

**A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's**  
**The future of day opportunities in Knutsford -**  
**Consultation**

FINAL

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# Executive summary and recommendations

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## Introduction

During May / June 2023 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation on the potential decommissioning of the existing provision at the Stanley Centre in Knutsford. The consultation sought views from those who currently access day opportunities in Knutsford, their carers, potential service users, staff and the general community on what was most important when looking at learning disabilities day opportunities services, their preferences, the impact a change in service may have and on any alternative ideas for service provision.

The consultation was held online, with paper copies being made available at the Stanley Centre, Knutsford and on request. Easy read versions of the survey were also made available alongside the full version. In total, 108 responses were received during the consultation.

## Most important service aspects

All respondents were provided with a set of statements regarding learning disabilities day opportunities services and asked how important they were to them.

- Respondents felt it was particularly important for a day opportunities service to be local (ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by those who answered the full version of the survey) and provide opportunities for social interaction (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>).
- Respondents re-iterated the importance of a service that offered opportunities for social interactions, within the comments sections, adding that a local service helped to establish friendships and a feeling of being a part of the community.
- Many also mentioned it was important for a service to provide continuity and stability as this offers security, consistency, and routine for those that attend.

## Preferences and impact

Respondents were also provided with a set of options for future day opportunities.

- Receiving support at the Stanley Centre was identified as the most preferred option by respondents. 72 respondents who answered the full version of the survey (85%) ranked this option first and all of those who answered the easy read version (16 respondents) stated that they liked this idea.

- Services that offer a more outcomes focused, personalised service and more opportunities to get involved in the local and wider community was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>

Within the comments sections on 'any other preferences' and 'ideas / suggestions for ways in which the Council could obtain better value for money' the theme which received most mentions was a suggestion that the Council retain, promote and expand the Stanley Centre offer, believing it could be a valuable community hub and the most cost-effective way of delivering the level of care needed.

Alternatively, respondents stated that finding another suitable space in Knutsford would ensure some level of service is retained in the local area, perhaps joining up with the NHS services to provide a health and well-being centre incorporating essential day opportunities services at the same location as other health services.

The main impact to a change in service, cited by respondents, was stress leading to an adverse effect on the wellbeing of service users as well as their family / carers.

### **Other considerations**

Certain respondents mentioned that they would like more detail on what the options would mean in practice and a clearer breakdown of the cost savings believing them to be unclear. Questions were asked particularly in relation to the transport arrangements for alternative day opportunities services outside of Knutsford and the cost impact that may have.

### **Recommendations**

The Research and Consultation Team recommend that the details of this report are considered alongside any other supporting information when reviewing the future of the day opportunities service in Knutsford. Continued engagement with service users, their carers and staff would be beneficial to ensure their needs are met and they understand what any potential change means to them in practice.

# Introduction

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## Purpose of the consultation

A proposal around the potential decommissioning of the existing provision at the Stanley Centre in Knutsford was included within the 2023-2027 Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The MTFS was agreed on 22 February 2023, with an agreement that the proposal regarding the Stanley Centre, be subject to further consultation.

During May / June 2023 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation outlining the background of the proposal with an aim to gather views from those who currently access day opportunities in Knutsford, their carers, potential service users, staff and the general community. The consultation sought views on what was most important when looking at learning disabilities day opportunities services, their preferences, the impact a change in service may have and on any alternative ideas for service provision.

This report summarises the responses received as part of that consultation. 1-2-1 meetings are also being held with current users, their carers and staff before a decision is made. The findings from these discussions are not part of this report.

## Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was held online with paper copies being made available at the Stanley Centre, Knutsford. Easy read versions of the survey were made available alongside the full version. The consultation was promoted to:

- Current day opportunity service users in Knutsford, their carers, and staff
- Potential future day opportunity service users
- Local stakeholders including relevant community groups and organisations
- The general public

In total, 108 responses were received during the consultation, broken down as follows:

- Full version, 90 responses
- Easy Read Version, 16 responses
- Emails, 2 responses

## Section 1: Current use of Knutsford day opportunities

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Respondents were first asked a set of introductory questions on how they were responding to the consultation and if applicable were asked further questions on their current use of day opportunities in Knutsford.

