

Carers Centre Relocation Consultation Results November 2013

Background

There is a proposal as part of the Oldham town centre regeneration to redevelop and improve the area around Union Street. The redevelopment is linked to the new tram line that will make the town centre more accessible and vibrant.

The Phoenix Centre and surrounding land including the car parks will be part of this redevelopment and because of this, the Carer's Centre services will relocate to another venue.

The Carers Centre services provided by Wired (a registered charity), will continue in a different venue. The staff providing the services will still be there to support carers though they may be based somewhere different.

The construction for the development is due to begin in spring 2013 and the services are expected to relocate by the end of 2012. The Wired staff have gathered the views of carers and have worked in partnership with Oldham Council to find the most appropriate alternative accommodation for services.

The Consultation

A consultation took place which closed on Tuesday 30th October regarding what type of accommodation carers felt the services need in the future. The design of the survey included the following questions for carers:

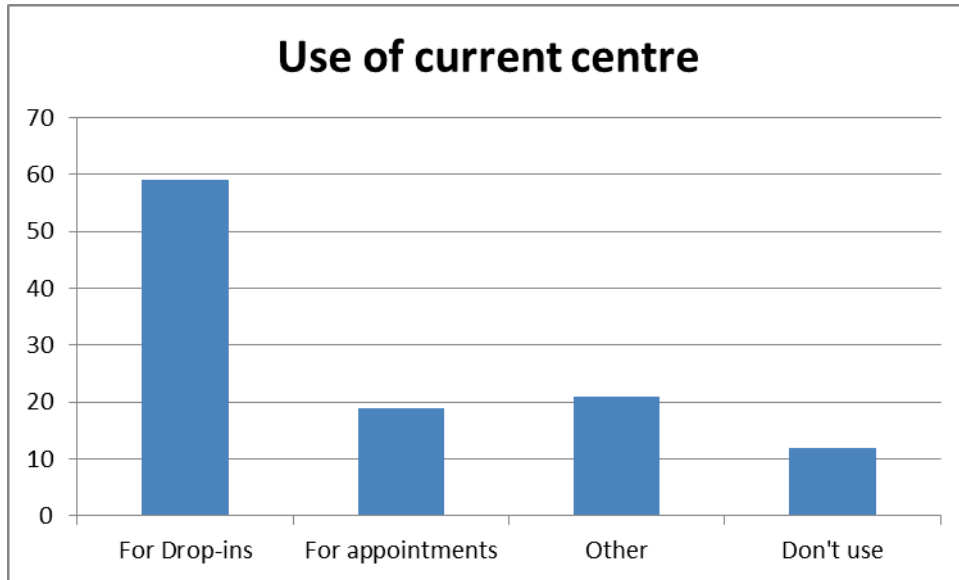
1. Do you access any services at the Phoenix Centre currently?
2. If you don't use the current venue, why not?
3. What transport links would you require to visit a new venue?
4. Where in Oldham could a new carers centre be based?
5. Are there any specific access requirements you would need the new venue to have?
6. What would make it easier or better for you to access services at any new venue?
7. Could services be delivered from a range of different venues rather than just one?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The consultation questionnaire was distributed in a number of ways. The council alerted carers to the consultation by writing to them about the relocation and outlining the opportunities available for comment. The Carers Centre staff and volunteers gathered views at the drop in sessions at the Carers Centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays and distributed questionnaires to anyone calling in. There was also an online questionnaire on Survey Monkey. <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WFQB62J>

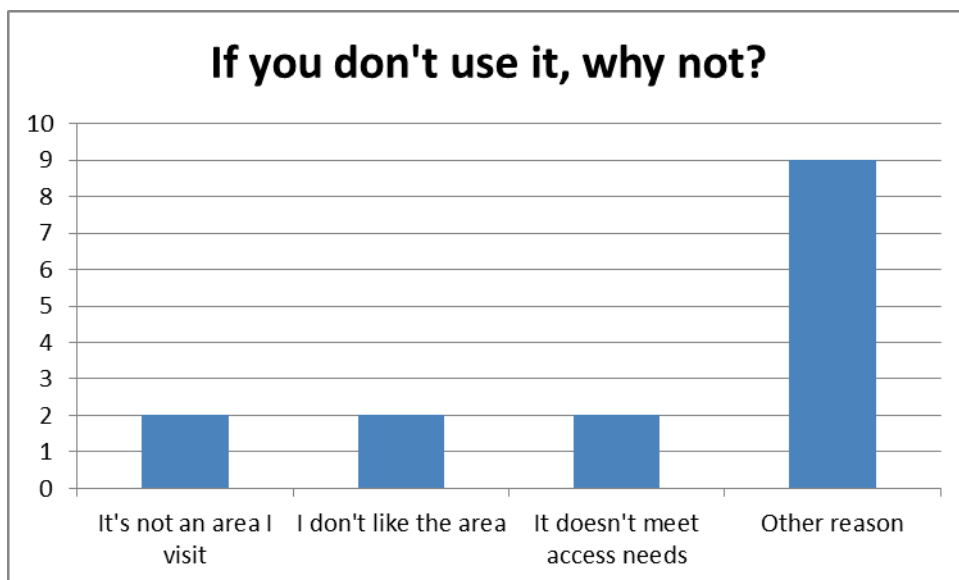
The final opportunity for carers to contribute to the consultation was at the Carers Voice event at the Link Centre on Tuesday, 30th October.

