

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	Adults Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee		
DATE:	13 DECEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:13	
TITLE:	READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PROPOSED APPROACH TO SHORT BREAK AND DIRECT PAYMENT PROVISION		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed direction with regard the provision of Short Break and direct payments for the children and families of Reading who have disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs.
- 1.2 Following a proposal to Adults Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (ACE) in February 2016 that identified potential changes to the provision of direct payments and short breaks a public consultation exercise was carried out through a variety of means both face to face and through various media. The result of the consultation identified that Reading Borough Council should address the provision of support to children and families through a range of options allowing children and families' choice in their access to appropriate support (APPENDIX A).
- 1.3 The findings from the consultation are in line with the legislative requirements in addressing the provision of choice and support delivered by Reading Borough Council.
- 1.4 A full review of the eligibility criteria and practice associated with identifying and addressing need will follow during the spring of 2017 thus ensuring that access to support is appropriate and equitable for those children and families in need.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Reading Borough Council provides support to children and families with disabilities and special educational needs through a range of direct payments and the provision of short breaks.
- 2.2 That eligibility to direct payments and short breaks is identified through the publication of criteria and is subject to assessment and appropriate review.
- 2.3 That the provision of short breaks is secured and delivered through outcome based contracts with a range of providers to ensure that varied services achieve appropriate outcomes for Reading's children in need of support.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 3rd February 2016 Adults Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (ACE) received a report proposing a plan for a personalised approach to short break services in Reading. The report was followed by a public consultation that ran during the summer of 2016.
- 3.2 The provision of a range of services to address the needs of children with disabilities, Special Educational Needs and their families is legislated for in three key pieces of legislation, the most recent (Children and Families Act 2014) places a duty on the Local Authority to provide a range of access to provision across universal to specialist services.
- 3.3 Reading Borough Council currently address their provision of Short Breaks through a range of in house provision, grant payments to community and voluntary sector providers and direct payments. This arrangement addresses the legislative requirements.
- 3.4 The current grants to providers of short breaks were originally due to expire on 31 March 2016. This grant arrangement has been subsequently extended with the expectation that there would be an increased demand for personalisation through the direct payment option and upon the shift to this revised scheme the grants from the Local Authority would be expected to cease.
- 3.5 The consultation exercise was inconclusive with the response indicating that a range of options should be provided by Reading Borough Council.

This response is in line with the legislative requirements of support provision to children and families with disabilities and special educational needs.

4. THE PROPOSAL

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The current position is that Reading offers a range of options for children and families with disabilities and special educational needs. The current position does not have published full eligibility criteria and as a result there are families entitled to support who do not access support and conversely there may be families accessing support at an inappropriate level in relation to their level of need.
- 5.2 Short break providers are currently funded through a grant system which requires modernisation in order to ensure the right children are receiving the right services at the right time evidencing outcome based accountability and sound financial decision making.

OPTION PROPOSED

- 5.3 The proposal is that Reading Borough Council continues to provide a range of options in the provision of support to children and their families with disabilities or special educational needs.
- 5.4 In order to appropriately meet the needs of the population and to ensure appropriate financial control there will be a review of the current provision and operational system in the award of packages of support to children and families.
- 5.5 Reading Borough Council will publish a revised set of criteria (April 2017) that will assist children and families with disabilities and special educational needs in understanding their entitlement to support.
- 5.6 A robust system of assessment and review will ascertain the needs and requirements of individual child and family circumstances in order to ensure that the approach requested is appropriate.
- 5.7 Reading Borough Council will identify the outcomes required from providers for children accessing short break intervention. Reading Borough Council will then invite providers to tender for short break contracts. The contracts once awarded will be robustly managed to ensure the correct outcomes are achieved for the correct families. This

approach will ensure the delivery of financial control and success in the achievement of outcomes.