From the full version of the survey (90 responses in total):

- 16 respondents stated that they currently have a family member or care for someone who attends a learning disabilities day opportunities service in Knutsford
- 10 stated that they have a family member or care for someone who may attend a learning disabilities day opportunities service in the future. 8 respondents stated that they may need to access day opportunities services in the future
- 56 responded as another interested party, describing themselves as either a resident, a health or social worker, a community group, a family friend, a town councillor.

The 16 respondents who stated that they currently have a family member, or care for someone who attends a learning disabilities day opportunities service in Knutsford, were asked some additional questions on current use:

- All (16) stated that the person they are a family member of / care for currently attends the Stanley Centre.
- 11 live in their own home or at home with family whilst 5 live in supported housing.
- 14 are currently taken to their day opportunities service by family / a carer (2 of these also stating that they walk), and 2 use their own transport.

From the easy read version of the survey (16 responses in total):

- 15 respondents identified themselves as current users of the Stanley Centre, 1 did not specify.
- 6 respondents stated that they live in their own home or at home with family and 10 live in supported housing
- 9 are currently taken to their day opportunities service by family / a carer, 4 walk, 2 use their own transport and 1 gets a taxi.

From the email responses (2 in total):

- 1 response was received from an individual and 1 response was received on behalf of Knutsford Town and Parish Council.

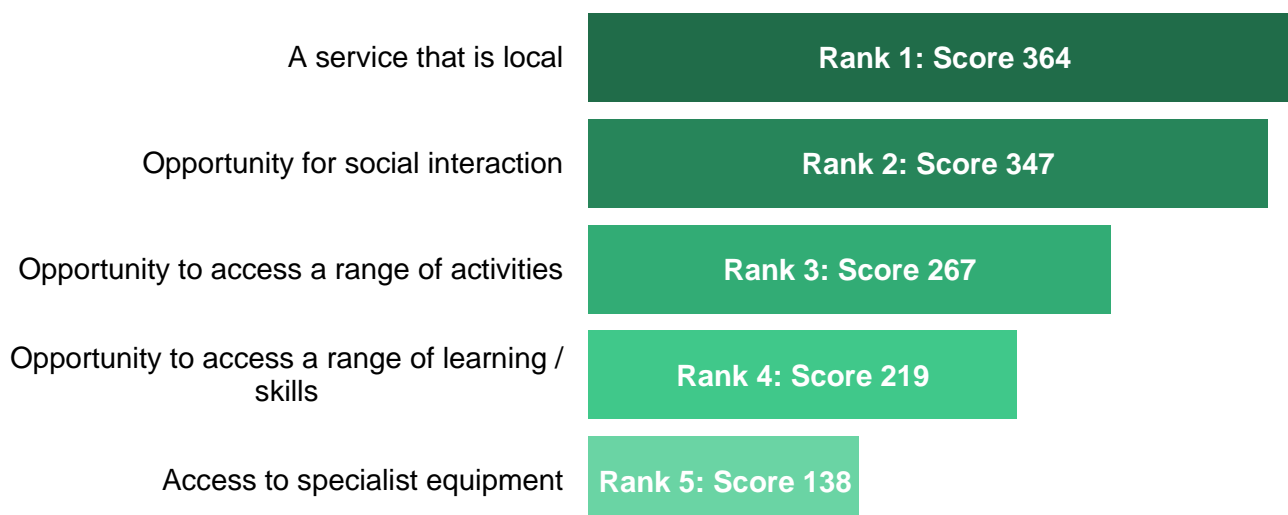
A breakdown of respondent demographics can be seen in Appendix 1, and a map of respondent postcodes can be seen in Appendix 2.

## Section 2: Most important service aspects

All respondents were provided with a set of statements regarding learning disability day opportunities services. Those who answered the full version of the survey were asked to rank the statements from 1 to 5 in order of importance to them. Those who answered the easy read version of the survey could choose from 'yes' (indicating they felt it was important), 'no' or 'don't know' for each statement.

For those who answered the full version of the survey, the most important aspect was a service that is local, which received an overall rank of 1 (score 364 out of a maximum score of 445). This was closely followed by opportunity for social interaction (overall rank 2, score 347). Access to specialised equipment was the least important (overall rank 5). Figure 1 shows the full breakdown of response.

**Figure 1: How important are the following when choosing a learning disabilities day opportunities service that you or someone you care for attends? Full survey respondents**



Base for score is 89. The score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts. Maximum score possible is 445.