Results

There were 84 responses to the consultation of which 13 were completed online. The majority of people who responded use the current centre for the drop-ins (59 people) with 12 people who didn't use anything.

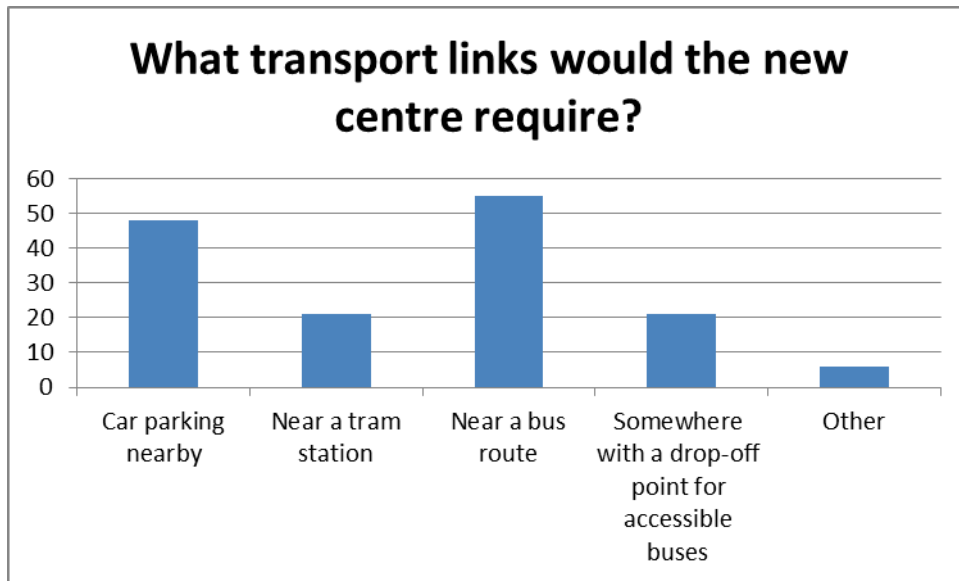


From respondents who don't use the current centre (question 2) there wasn't a theme in the responses but people stated that the times of opening didn't suit them, the centre was difficult to get to, they didn't know what was on offer in addition to the options below.

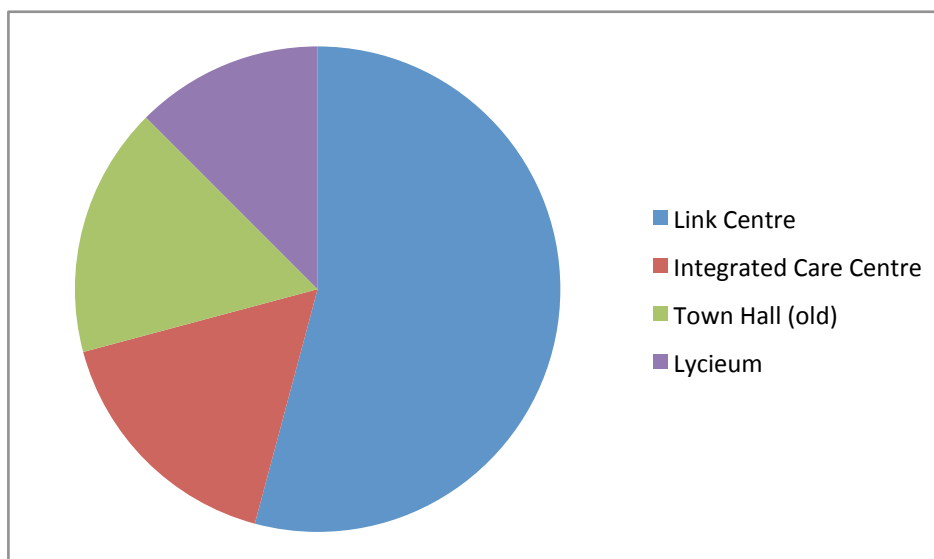


Transport (question 3) was obviously important to many carers as many additional comments showed. The 2 most important elements were car parking and being near a bus route. There were a number of requests for free

parking recognising that if carers visit the centre without the person they care for they cannot use their blue badge.



With regards to where a new carers centre could be based (question 4) there were a large number of suggestions (31) however the majority were only mentioned by only 1 person and were privately owned venues e.g. Spindles. The most popular venues are shown in the following chart.

