
Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The council made the decision in March 16 to accept the recommendations in respect of the budget proposals to reduce the funding for Short Breaks for Disabled Children. This Council decision is now subject to a Judicial Review hearing in the High Court. The basis of this challenge is that the council only had general information about the impact of this decision and this report seeks to give more concrete and specific information to Council Members so that they can review the decision. The challenges by the claimants in the Judicial Review are in relation to specific legislation and statutory requirements that the council must have regard to when making these decision.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 There are currently 170 families in receipt of statutory services from children's social care, all of whom receive short breaks provision. The budget for these children is not affected and no packages of care are being re-assessed or reduced.
- 2.2 The total number of disabled children receiving short breaks in 2014/15 and 2015/16 was 350 – 400. For the reasons given below it is not possible to be precise.
- 2.3 In 2014/15 different providers provided short breaks to 560 children and in 2015/16 the figure was about 526. These figures are compiled by short breaks providers, on the basis that each child who receives a particular service from a provider counts as one child. This has the consequence that a child who receives a service from Mencap and also Crossroads will appear twice in these numbers; and a child who receives 2 different services from Mencap and one service from Crossroads will appear 3 three times (see the attached data sheets).
- 2.4 The data provided to the Council by different providers is anonymised so while it is possible to see how many different services are provided to how many numbers of children, it is not possible to work out exactly how many different children are in receipt of services. It is estimated that 350 – 400 children receive one or more short breaks services each year.
- 2.5 The figures referred to above in paragraph 2.4 also include children who are entitled to statutory care services. There are currently 170 children in receipt of statutory care services. There is no double counting involved in those figures because they are from the Council's own records. These children may also be subjected to the double counting described in paragraph 2.3. We estimate of the 350 – 400 children in receipt of short breaks services each year, 200-300 are entitled to statutory services. Approximately 200 children who receive short breaks services do not have a statutory entitlement to them.
- 2.6 The short breaks service providers and the numbers of children they provide services for are as follows, as set out in the attached data sheets for 2015/16.

Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Supporting Information

	2015/16			
	Number of young people receiving a service			
Organisation	Total (Q1)	Total (Q2)	Total (Q3)	Total (Q4)
Mencap				
Sleepovers			5	
Home Sitting Service				
Holiday Playschemes	50	75	42	
Saturday Club	36	36	42	
Youth Club	28	27	26	
Greenfields	10	10		
Residential				
After school club	73	73	74	
Crossroads				
Sitting service				
Oxfordshire Overnight	5	31		
Youth Provision	6	7	8	
Playschemes	26	32	27	
Befriending	7	10	8	
Home-StartWB				
Care/Sitting service	22	20	10	
GUIDEPOSTS TRUST				
Guideposts Trust	13	13	8	
National Autistic Society				
National Autistic Society	14	10	18	
Oasis club	21	20	18	
Oasis Transition Group	5	4	5	
Dingley				
Summer playscheme	28	29	25	
The Castle School				
Summer playscheme/Easter Holiday Club	16	12	15	
Brookfields School				
Youth Club	27	27	25	
After School Club	38	39	46	
Holiday Club	73	71		
KIDS				
KIDS	0	8	32	
PALS				
PALS	24	17	16	
TOTALS	522	571	450	0

2.7 As can be seen from Alice Cullingworth's statement:

- Mencap West Berkshire, which is by far the largest short breaks provider will continue to provide its after school club on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and its youth club on Thursdays. This will benefit approximately 15 children per day, about 60 per week for 38 weeks of the year. It will, however, cease to provide its Saturday club (except in the case of 6 children), its Greenfields play schemes in the summer and Easter holidays, its residential

holiday during February half term and its sleepovers (4 nights a year), whilst it will have to significantly reduce its holiday play schemes in the summer and Easter holidays (from 22 days per year to 12 days). Mencap will continue to provide 20 children’s places a day for playschemes which is 240 sessions per year in total. It may increase its charges for its home sitting carers service;

- Crossroads Care Oxfordshire provides activity days during weekends and holidays and trips away during school holiday, as follows:

Crossroads 15/16	Q1	Q2	Q3	
Sitting service				
Oxfordshire Overnight	5	31		
Youth Provision	6	7	8	
Playschemes	26	32	27	
Befriending	7	10	8	

2.8 This provision will be reduced by about 40%;

- As can be seen, Guideposts planned to cease provision in any event. It used to provide holiday playschemes:

