trustee” would be too onerous for us - we are both in our 70s”

“Being a carer severely restricts the amount of time available to do other things. This is why respite is so important to us! We are balancing work and caring and do not have the time.”

“Parent Carers don't have time to do this. Not sure how this would work. Parent Carers need support not more work”

Although no participants said they would *prefer* carers/parents/family/staff to run Orchard Close as a charitable trust or CIC, this engagement does show that carers/family members would like to become more involved in the decision-making processes. A recurring comment was that they would like more representation and say in how the service is run. Their suggestions included; having carer representatives on the charitable trust and a Parent Carer Forum that gives service users and their carers the opportunity to help shape the service.



Orchard Close Engagement

“If Orchard close continues as HCC led, it needs carers on the charitable trust and needs some sort of forum of parent carers to represent our views”

“Some parent carers involvement would be good, but carers don’t have capacity to do it by ourselves”

“Can carers assist through trust or CIC rather than run it in its entirety? HCC should still support this... Carers should already be on the current charitable trust rather than just HCC. Current set up lacks integrity”

“Carers may have a role in terms of governance but would not have the time or expertise to run the organisation.”

“It should not be given to a private company to run under any circumstance - carers/parents could be more involved using the charitable trust as support and should be involved in that way.”

How do you feel about becoming involved in assisting any model that includes carers/parents/family/staff through a charitable trust/entity?

When asked how they would feel about becoming involved in assisting this model, many participants said that for the reasons set out above, they did not have the capacity to become involved.

“Would not like to be involved as could have far reaching legal repercussions if things went wrong.”

“Because I have a long-term illness, I’m unable to physically be involved but I’m willing to assist in any other way.”

“Being a carer severely restricts the amount of time available to do other things. This is why respite is so important to us.”

“We are both too old to even consider this option”

However, participants who attended the group sessions said they “would be interested in looking at this option”, with some individuals indicating in written responses that they would be interested in becoming more involved to keep it open.

Orchard Close Engagement

“I would be happy to be part of a community interest company if it would keep Orchard Close open. Parent carers should be on the board of trustees. It would add extra stress to some people, some parent carers are older themselves and would struggle to do this”.

“I already feel bogged down, but we would do this to save it. A community interest company would be better.”

“I would definitely want to become involved if this was an option other than Orchard Close still being run by HCC. Having spoken to someone who went to visit a similar facility which is run this way and has become a success.”

Several said they needed more information about what this option would look like to make their decision.

“With the relevant information I would give it due consideration”

“Yes, would be willing to explore that, but we would need a lot more detail to start considering this. We would prefer HCC to continue funding though and have a model that is co-produced”

Do you have any other comment you would like to add about carers breaks and carers support?

The importance of being able to get good quality respite.

“These breaks are essential and so is carers support. It is an extremely stressful life, caring for someone, so knowing there is trustworthy help by professional empathetic people is a must. Sometimes it’s difficult to get the strength to carry on!!”

“Respite saved me from suicide, sadly only received respite when having a breakdown. Need the break at the end of every 4 months to recuperate from 24-hour caring”

“As we get older, we need more respite because sometimes we find it a real struggle and just want some of the weight lifted off our shoulders, and the responsibility for a short while. Going for respite at Orchard Close is ideal. Please keep it open for us and all the other carers who use it. We need this support.”



A lack of support for carers

A recurring issue was parent carers felt they did not have enough support and were not listened to regarding their support needs.

“As carers we don’t feel we get supported, why do we have to fight for everything”

“Severe lack of carers support. Already on our knees - we need supporting not constantly fighting - please support us.”

“We feel we are not being listened too”

Cost savings in respite care could lead to rising costs in the longer term if families are unable to cope

Participants said that cuts in respite services could cause families to be unable to continue being carers, leading to service users having to move into fulltime residential care.

“We as parents/carers have to fight for everything that our adults need and most of what they need we shouldn’t have to constantly battle for. All we need is some support for us to be able to care for our adults at home with the help of respite. The alternative would end up costing HCC the millions we save them every year with them not being in full time residential care.”

“Despite the need for councils to balance their books and make cutbacks if they continue to do so e.g closing Orchard Close then this means carers have even less support. This inevitably means in a lot of cases a crisis occurs when carers can't cope because of a lack of respite and those they are looking after end up being placed in residential care or some other care. There needs to be more support and availability for respite for carers to sustain looking after people with learning disabilities who live with family/parents.”



Orchard Close Staff Engagement

Healthwatch Hampshire were asked by the Voluntary Sector/Carer/Service User/Officer Working Group to consult Orchard Close staff for this engagement.