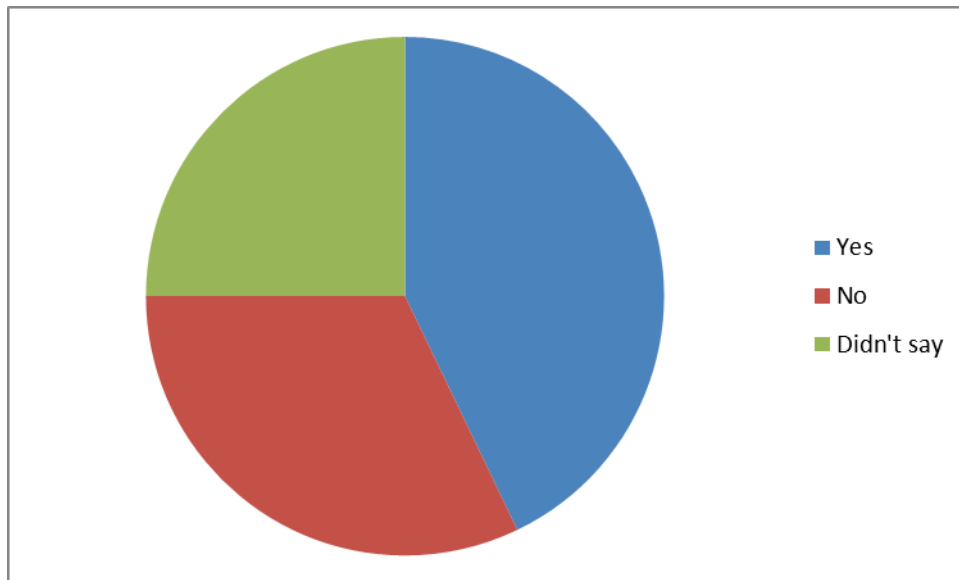


The majority of respondents (49) also asked for a town centre venue.

The access requirements that people requested (question 5) frequently reflected the transport needs shown above but a number of people specifically requested access for disabled people, requirements to deliver the services e.g. office space and kitchen facilities and a welcoming environment. The comments on what would make it easier for people to access the new venue reflected the previous answers in the main with transport access and access for disabled people being the most popular answers. A couple of

people mentioned about wanting more information which emphasises the need to ensure any change is well publicised.

There were a significant number of people who didn't say on question 7 whether they would like services to be delivered in more than one venue (21) but the majority that answered suggested that services could be delivered from more than one place (36) with suggestions that there be occasional events or drop-ins elsewhere.



In response to whether there was anything else they would like to add (question 8) comments were varied with some people reiterating their previous comments and some expressing concern about the move and potential effect on services. Full results of the survey are available on request.

Looking at the above results it is clear that the new venue would ideally be:

- Central
- Close to all transport links
- Have car parking on site or near-by
- Be fully accessible
- Be able to accommodate all services provided by the current centre (with some opportunity to do occasional sessions elsewhere)

How were results considered?

Wired developed an accommodation brief based on the needs of services and the results of this consultation which outlined the expectations and requirements of any future facility.

Oldham Council looked for alternative accommodation for the services and provided Wired with a list of options. These were evaluated against the accommodation brief and there was only one venue that came close to meeting the majority of the essential requirements for the services and carers; this was the Link Centre.

Other venues were suggested by the council including the Lyceum, the Gallery / Museum, Rock Street Centre and these were considered as well as other venues suggested by carers. The following explains why these were not suitable:

- A number of carers had asked for either a new building or for refurbishment of an existing one, unfortunately due to the timescales for the redevelopment of the town centre this would not be logistically possible.
- Some carers had requested venues that were near to them but not in the town centre so would be inconvenient for many carers as shown by the consultation responses.
- Other suggestions included a number of privately owned buildings; these would have market value that is not affordable in the current climate especially those in the town centre and they would also require refurbishment and/or renovation. As above there is not sufficient time for this to happen before the proposed moving date.
- The Lyceum and Gallery would be appropriate venues for drop-in sessions and events but could not accommodate the other services or office space. These venues may be used for one-off events in future but cannot be the main base for the Carers Services.
- Rock Street has some office space but is not central and it is at the top of a hill so has access issues that a significant number of carers were concerned about so is not suitable.
- The Honeywell centre was requested but is outside of the town centre again not meeting the majority of carers needs.
- Libraries in areas outside the centre could be used for occasional drop-ins but would not be appropriate for the majority of carers who requested a central location.
- The Integrated care centre and other new PCT buildings were suggested but whilst there might be office space, would have limited availability for other provision and have higher rents attached; these 2 issues make them unsuitable.

Conclusion

As the Link Centre was the most popular venue that was actually requested by carers, is in the town centre (also the most popular area for the facility), and met the needs of service delivery it is the preferred option for the relocation of the carers centre.

Any change in services can be difficult especially when you have caring responsibilities. It is important to carers that services continue and the staff who provide them continue to do so. The team will work with the council to ensure that carers are informed of the change in venue and are working to ensure a smooth transition to the new venue.

The team from Wired look forward to working with carers in the Link Centre from 2013.