The rank order was similar for those who currently have a family member or care for someone who attends a learning disabilities day opportunities service in Knutsford (current users) and those who stated they may attend / have a family member or care for someone who may attend a learning disabilities day opportunities service in the future (future users) as Table 1 shows.

**Table 1: Most important aspects broken down by current and future users**

Option	Current Users		Future Users	
	Rank Position	Rank Score	Rank Position	Rank Score
A service that is local	2	65	1	76
Opportunities for social interaction	1	67	2	66
Opportunity to access a range of activities	3	52	3	54
Opportunity to access a range of learning / skills	4	34	4	46
Access to specialist equipment	5	22	5	28
<b>Base for rank and score</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>18</b>	
The score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts. Maximum score possible is 80 and 90 respectively.				

Many of the service aspects were important for those who answered the easy read version of the survey with 11 or more (out of 16, 69% or over) selecting 'important to me' for all except one of the options which was 'for a place to have all the things needed to help me' (9 indicated that this was not important).

Respondents were asked to let us know if there was anything else important to them when choosing learning disabilities day opportunities services. 64 respondents overall chose to leave a comment (54 respondents from the full version of the survey and 10 from the easy read version, the email responses received have also been included as part of this analysis were appropriate). The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Continuity of service and stability, 19 mentions
- Opportunity for social interactions, activities & learning / local community, 19 mentions
- Should be easily accessible, 15 mentions
- Need dedicated and trained staff, 11 mentions
- General quality of the service / needs met, 8 mentions
- Respite for carer, 6 mentions
- Building based support needed, 4 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 2.



**Table 2: Anything else important**

Overall theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Continuity of service and stability	Full Version: Continuing use of a familiar setting and staff offers security, consistency and routine, many people who use the service do not like change, a change will affect their mental well-being. A local service makes it easier to settle in a familiar environment and build relationships / meet friends that have been made over the years, ability to know local area, local shopkeepers.	19
Opportunity for social interactions, activities & learning / local community	Full Version: The opportunity to leave own home and socially interact with people. To be close to the community in which they live, a sense of community and feeling part of society to counter social isolation. The ability to join in with local community activities, gain new skills and opportunities, taking part in suitable work experience and education.	11
	Easy Read Version: Seeing friends and staff I know at the Stanley Centre / in Knutsford, its lonely in own home. Being part of the group, baking together, exercising together, and playing games. Learning new things and having fun. Going on trips, going to the café, going to the supermarket, swimming.	8
Should be easily accessible	Full Version: An accessible service that is easy to get to (local) and close to the town centre / near to e.g., coffee shops, the library, supermarket, and cinema. A service that is open frequently during hours that suit those who need it. Will need transport provision if the service is not local, public transport connections to both Handforth and Macclesfield are inadequate. It would be more difficult and expensive for families / carers to transport those who use the service placing additional burdens on them.	14
	Easy Read Version: Not travelling far. Less inconvenience for the people who take me.	1
Need dedicated and trained staff	Full Version: Access to dedicated, friendly and specialist trained staff who support needs and help link in with other services. Adequate staff to group ratio.	10
	Easy Read Version: Staff must know me well and meet my certain needs and requirements.	1
General quality of the service / needs met	Full Version: Quality of provision, somewhere safe that carers trust and get the support they need, opportunity for other medical needs to be dealt with at the same location.	7
	Easy Read Version: Good quality provision. Stable environment.	1
Respite for carer	Full Version: Respite / break for family and carers from a safe and secure, easily accessed support system. Mental Health of all matters.	6
Building based support needed	Full Version: A building-based service is vital, it is an essential hub for friendships, support, advice and learning which provides a welcome and familiar place reducing loneliness and isolation, essential that this remains in Knutsford. These things cannot be replicated on a community-based approach with no central hub.	4