Methodology

Healthwatch Hampshire adapted the questions set by the working group in order to capture the views and experiences of Orchard Close staff. The questions in the survey focused on what they were most proud of about the service, their perception of its impact on service users and carers/family members and their preferred option for future delivery. It also asked staff to consider possible improvements to the service and avenues for income generation.

The survey was delivered via an online portal (www.smartsurvey.com) which allowed staff to comment anonymously, with the results being sent directly to Healthwatch staff. Healthwatch also offered to send out written surveys to any staff members who would prefer to complete it in paper format. Healthwatch received responses from 12 staff members in total.

Findings

What aspects of the service at Orchard Close are you most proud of?

Staff identified many aspects of the service which they felt proud of; these included, helping service users grow in confidence, delivering personalised care, providing an exciting holiday, building trusting relationships with service users and giving carers “peace of mind” while they had a break.

Helping service users grow in confidence

Staff said that they were proud that the care they provided at Orchard Close helped service users grow in confidence, socialise and learn new skills. This was echoed in responses received by service users, many of whom said that their time at Orchard Close had helped them be more independent.

“I walk into Orchard Close and instantly feel proud of everything we do, it’s hard to separate but I think our proudest moments are when a new service user joins us and how it can sometimes change their life, as in they come out of their shell and gain confidence and become able to approach us, to socialise with other service users and even make long term friends.”

Orchard Close Engagement

“I’m proud of the fact that most of the service users we have staying at Orchard Close absolutely adore coming here, they look forward to it and are so pleased when they walk through the door. I’m proud of the fact the service users feel safe, happy and looked after whilst staying at Orchard Close. It’s also lovely to know that they get the opportunity to try new things, have different experiences and make new friends.”

Personalised care

Staff said one of the service’s strengths was that it offered a personalised approach to care. They said by focusing on the needs and choices of service users and their families, they were able to ensure that service users got the most out of their time away, and carers felt secure that their loved ones were well cared for.

“Service users come here to have a holiday. Everyone is treated as individuals and their break is tailored to what they want from their holiday.”

“I am incredibly proud of the team and the way they are able to adapt their approach to any individual who uses the service.”

“With regards to special requests, bookings, activities etc, if there is any possibility something can be done - then Orchard Close will leave no stone unturned to try and get it done for our service users”

“100% person centred orientated”

Activities, Location and Community Links

Staff said service users enjoyed trips and activities with their friends. They also felt that the seaside location, the house, grounds and the links with+ the local community meant that Orchard Close offered something unique.

“Beautiful, large garden, suitable for people with autism, perfect location, very near the beach”

“The totally unique environment with amazing grounds, orchards and space for our most challenging service users to be able to explore in a very safe environment. The fact that WE CARE”

“We make excellent use of the local Hayling beach train which runs along the beach front and it is a weekly activity. The local vendors are very welcoming, and the local community is often supporting us.”



Trusting and supportive relationships with service users

Staff were proud that they had built strong trusting relationships with service users, in some cases over many years.

“The staff team care, it's not just a job, and have built up a strong rapport of mutual trust and respect!”

“The longevity of the staff team ensures we have a very clear insight into our service users’ needs and requirements and how to give them the best stay possible.”

“Some of the staff team have been working there a number of years and are very familiar with our guys, whilst also enjoying meeting new users and introducing them to our service. This is a process that can take several years of building up routines and trust among our guys e.g. it is wonderful to see how a service user with high support needs would scream for hours in the car park and refuse to get out of the car several years ago, will now run into the building chatting to all the staff by name and relaxing immediately into his routine.”

“Peace of mind” for carers so they can take a break

Staff felt proud that parents, carers and family members trusted them to look after their loved ones. They said that this enabled them to take a break without worrying.

“We provide a safe happy environment where parents/carers feel confident about leaving their loved ones and are able to re-charge their batteries...”

“Parents/carers feel totally at ease to leave the country and go on their own breaks without a backwards glance as they’re so confident in Orchard Close staff team to look after them”



What could be done, if anything, to make Orchard Close better for service users and parent carers?

More allocation

Staff said they felt that carers/parents/family would like the opportunity to use the service more.



“I’m not sure parents/carers want anything, except maybe more allocation.”



“Service users/parent carers have the opportunity to pay for additional nights of respite”

Updating some of the facilities

Staff spoke about upgrading the building and facilities, to make Orchard Close more accessible, improve service user privacy, and facilitate the use of technology.



“The building could do with being updated - the Wi-Fi is non-existent at best - extremely challenging for service users who rely very much on that technology - although apparently its being updated shortly.”



“A lift maybe, to make upstairs more accessible to all. A lick of paint.”

