

Healthwatch Cheshire West Enter and View Report - Social Care	
<b>Enter and View Visit to</b>	Social Drop-In group supported by VIVO St Wilfrid's Church Community Centre Northwich CW9 5NP
<b>Date</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2014
<b>Authorised Representatives</b>	Sue Masterman, Jo Lewis and Neil Garbett from the Healthwatch Team
Authorized representatives would like to thank all those involved from the group for their help and comments. Thanks also go out to Fiona Gibson and Sandra Griffith, both VIVO supervisors, and to the kitchen staff/volunteers and carers who were all happy to talk to us.	
<b>Background</b>	This supported social group meet weekly, from 9.30 am until to 2.00 pm. each Thursday at the same location. This is an informal drop-in, <u>self funded from participants</u> , which appears mainly to cater for those with special needs - many of whom are service users at other VIVO-operated facilities. St Wilfred's Church Hall is used by the group - this is a reasonably well equipped Parish Centre that provides enough space for activity but also a social setting for the group. The Hall is situated in Northwich on the edge of the town centre with reasonable access to public transport (5 min walk from bus station) and on-road parking. Representatives were told that the basic costs in running the drop-in were £40 per week to cover the cost of the hall. This cost was raised by the sale of drinks and snacks and small charges for additional activity e.g. raffle.
<b>Overall impression</b>	This drop-in centre provides an excellent service to those who use it. Participants come from a wide geographical catchment area. Sessions provide participants with many different experiences including love and goodwill from friends with all participants and helpers displaying a very positive approach to activity. This centre provides immense value in terms of the lives of those it affects. It enhances physical and mental alertness and stimulates without being in any way forced or intrusive. Representatives left with a very positive impression of this relaxed, friendly, informal social group.
<b>Any ideas or suggestions for improving service?</b>	Representatives feel that the drop-in group would benefit from additional external funding to remove the need for the group to rely on food, drinks and snacks sale. A fixed grant of around £50 a week would allow the group's own income stream to pay for additional activity. The participants of the group are people who can achieve a great deal with very little in resources, but they deserve better financial support in order to fulfil their potential. Provision of a portable hoist would greatly improve facilities for those with mobility difficulties.

## Environment - Observations and service user/relative comments

Many participants were accompanied by carers. There is no charge for the drop-in and it is open to all members of the community, to come and go as they like.

The Drop-in setting, held in the Church Hall rather than a specialist centre, provides a 'club' atmosphere rather than delivery of a social care service. This also encourages social inclusion.

Staff referred to those who attended as 'service users' and said that the majority attended with either a paid member of VIVO staff or individual Personal Assistant. The majority of attendees travelled to the centre from Northwich, Winsford and Frodsham.

Although the group was open to all, staff commented that most participants had been signposted to the centre by social care staff or a personal assistant.

The hall itself is quite spacious. It is all on one level with no steps outside.

Toilet facilities are superficially clean at the hall, but (in the ladies at least) cisterns fill at a trickle and the hand-dryer was not working. Door maintenance is required with a number that do not close properly. Representatives noted that in one of the toilets a simple nail was used as a towel hanger.

Representatives were told that VIVO had contributed to have an extra disabled toilet installed at the far end of the hall. Representatives feel that the group's organizers should be commended for this. However, on observation it was noted that access to this facility is through a door that, although badged as accessible, does not appear to fully meet wheelchair standards with an additional small, sharp slope at the threshold. Staff commented that the facility was a 'best fit' in relation to the general use of the building and knew that DDA standards were not being fully met.

We welcomed the honest comments from staff who expressed considerable enthusiasm to improve facilities at the hall for those participants with mobility difficulties. Representatives noted that there was no hoist provision (fixed or portable) in the building and that provision of such would definitely improve the experience of staff and service users.

Representatives commented on the relaxed, comfortable atmosphere of the group. Staff interactions with 'service users' was informal and friendly. Staff joined in the activities on offer, participating with enthusiasm alongside group members.

## Health and Wellbeing - Observations and service user/relative comments

The atmosphere was extremely relaxed. Visitors seemed content with being in familiar surroundings with familiar people and often in familiar groups. For some, it seemed simply enough to be in different surroundings for a day. There was plenty of coming and going. The Zumba session had all those who were able on their feet, including carers, mixing and dancing with abandon.

The organisers have no control of the running or condition of the hall itself, other than cooperation with the Parish. They pay £40 rent per session. This cost has to be covered by the sale of drinks and snacks. Kitchen facilities are cramped and limited and staffing is mainly voluntary. Those working there say it is tough to raise the £40 but that they "Work hard at it!"

During a lunch period around noon, visitors purchased lunch from food outlets in Northwich Centre where there are many takeaways - this, indeed, appears to be an important part of the 'day out' to the centre.

Talking to the carers who accompany some of the visitors, there was a feeling that more could be done.

"They absolutely love music," one told us. "They need more. So much more could be done."

“There are basic needs - the hall’s own sound system is out of order. The Zumba teacher brings her own but when there is no sound system available, other musical activity is hard to stage in this large space.”  
Fund-raising and sponsorship from local businesses were suggested as a possible way forward.

### Activities and Community Links - Observations and service user/relative comments

Fiona and Sandra told us that regular activities are organised, and that the day ends with a Zumba session led by an instructor. Other activities include animal patting sessions, a reptile man, a bowls team, and talks by people such as the fire brigade or police with information on how to counter bullying and develop other social aspects of life. We were informed that a recent visit by an Elvis impersonator went down a storm. On the day we were there, there was a tombola raffle with donated prizes - small items which were received with joy by the winners. Organizers informed us that encouragement was given for attendees to take part in committee meetings held every 8 weeks to make decisions on proposed activity. On each table visitors were given ‘choice cards’ for activities on offer.

### Feedback - service user/relative/staff comments

Comments from ‘service users’ on why they use the drop-in -  
“I like coming here.” “I like to see my friends.” “Zumba is my favourite!” “Lots to do and we can choose.” “Like where it is.” “Can bring my dinner.” “Zumba is only £1.” “Staff nice”.

### Additional Comments

Staff said that although at present there isn’t any formal publicising of the drop-in (which would increase general local community residents), this may change now that VIVO has more autonomy, being a company in itself.