- 5.8 Where children and families opt for direct payments Reading Borough Council will ensure, in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 that the Local Offer is maintained and accessible and families can use this to assist them in securing their own individualised support.
- 5.9 This proposal therefore ensures that Reading Borough Council is compliant with legislation in offering a range of support. It also ensures that appropriate families are identified for support and that providers are directed to deliver appropriate outcomes to safeguard and promote the welfare and opportunity of Reading's Children.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.10 The option proposed within the February 2016 ACE report identified a direct payment funded short break programme. This proposed recipients of direct payments collaborating to secure short break provision from local providers. This option was not universally accepted within the consultation by providers of short break provision; or from recipients of direct payments. As a sole model of provision this would not meet with the legislative duty placed on the Local Authority.
- 5.11 The market is underdeveloped in Reading (as it is in many other areas) and does not provide fully the range of services that may be required by children and families to ensure successful access to individualised provision. This would place greater pressure on recipients of direct payments.
- 5.12 In order to ensure that Reading Borough Council meets its duty and in order to ensure that the children and families of Reading are appropriately supported to achieve successful outcomes no other options are under consideration at this time.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 This report is in line with the overall direction of the Council by meeting the following Corporate Plan priorities:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
 - Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 During the late spring of 2016 Reading Borough Council contacted a number of user groups including the Family Forum, Short break providers and the voluntary and community sector to ascertain those groups and individuals who could best contribute to a consultation on short break/direct payment provision.
- 7.2 The formal consultation managed by Reading Borough Council commissioning service took place over the period 20th May to 17th August 2016.
- 7.3 A press release launched the consultation and the Family Information Service sent direct correspondence to 700 families across Reading. Reading Borough Council's Social Media accounts were utilised in order to direct respondents to an online consultation link as well as dates for face to face interactive consultation meetings. Paper copies of the consultation document were also available. There were only 71 respondents to the consultation. Those respondents were primarily parents or family members of children with disabilities.
- 7.4 Reading Borough Council worked collaboratively with Reading Families' Forum, RCYVS and Reading MENCAP to utilise existing meetings and established groups to inform the consultation.
- 7.5 Key findings from the consultation concluded that many families are not aware of their entitlement to Short Breaks or direct payments; that face to face support would be required where direct payments are provided; the key success of either provision would be flexibility and choice and that periods including holidays, weekends and afterschool periods are the primary focus of provision (including overnight respite).
- 7.6 The consultation did not predominantly favour any single type of provision and a range of options would be required to address the findings of the consultation.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 A full Equality Impact assessment will be completed in line with the review of practice and eligibility criteria.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The provision of support to the children and families of Children with disabilities is governed under three key areas of legislation Section 2 of 1970 Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act; Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 and The Children and Families Act 2014.

9.2 A primary aim of the Local Authority should be to promote access to a range of services that promote the welfare of the child.

9.3 Under the provision of these acts the Local Authority has a duty to provide a range of support to families of children where a child has special educational needs or a disability. The Local Authority must give young people and their parents more say about the help they get. Children, young people and their parents have to be told the information they need to be able to do that. Local Authorities have to keep checking whether their Local Offer provides enough help for children and young people with a disability or special educational needs. They have to ask children and young people and their parents what they think when they do this. If children, young people and parents say they don't think there is enough help, the council have to say what they are going to do about that.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The current (2016 - 2017) combined spend Direct Payments and Short Breaks is £179,900. This is made up of £84,000 on direct payments and £95,900 on short breaks.

10.2 The consultation identified that some families with children with a disability were not aware of their entitlement to support via direct payments or short breaks and therefore it can be expected that there is an increase in demand for support. This position is not quantifiable at this time and will require rigour in the application of eligibility criteria and assessment to ensure the Local authority meets its duty under the legislation.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

SHORT BREAKS COMMISSIONING PROCESS 2016-17

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/8897/Adult-Social-Care-Childrens-Services-and-Education-Committee-03-FEB-2016>

The Local Offer

<http://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/family.action?familychannel=3-7>

To view the current Short Breaks Statement 2015/2016

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/reading/enterprise/files/rbc_short_breaks_statement_2015-16_v6_2_1.pdf

APPENDIX A

Short Break Consultation Summary 2016

Do you or another member of your family (between the age of 0 and 25) use a Short Breaks service at the moment?

Yes	30
No	41

Do you or another member of your family (between the age of 0 and 25) receive a Direct Payment at the moment?

Yes	14
No	57

What opportunities do you see in using more Direct Payments for accessing Short Break services?

More options	24
Tailored services	4
Better value for money	2
Timetable for support to suit my needs	16
Other	12

Other examples include 'None', 'Finding PAs', 'Response to specialist demand' and 'Very few'.