## Section 3: Preferences

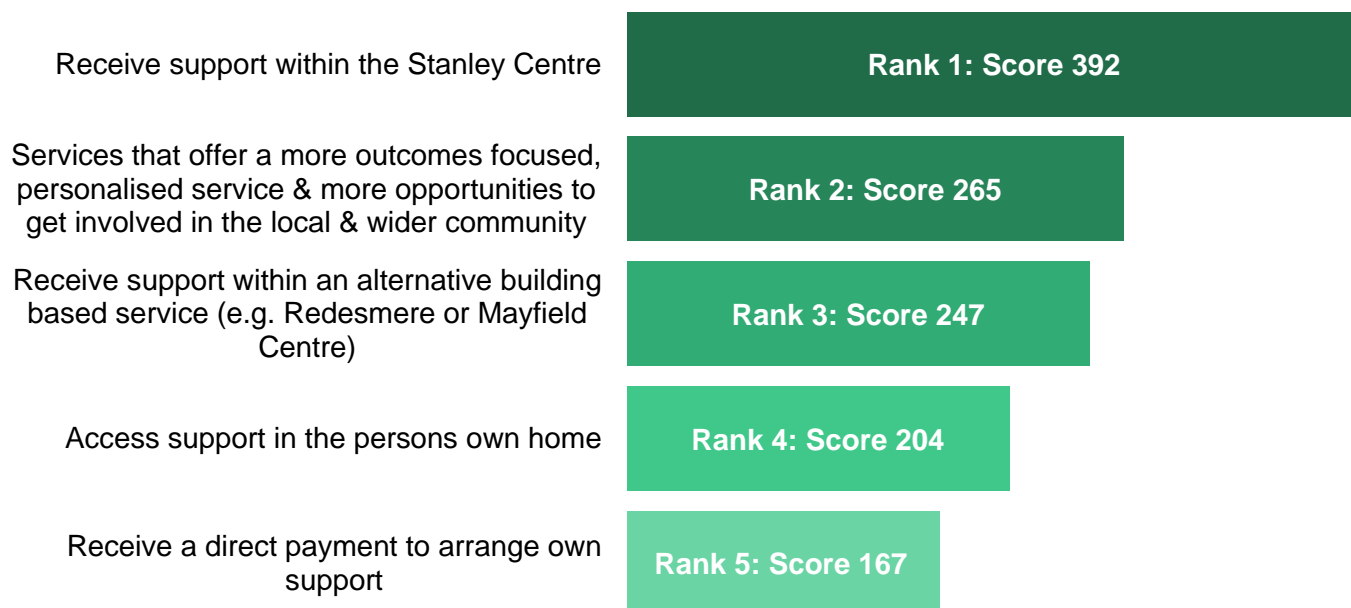
Those who answered the full version of the survey were asked how much time they / the person attending a learning disabilities day opportunities service would be willing to take to travel to access a service. The majority of respondents (61, 73%) stated that they would be willing to travel up to 20 minutes to access a service, 19 respondents (23%) stated that they would be willing to travel 20-30 minutes.

All respondents were provided with a set of potential options for the future of day opportunities. Those who answered the full version of the survey were asked to rank them from 1 to 5 in order of preference. Those who answered the easy read version of the survey could choose from 'I like this idea', 'I do not like this idea' or 'don't know' for each option.

Receiving support at the Stanley Centre was identified as the most preferred option by those who answered the full version of the survey (rank 1, score 392 out a maximum total of 425), 72 respondents (85%) ranked this option first.

Services that offer a more outcomes focused, personalised service and more opportunities to get involved in the local and wider community was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> (score 265), closely followed by receiving support within an alternative building-based service ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (score 247). Figure 2 shows the full breakdown of the results.

**Figure 2: Thinking about future learning disabilities day opportunities, please rank the following statements in order of preference.** Full survey respondents



Base for score is 85. The score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts. Maximum score possible is 425.

All of those who stated that they currently have a family member / care for someone who attends a learning disabilities day opportunities service in Knutsford ranked receiving support within the Stanley centre as their 1<sup>st</sup> option (score 80 out of a possible total of 80). There were a few differences in rank order for those who stated they were current users and those who stated they were potential future users as shown in Table 3.

<b>Table 3: Preferences broken down by current and future users</b>				
<b>Option</b>	<b>Current Users</b>		<b>Future Users</b>	
	<b>Rank Position</b>	<b>Rank Score</b>	<b>Rank Position</b>	<b>Rank Score</b>
Receive support within the Stanley Centre	1	80	1	78
More outcomes focused, personalised services & more opportunities to get involved in the local & wider community	3	47	2	61
Receive support within an alternative building-based service	2	51	5	41
Access support in the persons own home	4	34	3	47
Receive a direct payment to arrange own support	5	28	4	43
<b>Base for rank and score</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>18</b>	
The score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts. Maximum score possible is 80 and 90 respectively.				

