

Biggar Community Council Consultation on Health and Social Care

Overview

Responses were obtained from:

1. An event at the Gillespie Centre (50-60 people attended)
2. An event at Langvout Court involving the tenants of Langvout Court and Langvout Square (around a dozen people attended)
3. A Survey Monkey questionnaire with 24 respondents

The Gillespie event also involved a consultation on transport, and asking people what they thought BCC should focus on. The Health and Social Care survey was carried out in partnership with Biggar Wee Oasis, a group working to try to find uses for the vacant day care building. **None of the responses reflect the views of Biggar Community Council. This collection of local opinions is simply a starting point for discussion.**

Three questions were asked in all of the settings:

What is good about Health and Social Care Provision locally?

What is not so good about health and social care provision locally?

What would you like to change about health and social care locally?

At the Gillespie and at Langvout an additional question was asked about possible uses for the vacant day care building.

Transport

22 responses highlighted the difficulty of getting to medical appointments using public transport. The hospitals mentioned were Wishaw General, Monklands, Hairmyres, Golden Jubilee and Borders General. Home visits and localised clinics were seen as a possible solution. There were seven comments about patient transport, often about the long waits, with a story about a ninety six year old woman arriving home at midnight. A voluntary transport scheme for hospital visits was suggested. People also commented that it is difficult to get out and about, to get to activities in the town, to get to places where they can meet other people. Transport to medical appointments and social care resources like Day Care was the strongest theme to emerge from the consultation.

Biggar Medical Practice

There were a total of 34 positive comments, often very positive, about Biggar Medical Practice. These included comments like “superb GPS” and “quality care is offered by professionals”.

However, 21 responses mentioned the appointment system, with 18 of these comments being negative. Difficulties with the appointment system were seen as:

- the difficulty of making an appointment if you work away from Biggar as the triage system needs you to take a whole day off work
- the difficulty of trying to see the same GP, important for continuity of care
- the current appointment system does not work for disabled, blind or deaf people
- its hard to get an appointment
- appointments are not long enough - “feeling the clock is ticking”
- the attitude of receptionists can be off putting

There was a comment that the appointment system is not fit for purpose. People's aspirations included being able to fit doctor's appointments around work and community activities.

Possible solutions were seen as having more bookable appointments online and running “drop in” surgeries where people understand they will need to wait (like the old doctor's surgeries!). Other comments about Biggar Medical Practice included: “its hard to get home visits”, “ there are no district nurses or on call doctors”; “health visitors should be replaced by district nurses”. Some respondents stated that there should be more doctors and that doctors should be full time so that “patients don't feel like a nuisance”.. Difficulties with getting prescriptions sorted out was a theme at the consultation event held at Langvout Court, with difficulties when prescriptions changed highlighted. A prescription delivery service would be welcomed and it was suggested that prescriptions should be designed so that all medications run out at the same time.

It was suggested that:

- The patient advocate group at BMP should be more inclusive and allow members of the public to attend;
- There should be more regular patient surveys which are well publicised so that everyone can participate and be made aware of outcomes
- Another Medical Practice might provide healthy competition

Other health services

Most responses about the Kello Hospital were positive, with one respondent stating that it is a fabulous and indispensable facility. There were positive comments about the pharmacy: “love the pharmacy-so helpful!”. The two dental practices and the opticians received praise. Community psychiatric nurses were seen as understanding and supportive.

Resource Issues: Health Care

Several respondents expressed concern that the expansion of Biggar's population due to new housing estates being built is straining Health Care resources in the area and that resources should be increased in line with the population growth.

Several people suggested that the Kello should be upgraded to be able to deal with a wider range of incidents and to be able to offer more help at weekends.

One respondent highlighted the lack of resources for mental health, with no mental health worker based in Biggar, another called for more Community Psychiatric Nurse support for dementia patients.

The distance between Clydesdale and most health care services provided by hospitals was a theme that ran throughout the whole consultation. Related to this, one comment concerned the limited services available at Lanark Medical Centre, despite what we were promised, another highlighted the fact that there are no major hospitals in South Lanarkshire. Someone felt that we do not have equal access to a full range of services because of our rural location.

Inevitably, there were comments about long waiting times for hospital appointments and referrals, and, of course, about the need for more staff and more money.

Social Care

The alert community alarm system, the community crisis team the home care team and the occupational therapy service were commented on positively.