GUIDEPOSTS TRUST 15/16	Q1	Q2	Q3	
Guideposts Trust	13	13	8	

2.9 As far as other providers are concerned the position is as follows:

- My information is that Home-start, National Autistic Society, Brookfields School, Castle School, PALS, and Dingley will continue to provide services to similar numbers as previously.
- Swings and Smiles is a new provider in 16/17 and will provide Holiday play schemes for 8 children for 20 sessions a year and 8 children at a Saturday Club over 10 sessions throughout the year;
- In addition to these short breaks providers, there are 2 schools in West Berkshire, Brookfields and Castle School, that provide short breaks. Brookfields provides holiday, after school and youth club services and Castle School provides after school activities such as a film club to children with special educational needs and/or a disability. These services have been partly funded by short breaks funding and this will continue in 16/17.

2.10 Officers are working with voluntary organisations to develop their use of transitional funding, so as to become more sustainable without Council financial assistance and, as can be seen, Mencap has already had some limited success in that it has secured alternative funding for its Thursday night youth club. In addition, officers will develop Castle Gate to provide a hub which will allow families with statutory needs to use their budgets to purchase services that involve social and group activities.

2.11 There will be a reduction in the level of social and group activities; in particular during the weekends and school holidays. As a result of that:

- The 170 families with statutory needs may find it harder to secure group activities for their children, where their children can socialise with other children and a variety of adults even though their statutory needs will still be met through funding that enables alternative activities and respite breaks to be purchased. There may be the upset of having to change a service, which some disabled children can find particularly distressing;
- The remaining families without statutory needs (around 200) and, of course, families with statutory needs who desire more services than their statutory entitlement, may find it difficult to secure activities that both allow their carers some respite from caring and that allow the children to engage in sociable activities.

- 2.12 It is not possible to provide accurate figures and the picture is a shifting one, in that local voluntary groups have some scope for obtaining alternative funding, the Council's transitional funding is designed to help voluntary groups develop sustainable alternative forms of provision and families with statutory needs have budgets that they are entitled to use to meet those needs how they wish so that there is scope for the market to respond to how those families wish to use their budgets.
- 2.13 It may be harder for carers of disabled children who do not have statutory needs (approximately 200) to pursue education, training, any regular leisure activity or employment, meet the needs of other children of the family more effectively or carry out household tasks.
- 2.14 The funding decision may impact on the ability of children without statutory needs to secure educational or leisure activities outside their homes and during evenings, weekends and school holidays. Children with statutory needs may find it harder and may have less choice, in terms of finding services to pay for that involve group activities where the children can socialise with other children and a range of adults.
- 2.15 Of course, socialising activities will still occur during school (there are, for example, 910 children in West Berkshire with a SSEN), and may also occur by obtaining services from remaining providers and by way of purchasing decisions from the budgets available to those who have statutory care needs.
- 2.16 Day-time care and home sitting has reduced in demand – in 2014/15 about 8,000 hours were provided but in 2015/16 about 2500 hours were provided. 2 providers have ceased provision due to lack of demand. Those with statutory needs can readily purchase services of this kind from agencies, or pay their own support worker. Other families will have to rely on services provided by voluntary organisations supported by transitional funding but there may be less available.
- 2.17 In 2014/15 the Council provided short breaks funding to providers who delivered 280 nights of overnight care and in 2015/16 that figure was 165. Families with statutory needs will continue to have their statutory needs met in full at Castle Gate or with short break foster families. Families without statutory needs will experience less provision in that 2 providers out of 4 will continue to provide this kind of service.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 The Council to take into account the information provided in this report in reviewing their decision as to whether to proceed with the budget proposals in relation to the Short Breaks Budget.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that a reduction in funding will reduce the range of Short Breaks provision for children with disabilities and their carers but West Berkshire are still committed to working with providers, parents and carers to ensure the provision available continues to exceed the statutory minimum expected and will continue to monitor this provision and ensure children's needs are prioritised.

5. Consultation and Engagement

- 5.1 It is considered that the consultation process undertaken for the proposal to reduce the budget for short breaks for children with disabilities was progressed in an informed and appropriate way. This included the council engaging Parent Voice, a parent participation group, to ensure parents views were heard, as well as meetings being undertaken with local providers of Short Breaks provision across West Berkshire to ensure the impact of any reduction in services were fully understood. These meetings are ongoing with the awarding of the Transition funding to further ensure maximum benefits are derived from the services delivered.

- 5.2 Officers consulted: Mac Heath, Shiraz Sheikh and David Holling as Monitoring Officer.

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected:

All

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