All 16 respondents to the easy read version of the survey indicated that they liked the idea of staying and getting support at the Stanley Centre. 10 respondents did not know whether they liked the idea of receiving money to choose and sort out their own support. 9 or more respondents (56% or more) indicated that they did not like the idea of the other 3 options provided.

Respondents were asked to let us know if they had any other preference. 38 respondents overall chose to leave a comment (32 respondents from the full version of the survey and 6 respondents from the easy read version, the email responses received have also been included as part of this analysis were appropriate). The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Retain, promote & expand the Stanley Centre offer, 17 mentions
- Social interaction & community/ keep the service local, 11 mentions
- Options / saving unclear, need more detail, 8 mentions
- A building of some sort is required, 5 mentions
- Consideration of transport requirements, 3 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Other preferences**

Overall Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Retain, promote & expand the Stanley Centre offer	Full Version: Only preferred outcome is support at the Stanley Centre / oppose the proposal to close the Stanley Centre. It is a valuable, central site for the community and access to the services it provides are vitally important. Retaining this service guarantees continuity, changing this would be unsettling and cause stress. Would be better to increase the services offered at the centre, if given the opportunity to develop further the Stanley Centre could be a valuable Community Hub for Knutsford. Promote the services of the Stanley Centre adequately, increase staff and make better use of the facilities.	17
Social interaction & community/ keep the service local	Full Version: Social interaction and local community are vital, opportunities to receive support from places within the town. Local volunteering and walking opportunities. Keep the service local, not everyone drives or can travel, public transport is not adequate	6
	Easy Read Version: I get support from my carers. I want to see people I know and can see in my town, want to go out into the community. I could go out with staff on the bus or train. If there was somewhere I would like to be doing it.	5
Options / saving unclear, need more detail	Full Version: Not clear what is going to replace the current building-based support, what do the options mean in practice? Too much jargon – what do the 'outcomes' and 'opportunities' amount to? Why is the Stanley Centre in Knutsford the only building being closed if moving away from 'building-based' support? There will be some added costs which would need to be considered that are not included in the proposed savings.	7
	Easy Read Version: Where?	1
A building of some sort is required	Full Version: A building of some sort is required to support carers and service users in one place, cannot expect this to be done in people's homes. A new Health and Wellbeing Centre for Knutsford should be provided at the Knutsford Community Hospital incorporating future learning disabilities day opportunities.	5
Consideration of transport requirements	Full Version: Travel will have to be considered, transport to day opportunities would be required – how does this help the green agenda?	3

Respondents were also asked if they felt a change in service would directly impact them or the person they care for and why. 75 respondents overall chose to leave a comment (62 respondents from the full version of the survey and 13 respondents from the easy read version. The email responses received have also been included as part of this analysis were appropriate)

The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Change will cause stress / upset, 54 mentions
- Loss of social contact, 19 mentions
- Lack of transport, 14 mentions
- Lack of local support offer, 7 mentions
- Retain the Stanley Centre or provide a suitable alternative, 5 mentions
- Options / saving unclear, need more detail, 3 mentions

Finally, respondents were asked if they have any ideas or suggestions for other ways in which the Council could obtain better value for money in relation to day opportunities services. 55 respondents overall chose to leave a comment (50 respondents from the full version of the survey and 5 respondents from the easy read version. The email responses received have also been included as part of this analysis were appropriate). The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Retain, promote & expand the Stanley Centre offer, 24 mentions
- Find an alternative suitable space locally, 16 mentions
- Unclear on how savings would be made long-term, 12 mentions
- Seek community-based support / funding, 4 mentions
- Monetary contribution, 3 mentions
- Make savings elsewhere, 4 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme for each question is presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