The following points were raised about Home Care

- Social Care is not easily available and hard to source
- The role of carers is limited to personal care, there is no scope for domestic care or social activity, a more flexible approach to help is needed, what us offered is too rigid

Six people, five of whom were in receipt of home care, commented that carers can't spend enough time with people. This issue was a theme at the Langvout Court consultation. Other issues raised there, which did not really crop up elsewhere, were:

- Having to use the phone when you have a hearing impairment
- It is hard to access regular maintenance for calipers/shoes
- There should be better access for hearing and eye tests – they should come to us
- Trips should be organised for older people

Five people commented about the absence of a local Day Care facility, and the consequences of this for people who are housebound and lonely.

Quite a number of the comments about residential care related to the closure of local facilities over recent years i.e. Abbeyfield, Bield Day Care, Care Home and Bield at Home service. One respondent said “the closure of Bield Care Home and Day Care has diminished our community”. Three people commented that, in the light of the rise in the number of people diagnosed with dementia, it is hard to understand why resources are being shut down. One person commented that it is a waste to leave the Bield buildings empty when there is a demand for local care. Another theme was that there is no choice of care home in Biggar. If you want choice you have to travel outwith the area. Local provision allows people to stay in touch with friends and family. One respondent said “Greenhills should be a great place for stimulating care of our elderly. We need more pressure on the company to resource it properly. We are a very engaged community but need their commitment”.

It was acknowledged that social services were stretched and 8 people commented on the need for more local provision, both residential and home based. One respondent suggested that something in between home care and residential care would be good.

Other comments included:

- Carers need more support.
- Befriending services are needed.
- There is limited accommodation for elderly and those with physical challenges.
- Social care support for dementia patients is patchy at best.
- There is increased pressure in Kello due to Lockhart Hospital being closed, which has decreased the potential of the Kello to be a respite facility.
- There is a need for more services for people experiencing a mental health crisis (and their carers)
- A local counselling service is needed.
- There is a need to increase support and access to technology for hearing difficulties
- Agencies don't communicate with each other.

And one comment, which, from experience, I would wholeheartedly endorse:
“We have a social care system full of hurdles rather than help when it's needed.”

But, on a more positive note, people said: “We get what we want when we need it”; “the standard of care is good”; “everyone tries their hardest in a difficult financial climate”.

A number of people who felt our services are good at the moment were worried about the impact of new housing and the resultant increase in population.

Wider Issues

Three people commented that access to the Corn Exchange, shops and toilets should be improved and there was a comment that the lighting in Langvout Court and MacDairmid Court should be improved.

At a Scotland wide level, comments included:

“Our government is not intent on privatising the NHS”; “Our services haven't disappeared

completely”.

At the level of the Health and Social Care Partnership one comment was that there is a lack of willingness to take account of the needs of a rural area. “ It tends to be “one size fits all”.

Information about future health and social care provision in Clydesdale would be welcome.

Possible Uses for Bield Day Care Building

Nine people wanted the building used for Day Care! This is probably not an option as this form of service delivery is being phased out by many councils. Two respondents spoke about a community hub for older people and it is possible that this could be developed, with a mixture of the following components generated from suggestions at the Gillespie Centre and Langvout Court consultations.

Support Services

Support groups; mental health services, including groups and a range of therapies; counselling; access to therapies for those on low incomes; bereavement support; carer information, advice and support; drop in centre; advice centre e.g. CAB, Welfare Rights advice.

Social

Social events, particularly for the residents of Langvout Court; activities e.g. art and music groups; seated Qi Gong, Tai Chi and Yoga Classes; “Chill out zone”; wee cafe; hairdresser.

Medical

Local clinics: chiropody; GP surgeries; OT service :drop off/collection for OT aids and information about what is available from the OT service

Other

A base for the men's shed; training venue (this could potentially generate income).

There was a suggestion that we should work in partnership with local third sector organisations, and a widespread feeling that it is a pity to waste the currently empty space at the Bield complex when local health and care resources are stretched.

What next?

Biggar Community Council intend to publicise the findings of this survey widely, and to use it as the basis of the Community Council’s response to consultations which it responds to on this topic.

Biggar Community Council will circulate copies of this report to individuals and organisations including:

David Mundell MP.

Aileen Campbell MSP and South of Scotland Regional MSPs.

Cllrs Alex Alison, Eric Holford and Ian McAllan.

Other Community Councils in the surrounding area

Caryn Innes Bield Housing and Care

Christina Greig Bield Housing and Care

Michelle McConnachie South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Maureen Dearie South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Val de Souza Director of Health and Social Care

Ann Lindsay Health and Social Care Partnership local consultation group

Donald Stewart Biggar Medical Practice business manager

Copies will also be made available to the public via the Biggar Community Council website and social media and in Biggar Library and the Gillespie Centre.

Biggar Community Council will issue a press release to local press highlighting the main findings of the survey.