“Some adaptations to the building to make supporting service users with disabilities a bit easier e.g. widen downstairs corridor, add hoist facilities in other downstairs bedrooms Room 1 and 5”

“Interior of building needs to be upgraded, for example; the walls, doors, need to be painted, renew toilets, bathrooms, bedrooms. General refreshment will be great”

Other comments



“Save money have set shut times i.e. Christmas do not open for one service user - waste of money. Have better in-house recruitment and deal with issues in house faster”



“For the service users, to be given more choice whilst here.”

“Give us more staff”



What do you feel is most important to service users and carers about Orchard Close?

Service Users

Staff identified that service users most valued socialising, taking part in activities and staying in a safe, familiar environment with staff they trusted.

“Meeting up with friends they've known, in some cases, for 30+ years. Going out on trips. Seeing their friends”

“That they are with their friends and do fun things together. That they arrange their breaks to come with their friends. Its relaxed and fun for them. Freedom from family i.e. stay up late, go out for meals and do more things in the evening and afternoons. It's fun here, and the fact they're with a group of their peers.”

“The `holiday` feel to Orchard Close has always appealed to families and service users. Many service users say Orchard Close is their holiday. The activities are very important to service users and families.”

Carers

Staff identified that for carers/family members the most important feature of their respite at Orchard Close was that they could take a break, knowing that their loved one was well looked after and happy. Staff felt that trust and safety were key concerns, which echoes the responses received from parent carers/family members.

“The care, and peace of mind... The well-trained staff - in all aspects of care. A safe and beautiful quiet setting”

“Parents and carers know that their family member will be safe, treated with respect and will have a lovely holiday while staying at Orchard Close. They trust the staff and management of Orchard Close.”

“I think the familiarity of the staff team is important to both service users and their families. I think knowing your son/daughter is being supported by people who know them well instils trust in parents/carers. This is also important to service users when supporting them with personal care, mealtimes and activities”



Given the options presented by Hampshire County Council (HCC), which could include:

- HCC Adults' Health and Care continues to run a service at Orchard Close in its current format.
- Somebody else runs a service at Orchard Close e.g. a private or voluntary organisation.
- Carers/Parents/family/staff have control over the running of Orchard Close through a charitable trust or Community Interest Company.

What do you want to see in the future for service provision at Orchard Close?

All staff who stated a preference, said they would like the service to remain being run by HCC Health and Care.

“HCC to continue to run the service - HCC is accountable to a much more rigorous standard than most private companies and that is what our service users need and expect.”

“HCC to carry on running it but to accept service users who pay privately as we use to do, removing these in the first place has seem to trigger a loss of incoming finance.”

Do you have any ideas or suggestions on efficiencies and possible income generation at Orchard Close?

Staff felt that income could be generated by making unused occupancy available to carers from other geographical areas, by allowing self-funding and permitting the purchase of extra nights.

“HCC could sell some beds outside of Hampshire which is what used to happen in the past. Dates could be offered to service users from other counties when occupancy isn't so high.”

“To take people from outside of county and direct payments as we used to take them... they would add finances to the service and fill the empty beds during quieter months”

“Allow for people out of county to pay for nights of respite. Allow for shared lives, residential to pay for nights of respite... advertise Orchard Close across the UK to anyone with a learning disability and allow them to pay for respite at Orchard Close”



Summary of findings

The over whelming response from service users, parents, carers and families and ultimately the option most favoured is for Hampshire County Council to continue to run the service at Orchard Close.

Service users said they enjoyed their time at Orchard Close as they took part in activities and trips, they were able to socialise with friends and had positive relationships with staff who understood and responded to their needs. Service users also commented that they liked the house and gardens, the meals on offer and the seaside location. A significant theme in the feedback was continuity and consistency of the Orchard Close staff team. Service Users felt this was a key factor in the future service delivery.

Parent, carers and family members valued the respite they received through Orchard Close. It provided them with a trusted and safe place, giving them peace of mind while they took a break knowing that their loved ones were happy and well-looked after. The preferred option throughout the feedback was that Hampshire County Council continue to run the service, with concerns around any external provider giving the same quality of service currently received.

Parents, carers and family members were mixed in their responses to being more involved in the running of Orchard Close, with a significant amount concerned that any level of responsibility would not be possible due to caring commitments, their current professional and personal commitments and age being highlighted.

Where respondents were interested, further work needs to be investigated to ensure that any commitments are clearly defined and sustainable. Some suggested they would like to be more involved in decision-making processes, these could include having carer representatives on a charitable trust and a forum that gives service users and their carers the opportunity to help shape the service.

Parents, carers and family members highlighted that having good quality, regular respite was important for their wellbeing, which enabled them to continue their caring responsibilities. There was a consensus throughout the engagement activity that Hampshire County Council needs to communicate more effectively with parents, carers and family members and by listening to them, can be more responsive to their support needs.

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