**Table 5: Impact a change in service would have on respondents or the person they care for**

Overall theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Change will cause stress / upset	Full Version: A change in service, having to travel longer distance, meeting new people and staff would be stressful on service users and on their family / carers. Individuals with learning disabilities do not cope well with changes. A loss of routine, interaction, friendships and local connection will impact their wellbeing, self-worth and ability to interact potentially pushing the cost elsewhere. Would result in a loss of respite care for family members / carers.	42
	Easy Read Version: Very sad, upset, angry, alone, bored, stressed. Would not like it, would miss everybody, would not know where to go. The centre gives me independence but with the support I need.	12
Loss of social contact	Full Version: Would result in a lack of social interaction if they receive the service in their own home or must travel outside the area. Would lose the friendships and sense of community that have been built at the Centre with friends and staff.	19
Lack of transport	Full Version: Transport for some people may not be available, many learning-disabled individuals cannot travel on public transport without supervision, elderly relatives will struggle to drive further to another centre. Local buses and other transport options are limited, options for a wide range of affordable transport would need to be explored. Projected cost savings do not consider any additional travel costs.	14
Lack of local support offer	Full Version: There are not many day services, apart from the Stanley Centre there is very little support for people with learning disabilities in the Knutsford area.	7
Retain the Stanley Centre or provide a suitable alternative	Full Version: Advertise / optimise the use of the centre! Would be good if a decision to build a Knutsford Health and Wellbeing Centre which also provided essential facilities for those who currently access the Stanley Centre.	5
Options / saving unclear, need more detail	Full Version: Please provide a list of the alternative provision that would be provided within a 30-minute journey time of Knutsford with appropriate transport. Would like to see figures for capacity at the 2 alternative centres versus the people registered at the Stanley centre, the proposed staff ratio if people were to move and a breakdown showing what has been included within the £229,000 saving. If the centre closes these person's 1-1 hours will need to be increased so the savings may be less than predicted.	3

**Table 6: Ideas or suggestions for other ways in which the Council could obtain better value for money in relation to day opportunities services**

Overall Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Retain, promote & expand the Stanley Centre offer	Full Version: Carrying on with the current service is a cost-effective way of delivering the level of care needed to those most vulnerable in the community and for providing respite to carers. Encourage more people to access the Stanley Centre, promote it better than the cost per head will go down. Hire out space to third parties / groups in the evenings and at weekends / outside the hours it is needed for delivering day services. The Town Council can help explore further community use to support the building's sustainability.	23
	Easy Read Version: Share building with other groups.	1
Find an alternative suitable space locally	Full Version: Rent or move to a different, more modern building. A smaller venue would reduce running costs, make use of space inside a social club or a community space to ensure there is some level of service in Knutsford, needs to be somewhere with a garden so the gardening activities can continue. Convert the old nurse's home (Stanley Centre) into a Medical Centre for all the doctors' surgeries and move current Stanley Centre into the present clinic. The Knutsford GP practices would be willing to offer a space for the Stanley Centre facilities to relocate into however due to lack of disability access and space are unable to accommodate this currently, need support from the Council in helping develop a single health centre / finding new accommodation. The building is the preferred site for future development of a combined medical and wellbeing centre. A joint health and well-being centre incorporating essential day opportunities services would be beneficial. It is important that users are not lost from Knutsford whilst plans for the new medical and wellbeing centre are developed.	15
	Easy Read Version: Move to a smaller building.	1
Unclear on how savings would be made long-term	Full Version: Need to see a breakdown of the potential savings and operational costs. The long-term costs of needs might outweigh any savings made from closing the Stanley Centre. Do the costs include the older part of the property (currently unused)? Would still have to pay staffing costs for those redeployed, cover transport costs and pay for commissioning / 1-1 support. What other services exist in Knutsford, how much do they cost?	12
Seek community-based support / funding	Full Version: Community support and volunteers, consider getting involved in group activities that benefit the local community. Local business support, reach out to charities to support some of the costs.	4
Monetary contribution	Full Version: Ask users for financial help, consider a voluntary £5 contribution on the local Council Tax.	2
	Easy Read Version: More money.	1
Make savings elsewhere	Make savings elsewhere for e.g., spend less on HS2, reduce night lighting, don't pay expensive contracts on maintenance, reduce black bin collection etc.	4

# Appendix 1 – Respondent Demographics

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All of the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

**Table 7: Number of survey respondents by gender (full version only)**

Category	Count	Percent
Female	45	54%
Male	36	43%
Prefer not to say	< 5	< 5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 8: Number of survey respondents by age group (full version and easy read version)**

Category	Count	Percent
16-34	6	6%
35-44	13	13%
45-54	27	27%
55-64	22	22%
65 and over	25	25%
Prefer not to say	8	8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 10: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin (full version only)**

Category	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	69	83%
Any other White background	< 5	< 5%
Asian / Asian British	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	10	12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 11: Number of survey respondents by religious belief (full version only)**

Category	Count	Percent
Christian	41	50%
Hindu	9	< 5%
No religion	24	29%
Prefer not to say	15	18%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>

