

## PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

19 NOVEMBER 2015

### Aiming High for Disabled Children - Short Breaks

Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	Creating a Brighter Future for All	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr R Foster	
Contact Officer(s):	Bernadette Caffrey, Head of Service Early Intervention	01572 720943 BCaffrey@rutland .gov.uk
Ward Councillors	Not applicable	

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

1. Note the content of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks Options Paper; and
2. Considers and comments on the options and recommendation for future action for the short breaks as detailed in section 3 of this report.

#### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide members of Scrutiny Panel with information on the current arrangements for the delivery of Short Break provision within the Aiming High programme and to set out options and make recommendations for the delivery of short breaks support for children with disabilities and their families, that is cost effective, personalised and targets those most in need of support.

#### 2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 The Aiming High service supports the Council's statutory duty under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 (or the Short Break Duty) which requires Local Authorities to provide a range of short break services. The service also helps ensure our compliance with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014.

2.2 Guidance issued in relation to the legislation for Short Breaks states:

- There should be a significant increase in the amount, quality, and range of provision.
- Services should be designed to meet the requirements of families to help them to continue to care for their children.
- Families should have choice.
- Services should be reliable, easily accessible, responsive and flexible so that families can take up support when, and where, it is needed.

2.3 In Rutland the Aiming High Programme is an 'early help' function that enables children with disabilities (up to the age of 25), and their carers to access support quickly and effectively without lengthy or unnecessary assessments of need. The Aiming High Programme provides services delivering short breaks, including leisure activities, day time care in the child's home and residential opportunities. The provision is made up of two components:

- i) *Support activities* such as group and club sessions, which are available to all children and young people who are on the disability register in Rutland. Regular activities currently include trampolining, basketball, climbing, cooking sessions and a youth club. In addition to these, in this year, there has been an activity weekend, water sports, sailing, model making, bikeability, bowling, music, art, sensory activities, Rhyme time, Lazertag and soft play. The Aiming High team also support the Oakham Family Centre to deliver swimming lessons, riding lessons and a Film club for these children and young people. The 2014/15 expenditure for this element of the Short Breaks programme was £18,000 which is in addition to staff time. During 2014/15, 113 children and young people with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) took part in an Aiming High activity.
- ii) *100 hours of 1 to 1 support* provision available to those children in receipt of Higher Rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or attending a special school and receiving at least mid-rate DLA. This provision enables these children to access either targeted activities or universal opportunities in their local community where because of their additional needs they would otherwise be unable to do so. It also supports parents and carers in their caring responsibilities for a child with a disability. Costs for this part of the offer is £80,000 per annum based on historical take up of those eligible. During 2014/15 47 children and young people accessed this one to one provision; however this has since increased to 51 applications for the new Short Breaks Scheme for 2015/16.

2.4 The aim of short breaks in Rutland is to provide:

- Opportunities for disabled children and young people to enjoy experiences away from their primary carer, enjoying fun activities and socialising with their peers, so they, irrespective of their disability, they develop confidence, independence and experience new positive challenges and social experiences.
- Support for parents/carers of children who are disabled so that they are physically and emotionally resilient to continue to provide care.

- Valuable breaks for parents/carers from their caring responsibilities, to spend time with their partners or other children in the knowledge that their child is safe, well cared for and having fun.

2.5 The evaluation and customer feedback reports for 2014/2015 indicate high levels of parental satisfaction and positive outcomes for children and young people who accessed one to one support via the Aiming High programme in 2014/2015.

2.6 Fifteen of the families who accessed one to one support in 2014/15 are also receiving additional support from Social Care as they have been assessed as needing more support than the Aiming High offer alone.

## 2.7 Landscape Changes – Aiming High Short Breaks Scheme

Following provisional award of the contract for the 100 hours 1 to 1 service the successful provider (New Horizons) withdrew as they were unable to fulfil the requirements of the contract, citing sustainability and recruitment issues. At the time of tendering the Authority only received 2 expressions of interest and after exploring the market for alternative providers, it became apparent that the market is underdeveloped and there were no other suitable providers. As a result, and in order to ensure no break in services for families, a short breaks grant scheme was devised by the Aiming High Programme team, beginning on 1st September 2015. The short breaks grant involves direct payments (£1,200 per annum) to families, whom would have previously qualified for support, allowing for greater personalisation and the delivery of short breaks that specifically meet the needs of individual children. This arrangement reflects the Children and Families Act and Care Act 2014 which places greater emphasis and importance on giving children with disabilities and their carer's greater choice and control in the support they need.

