

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM 6

### EXECUTIVE REPORT

**Report Title: Review of the Short Break Support Model for Children with Disabilities**

**Lead Executive Member for Children's Services: Mike Carr**

**Director: Eleni Ioannides - Wellbeing Care and Learning**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

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#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval to consultation on a revised model of support for children with disabilities which provides an improved asset based, family focussed approach within a model that will ensure improved value for money to the Council, while also continuing to ensure that identified needs are effectively met in line with statutory duties.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that:
  - The background to the review is noted, along with the engagement to date which has shaped the draft proposals.
  - Approval is given to undertake consultation on the draft proposals to reshape the service model within the existing assessment framework, as outlined at paragraphs 23 to 26.
  - A further report is brought forward, which considers the outcome of the consultation and sets out finalised recommendations for this support model.

#### IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£150,000)   
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards   
Non Key

#### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is  
Non-urgent   
Urgent report

## BACKGROUND

### Statutory duties

5. Local Authorities have a duty to provide short break services. The duty is included in Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The Council has to publish on its website and elsewhere a “Short Break Statement” – which includes details concerning local short break provision.
6. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 define the range of short break services which the Local Authority must provide, they are:
  - Daytime care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
  - Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
  - Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes
  - Services available to assist carers in the evenings, weekends and during the school holidays.

### Current service model

7. The current system is inequitable and not being consistently applied. It is vital that as many people as possible, who need help, get help and to ensure this packages of care must be reviewed. Some children with disabilities do not need specialist services and are provided only with support and advice in relation to suitable available activities. For those who do need support, Middlesbrough’s current service model is to provide a low, medium or high level of service - as defined in the Eligibility Criteria for Short Breaks which is published with the Short Break Statement. This defines these levels as follows:
  - **A low level of support** is for families who just need some additional support because their child is not able to do some of the things that children of their age could usually do - this would include families accessing trips and fund days and/or services of up to around £2,000. This support enables them to continue to care for the child without needing a higher level of service. Accessing this level of support does not require a formal assessment of need by a social worker.
  - **A medium level of support** is for families who find caring for their child a challenge and need assistance in order to overcome this. They may also have other health or family issues. This would include families who access services up to around £10,000. This support enables them to continue to care for the child without reaching a crisis situation.
  - **A high level of support** is there for families in very difficult situations who need help to keep their child safe. There may be a danger that without this support the child would not be able to stay with the family.

8. This support is provided to families in many ways including:
- Direct Payments/Personal Budgets - payments made to families so that they can organise their own support
  - In-house services - Gleneagles Resource Centre and the South Tees Home Support Service
  - Services purchased from a range of specialist agencies including Barnardos and Main (a local service for children with autism)
  - A range of activity based support and outings which can be accessed by any child with a disability
9. The service model plays an essential role in terms of both preventing family breakdown and giving children and their families the chance to have a life which includes the opportunities and activities which other families take for granted.
10. While some services, such as activities and outings, are open access - most are accessed following either an assessment by a social worker, a Direct Application from the Family (Self-Assessment) or an assessment by another professional (CAF)
11. Detailed analysis of the current service model has been undertaken as part of the development of these proposals; this is attached to this report at Appendix A. This analysis demonstrates that over the last seven years there has been a significant increase in the number of children accessing the service (300 to 587, or a 96% increase). Although the percentage rise in children receiving a service is 96% the percentage receiving overnight residential support from in house services has not risen and remains very much as it was in 2009/10 In September 2016 only 24 service users were in long term fostering or residential placements, less than 7% of the total number of Looked After Children cared for by the Council
12. This reflects the move away from traditional, institutional based forms of support to more flexible and cost-effective ways of supporting families. Similarly while the number of hours of individual support has increased by around 135% the number of hours of group support has risen by approximately 200%.
13. There are currently 97 direct applications for support in place (March 2016). A direct application” is a route to a small budget for families who meet the criteria for support but have not been assessed by a social worker.
14. Analysis by level of need shows that approximately:
- 15 % of those accessing services are accessing a high level of support
  - 21%of those accessing services are accessing a medium level of support
  - 64% of those accessing services are accessing a low level of support (this figure includes 26% who only access fun days and outings)
15. The current spilt of expenditure on Short Break Provision in 2015-16 is as follows:

Type	%	£
In house residential care - Gleneagles Resource Centre	31.3%	£640,369
Direct Payments/Personal Budgets	22.4%	£459,410

External Providers	12.8%	£262,532
Home Support Service	27.7%	£567,400
Playschemes/activities	2.74%	£56,189
Other salaries/services	3.09%	£63,359
TOTAL		£2,049,26

16. Measures have been put in place to manage the costs of the service within the current model, however it's clear that the model requires review to ensure value for money is achieved within a framework that meets the needs of children with disabilities. The draft proposals are based on delivery of a revised service model that continues to use the current eligibility criteria framework, but application of framework will be more accurate, which may have an impact on some families which currently use the service and potential future users of the service.