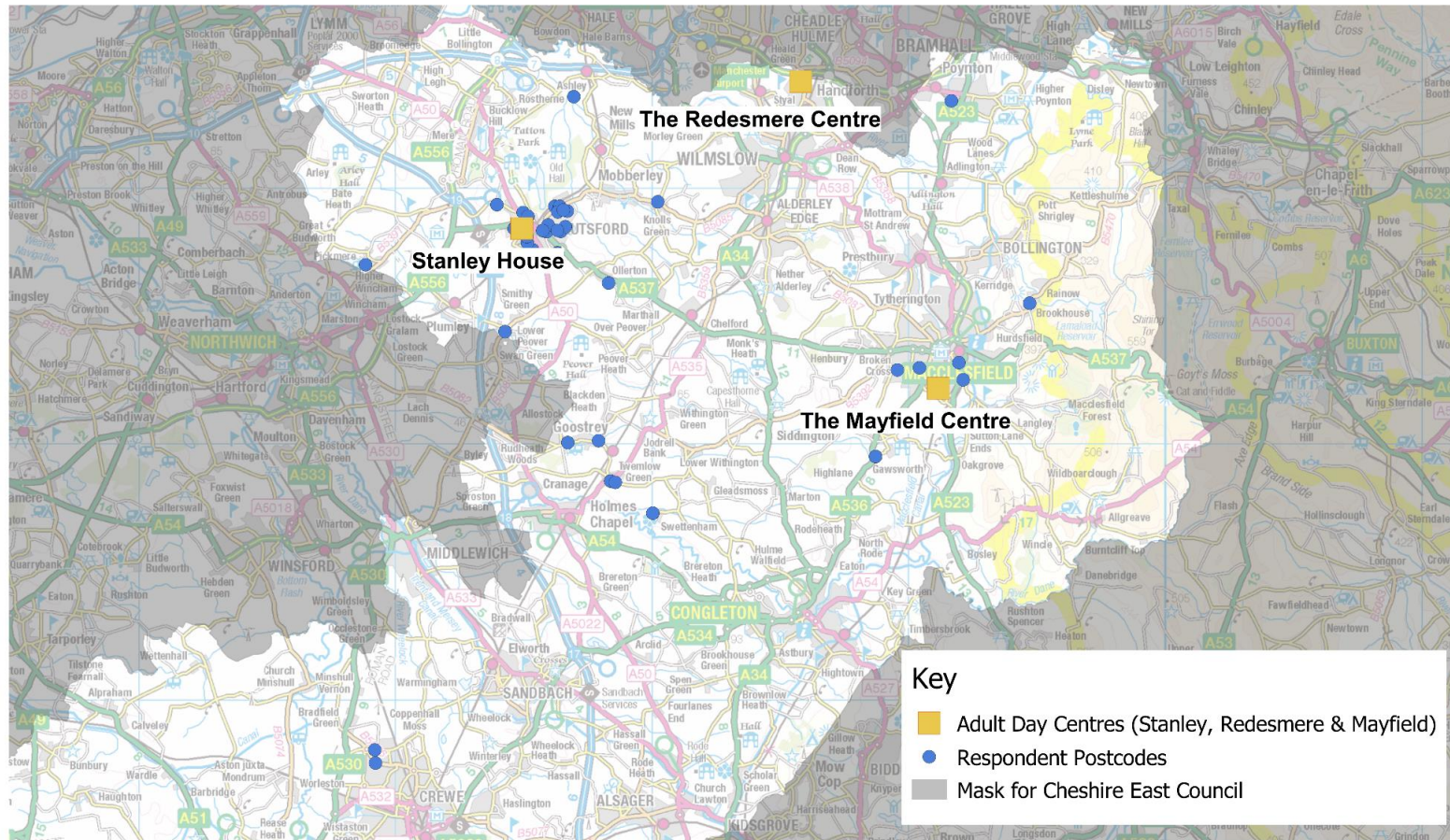


**Table 12: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability (full version only)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent5</b>
Yes, a lot	11	13%
Yes, a little	14	17%
Not at all	31	37%
Prefer not to say	27	33%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Appendix 2 – Map of Respondent Postcodes

This map plots respondent postcodes that are within Cheshire East (provided as part of the full version of the survey, 57 postcodes). Not all postcodes represent current users of the Stanley Centre.



 **The Future Of Day Opprtunities in Knutsford**  
**Respondent Postcodes**

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Report produced on 16th June 2023 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, Email [RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk) for further information.

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