## 2.8 Current Demand and Costs of Short Breaks

The previous cost to Rutland County Council to run short breaks through an external provider was £80,000 per annum based on the historical average take up by those eligible. The following table outlines the current costs under the new short breaks scheme based on current uptake and if full demand were realised:

Claimants	Estimated Numbers Eligible <sup>1</sup>	Current Uptake as of 02/09/15	Current Uptake
Higher rate DLA	35	33	94%
Higher rate DLA requiring 2:1 (25%)	9	7	78%
Mid-rate DLA / Special school	30	15	50%
Total	74	55	74%
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£88,800</b>	<b>£66,000</b>	

## 2.9 Purpose of the Review of the Short Breaks scheme

The delivery of the Aiming High Programme was considered under People First which tasked the service to undertake a review of the Programme, with a specific focus on the one to one support provision provided under the offer. The intended

<sup>1</sup> Based on Office of National Statistics Projections

outcome of the review was to ensure;

- 2.10 “The service targets support to those who need it the most and where it is not considered effective, value for money, or meeting the need of customers, support is reduced.” A review of the offer was completed in January 2015 and involved understanding national research alongside short break delivery in neighbouring Local Authorities to establish the extent of offers and best means of access for families. A summary of the findings:
- a) In comparison to other Local Authorities the previous 100 hour offer provided by Rutland County Council, is higher than Derbyshire County Council and Nottingham County Council both providing an 80 hour cap. The offer in Leicestershire is significantly below that offered by Rutland.
  - b) Nottingham County Council (up to £750) and Nottingham City Council (up to £2,000) both offer direct payments to families in order to enhance personalisation. Nottingham City is currently considering the reduction of this offer to £1,600.
  - c) For those requiring higher level support, assessments take place within Social Care as they do within Rutland and prevents discrimination through a single eligibility mechanism.
  - d) As with Rutland County Council higher rate DLA is the indicator of need for access adopted by Nottingham City Council and Nottingham County Council.
  - e) The needs of those accessing 1 to 1 provision in Rutland vary with no distinguishable factor supporting a scaled offer. It is acknowledged that 50% of those accessing Aiming High also require care through Social Care and as such would need to retain the highest offer possible.

2.11 The offer provided by Rutland County Council is based on best practice and reflects the national research and reviews of short breaks regarding improving the wellbeing of disabled children and young people through improving access to positive and inclusive activities.

2.12 Research by Action for Children found that parents were primarily concerned with whether their child was having fun and enjoying the short break. Knowing that their child is having fun and making progress through developing new skills, can in turn help the families to cope. Currently 96% of children and young people participating Aiming High targeted short breaks say they had fun, suggesting these activities help families to cope with their responsibilities.

### **3 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Options Appraisal**

There is no prescribed offer that the Local Authority must provide under the Short Break regulations. However the service must be able to meet the requirements of carers as the regulations intended. Accounting for the conclusions from the review the following outlines the main options for consideration:

##### **3.1.1 Option One: Remove eligibility for Mid-Rate Claimants**

Current eligibility for short breaks allows for an easy access service utilising simple eligibility criteria (higher rate DLA or mid-rate DLA and attending a special school) which was set in consultation with parents and carers. This system is administration light and reduces the associated cost and inconvenience for families that would come with conducting a single needs assessment in social care or early help. Based on current applications this would affect 15 families.

Considerations:

- Prioritises those families with the highest levels of need based on an independent assessment (DLA).
- Higher Rate DLA as the sole eligibility criteria is limited. For example the majority of children in receipt of high rate DLA need night support, however a child's disability may warrant their requiring assistance during the day that requires a level of support but they are not eligible for the high rate due to the nature of their disability not requiring night support.
- Support for up to 30 children (in the mid-rate DLA/special school) would cease and families who do have caring needs would no longer have access to short breaks. The short breaks scheme often provides a non-stigmatised route into support for families in need.
- Potential for negative responses and publicity from families affected.

3.1.2 **Option Two:** Eligibility remains the same and the grant is reduced for every child and carer in the programme. Keep eligibility the same but reduce the financial offer from £1,200 to £800 so that all groups have access to support through a reduced grant. Based on current applications this would affect 48 families.