### Engagement to date to shape draft proposals

17. The Council has worked closely with the Joint Short Break Planning Group to identify pressures on the current service model and identify opportunities to reshape it to make it more efficient, remove funding of unassessed needs, for the same need and provide support in ways that continue to meet identified needs of children and their families in line with statutory duties. No children or families will have a package of care changed without an assessment.
18. The group includes Council officers from commissioning and social care (children and adult services), health, families and schools. It has quarterly meetings which bring together all stakeholders to oversee and plan the support provided and ensure that Middlesbrough fulfils its responsibilities.
19. Parents4Change the Middlesbrough Parents Forum is a member of the group. The Council engages with Parents4Change on Short Break planning and delivery. For example members assist in the recruitment and training of staff, the commissioning of support and the creation of information leaflets etc. Short Break Support is often included in their conferences which are well attended.
20. Families were also consulted during the preparation of this report through a Consultation Form which was sent out and 159 responses were received. Families were asked to identify the benefits of the service and their ideas for how things could be done differently, this has informed the proposals. See Appendix C for a full account of the feedback received from families and a flavour of the feedback is set out below:
- *“Short breaks allow me to catch up on some much needed sleep and spend quality time with my other children. I would not be able to manage on my own.”*
  - *“Short break services help families to get out of their homes and have fun like others”*
  - *“The best way to help families is to let them design their own support and to use this creatively and flexibly to meet needs.”*
  - *“These services enable my son to have his own independence and friendship groups which a normal child of his age would have access to without support.”*

- *“Keep up all the good work and pleasure for the children it is their only chance of normality”*
- *“You can’t please everyone. Whatever you cut will affect someone but we have to be grateful for everything we get as it is better than nothing. Years ago there was nothing. You do a great job.”*
- *“I could not do without these things. I would be stuck in the house not able to do the day to day things that “normal” families take for granted like going to the pictures, doing the housework, ironing.*
- *“I don’t think that anything can be done differently and certainly nothing needs to be reduced, this is a much needed service.”*

## **Draft proposals**

21. It is proposed that the service model is revised as follows:

### Providing services that meet identified needs

22. The current eligibility criteria for assessment is retained, however if agreed, the revised model will reduce access to services without a formal assessment of need. In practice this would be implemented by:

- Reduce the amount of funding that can be accessed by families without an assessment of need through Direct Applications. The maximum budget which would be accessed through this route would reduce from the current £2,000 per year to £1,000 per year. This has a potential impact on the 97 families currently accessing support through direct applications; however it will be fully mitigated by the option to have needs assessed through a formal assessment.
- Where a family request a formal assessment the current level of support would be maintained until the assessment was completed.
- Elements of the service where access has not been based on an assessment of need will be amended so that in future access to these services is determined by assessments of identified needs. This will impact on the summer outings and grants to external organisations who provide holiday activities. Families who have a personal budget would still be able to access these services. It would also be possible for families in direct receipt of services to also continue to access them, where a formal assessment has identified that this is necessary to meet identified needs.
- A review of the Resource Allocation System (RAS) which has been in place for five years in its present form to ensure it is still the most efficient and effective model for determining the indicative budget. The review would be undertaken by a small working group which would include a range of professionals, parents and external facilitation - following the process used when the RAS was first introduced. The aim would be to produce a more efficient/more easily managed process which would be more straightforward for families.
- This would be followed by further promotion of the model with families and professionals to increase take up of personal budgets.

- There has been previously a small capacity surplus within the in-house residential provision. This is likely to occur again as personal budgets and other forms of support are increasingly used. It is proposed that the cost of delivering this service is reduced by working with other local authorities that have a demand for places. There would be no adverse impact on current or potential future service users as their needs would continue to be met as identified, the proposal would take advantage of a surplus that will be created.

### **Next steps – consultation of the draft proposals**

23. The draft proposals have been informed by extensive engagement undertaken to date:
  - The joint planning group has been engaged on the issues
  - Service users and their families were consulted on the general usage and benefits of the service and were asked for their ideas on what they thought could be reduced or done differently
  - A presentation to the Parents4change conference on the current service model and the consultation to date.
24. If approval is given to consult on the draft proposals as outlined at paragraph 21, consultation will be undertaken with parents, young people with disabilities and practitioners over the next six weeks.
25. A variety of methods will be applied to ensure that the consultation is accessible and it will be publicised externally to ensure potential future users of services are able to contribute.
26. The findings of the consultation will be reflected in a further report to the Executive Member which will set out a finalised set of proposals.

### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)**

27. An Impact Assessment level 1 has been completed. This found that the proposal was relevant to disability and age protected characteristics because of the nature of the service. The impact assessment found that while there would be no change to accessibility criteria or thresholds for access, the proposals did have the potential to have an adverse impact on those current service users who were:
  - Receiving support without an assessment of need, while those who meet the existing assessment criteria will continue to have their identified needs met. Those who do not will see a reduction or cessation in support as a result of the correct application of the existing policy.
  - Accessing services funded by grants to other organisation, which were in effect in addition to services delivered by the Council in response to identified needs. Where these services are required to meet identified needs, they will either continue to be funded or alternatives will be found. Where these services are

not required to meet identified need, there will be a reduction in the level of care these children access.

28. These issues will be explored as part of the development of the final proposals and a stage two impact assessment will be completed.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT**

29. Option 1 - do nothing. The Council could choose to continue to deliver the services in its current model, however there is a risk that this would result in an unfair service delivery with some service users accessing more support than is required to meet their need. Neither would it ensure that the Council is achieving value for money for the services that it provides.
30. Option 2 - consult on the proposed recommendations. This option supports delivery of a revised model, subject to consultation and agreement, which will ensure value for money for the Council while continuing to meet identified needs within the current assessment framework.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

31. **Financial** – There are no specific financial implications at this stage.
32. **Ward Implications** – There are no specific Ward Implications. Children with Disabilities live within all Wards within the town.
33. **Legal Implications** – Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide short break support. The proposals within this report would ensure that those statutory duties continue to be met.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

34. It is recommended that:
- The background to the review is noted, along with the engagement to date which has shaped the draft proposals;
  - Approval is given to undertake consultation on the draft proposals to reshape the service model within the existing assessment framework, as outlined at paragraphs 23 to 26.
  - A further report is brought forward, which considers the outcome of the consultation and sets out finalised recommendations for this support model.

## **REASONS**

35. The service model requires regular review to ensure that it continues to provide value for money, within a fair model that ensures the Council continues to comply with its statutory duties.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

36. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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