What are your main concerns about using more Direct Payments for accessing Short Break services?

I am unaware of the process	21
I am unaware of the eligibility criteria	17
Inefficiencies	5
Less value for money	4
Other	10

Other examples include 'Assessment process itself', 'Bureaucracy', 'Suitability', 'Cost', 'Times', 'Increased Cost' and 'Availability'.

If an introduction to Direct Payments was given, which of the following formats would you prefer? (You may select more than one)

Face-to-face	29
Online training	15
Information booklet	21
Other	2

Other examples include 'Proper written contract with CYPDT' and 'Full cost breakdowns'.

Please tick which of the following information and support services you have used in the past (you may select more than one):

Family Information Service/DISC	39
Alafia Information Service	5
Enrych's Personal Assistant Register and Client Support Service (PARCCS)	10
Reading Services Guide	18
Mencap Information & Advice Service	5

Autism Berkshire Information & Advice Service (formerly BAS)	12
Reading Information Advice & Support Service for SEND (Reading IASS)	13
None	2
Other	4

Other examples include 'Reading Families' Forum', 'Reading Autism Families Together', 'Surestart', 'Dingley' and 'Local knowledge'.

Which of the following type of short break services would you be most likely to use in future (you may select more than one)?

Weekend Short Break club	35
After School Short Break Club	28
Short Break holiday club	38
Support to access a regular club or activity individually	27
Overnight	23
Evening	19
None/not applicable	1
Other	2

Other examples include 'All of the above and more. We don't have enough' and 'Something dealing with more severe needs'.

Who responded?

Age	Count
26-34	14
35-44	37
45-54	17
55-64	1
65 & over	2
Grand Total	71

Ethnic Background	Count
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	12
Black or Black British - African	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1
Prefer not to say	10
White - Any other White background (Please specify below)	2
White - English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British	41
(blank)	4
Grand Total	71

Short Break Involvement	Count
Parent/carer of a young person with a disability	67
Provider of Short Breaks services for disabled children	2
RBC Staff	1
Young person with a disability	1
Grand Total	71

Main Topics Raised in Open Response

What do you value/look for most from a Short Break service?

- Accessible service outside of work/school hours.
- Time to spend with other family members.
- Enriching development services and activities catering for children and young people with disabilities in Reading once the Council has assessed and matched their needs.
- Services offering personal care and able to manage challenging behaviour.
- Services that can meet the needs of a whole family so all siblings can access them together.
- Value for money and minimal admin.

What aspects of the current Short Breaks service offer in Reading could be improved?

- More availability for clubs outside of working hours. Fewer waiting lists.
- More clubs in Reading for children with complex needs covering all age groups.
- Better communication for what is available, who is eligible and how to get an assessment.
- More input from families on chosen service providers.
- It is currently very difficult to find a good PA and assessments are heavily delayed.

What topics would you be most keen to see covered in a Direct Payments introduction?

- How to apply, timeframes for assessment, who is eligible and how to make the most of it.
- Genuine examples of how the process works in practice.
- Does this process demonstrate value for money? If so, how? What is included?
- PA recruitment problems, quality monitoring and paperwork/admin support.

What kind of issues would you like support with when using information and advice services?

- Out of school information, suitable activities and events, care options, how to access/apply.
- Good knowledge of multi-disability challenges with meaningful signposting/advice.
- What is available for families? Equipment, therapy, crisis management, Direct Payments, etc.

Do you have any additional comments you would like to make? It would be useful for Reading Borough Council if you use this box to tell us about your child's Special educational need/disability. Doing this will help us develop and shape services in the future.

- Very difficult to access Short Breaks that understand a number of needs including non-verbal, GDD, significant learning difficulties, sensory difficulties, anxiety, personal care, depression, rarely recognised forms of autism, etc.
- Establishing trust is very difficult in this area.
- The wait time for an assessment from the CYPDT is too long and staff engagement with families can seem minimal. Families want RBC to invest in this team as they are concerned of capacity for assessments.

- Charities will not supply Short Break services without guaranteed funding to cover costs.
- The Short Break needs of the whole family must be considered. Time off to recharge, meeting needs of other siblings, etc.