Considerations:

- All families and children with disabilities continue to have access to support and no groups go unsupported.
- The financial offer is similar, and in some cases, higher than in other Local Authorities.
- The option outlined is based on 100% take up of the grant. Under the previous schemes not all families took up the offer and therefore it is highly likely not all families will access the grant, by setting a claim window, unclaimed funding could be reallocated to uplift grant allocations.
- This model does not prioritise those families with the highest levels of need.
- The funding reduction may not fully meet the needs of families with higher levels of need. This may result in a pressure on the Social Care budget, as a result of picking up additional costs through re-assessment.

3.1.3 **Option Three:** Eligibility remains the same but the short break grant is set higher for high rate DLA claimants than for mid-rate DLA/special school. Based on current applications this would affect 48 families. The aim would be to ensure a

reasonable level of service for those with the highest needs whilst reducing the offer to those with lower levels of need.

Considerations:

- Prioritises those children and young people with the highest level of needs, whilst still supporting those with lower needs.
- All families continue to receive support and access early intervention services.
- The option outlined is based on 100% take up of the grant. Under the previous schemes not all families took up the offer and therefore it is highly likely not all families will access the grant, by setting a claim window, unclaimed funding could be reallocated to uplift grant levels for mid-rate DLA.

The grant level for mid-rate/special school eligibility would need to be reduced the most.

3.1.4 **Option Four:** Retain higher rate DLA for the whole grant cost of £1,200 and create a discretionary pot for mid-rate claimants. Based on current applications this would affect 15 families. This option involves retaining the rate of £1,200 for higher rate DLA claimants and removing automatic eligibility for families in receipt of mid-rate DLA. The remaining funds would be made available for mid-rate DLA claimants through application for discretionary funding which would provide a minimum of £240 per application.

Considerations:

- Prioritises those children and young people with the highest level of needs, whilst still offering support to those with lower needs.
- Discretionary pot can be used to ensure personalisation where support will have positive outcomes.
- The option outlined is based on 100% take up of the grant. Under the previous schemes not all families took up the offer and therefore it is highly likely not all families will access the grant, by setting a claim window, unclaimed funding could be reallocated to uplift grant levels for mid-rate DLA.
- In 2014/15 10 children and young people who were attending a special school and in receipt of mid-rate DLA accessed one to one support. Since the introduction of the Short Breaks Scheme this has increased to 15 children and young people. These 15 families will no longer have automatic access to short breaks.
- Potentially difficult to implement and administer a transparent process to agree discretionary awards. This will incur additional administration costs.

3.1.5 Parents are aware that the short breaks scheme, being delivered through a grant payment is in a test period until 31st March 2016 and subsequent changes may be made following this period. The Authority has committed to consulting with Rutland

Parent Carer Voice to develop any changes as well as taking into account feedback from families directly. The review will be tabled at the next meeting of the Parent Carer Voice on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The existing offer in Rutland provides an easy access service utilising a single eligibility criteria (higher rate DLA or mid-rate DLA and attending a special school) which was set in conjunction with Parents and Carers and is reflected by other Local Authorities. As each family will differ on an individual basis, with some families requiring more or less support depending on their personal circumstances, a single needs assessment would be more appropriate however additional administration costs would be incurred and it may also prevent families accessing the service at an early stage as it was intended and thereby creating a level of unmet need. The offer through Aiming High does not replace caring/parenting responsibility assessments required under Section 6 of the Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2006 which are considered when deciding on support under Section 17 of Children Act 1989. The offer should retain universal support activities for all disabled children and reflects the national research and voice of parents and carers. The existing budget for support activities has to date effectively supported families with high degrees of customer satisfaction. The introduction of a personalised budget through a direct payment (as per the new Short Breaks Scheme, September 2015) is a sound one and provides greater scope to parents and carers. Providing a cap on this personal budget should result in better use of resources as best value is sought from families and providers.
- 4.2 Members of Informal Cabinet recommend Option Three as this option will have the least impact as a whole on all the families but will prioritise those with the highest needs and if adopted would cost £60,000 as opposed to the current cost of £80,000, thus representing value for money. Informal Cabinet recommend proceeding to Cabinet for formal approval.

#### **5 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 5.1 There are no background papers.

#### **6 APPENDICES**

- 6.1 There are no appendices.

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