

Cabinet

16 July 2024

Children's Short Breaks and Respite Approval to Tender

Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 1) Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People to finalise and commence a procurement process for the provision of Short Breaks, Respite and Family Care Services for children with disabilities and other children in need, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children & Families; and
- 2) Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Executive Director for Social Care and Health to enter into relevant contracts for the provision of Short Breaks, Respite and Family Care Services for children with disabilities and other children in need, on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, local authorities have a statutory duty to provide access to short breaks and respite to eligible families with children with disabilities and other non-disabled children in need.
- 1.2 The aim of a short break is to enable children to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities, while providing a break from care to their parents / carers. Short breaks are part of local authorities' duty to provide a proactive and preventative offer, which supports families to stay together and reduces the risk of family breakdown and periods of care.
- 1.3 After assessment, parent/carers may choose to receive a Direct Payment to arrange suitable short breaks provision to meet their needs or may request for the Local Authority to set up a package on their behalf through a commissioned or spot purchased service.
- 1.4 In Warwickshire, commissioned provision covers day opportunities for children and young people to access groups and activities in the community, support for children and their carers at home during the day and overnight and planned overnight respite at home or elsewhere.

- 1.5 Across Direct Payment, commissioned and spot purchased packages, approximately 400 children and young people are currently assessed as eligible for a short break or respite package in Warwickshire.
- 1.6 Warwickshire County Council currently commissions these services under three contracts - two community contracts providing countywide coverage and one overnight residential contract - which commenced on 1st April 2022 and ends on 31st March 2025:
- Community Daytime and Overnight Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities is a demand led Lead Provider contract for Warwickshire North and Rugby (with option to serve children and young people countywide) – 2023/24 outturn was £0.212m
 - Framework Provision for Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities is a demand led contract for Warwickshire South (with option to serve children and young people countywide) – 2023/24 outturn was £0.235m
 - Children’s Residential Overnight Short Breaks is a block contract providing 4 overnight respite beds – 2023/24 outturn was £0.664m
- 1.7 The total outturn expenditure for the three contracts above for 2023/24 was £1.111m and the budget for 2024/25 is £1.177m
- 1.8 There are identified gaps in the commissioned offer (see sections 4.1 – 4.4), as well as wider gaps in community, targeted and specialist provision for Children with Disabilities, that have increased reliance on high-cost spot purchased packages with agencies and providers. Use of agency and spot purchased packages also increases the risks to the Council around quality assurance and regulation of placements:
- In 2023/24, an additional £0.482m was spent on spot purchased short breaks – with a budget of £0.492m for 2024/25
 - In 2023/24, £2.040m was spent on home care services provided by agencies – with a budget of £1.990m for 2024/25
- 1.9 Combined, the total spend on short breaks and home care for Children with Disabilities in 2023/24 was £3.633m, with a budget of £3.659m for 2024/25.
- 1.10 The paper recommends going to out to market with an expanded scope for short breaks to include elements of home care and urgent outreach, under the umbrella of “Children’s Short Breaks and Family Care Services”, with the aim of procuring a more robust commissioned offer that meets a wider range of needs and improves oversight and assurance around cost and quality of care.
- 1.11 The new model will align with the ethos and ambitions of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme.
- 1.12 The proposed service scope is outlined in Appendix 1.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are clear financial interdependencies between commissioned short breaks, and other packages of short breaks and home care to eligible families, where appropriate commissioned packages cannot be found:

Package type	Out Turn - 23/24	Budget - 24/25
Commissioned Short Breaks	£1,110,561	£1,177,248
Spot Purchased Short Breaks	£482,336	£491,752
Home Care*	£2,040,302	£1,990,000
Total	£3,633,199	£3,659,000
<i>Direct Payments**</i>	<i>£1,317,256</i>	<i>£1,449,050</i>

**packages of care delivered by agencies for children with disabilities not in care*

***provided for information – not in scope but with interdependencies due to family choice between DP and commissioned packages*

- 2.2 The budget for the re-designed Children's Short Breaks and Family Care model for 2025/26 will be set within the 2024/25 financial envelope for short breaks and home care (excluding Direct Payments) – totalling £3.659m.
- 2.3 Commissioning intentions for 2025/26 include a focus on strengthening commissioned provision and reducing reliance on spot purchased short breaks and agency provided home care.
- 2.4 There is also an additional £250,000 committed to the model for 2025/26 and 2026/27 which is ringfenced for an urgent outreach service for families at risk of breakdown due to unmet Social Emotional and Mental Health needs, as part of a wider family wraparound pilot programme (see section 4.8). Following a two year pilot, the family wraparound service will be evaluated to demonstrate impact on outcomes for families approaching crisis and for value for money, with a business case developed to support ongoing investment should this be indicated.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 None.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The highest demand for meeting the needs of children and their families is for activity clubs and 1:1 support in the community at weekends and school holidays. There is currently insufficient provision for these types of activities in terms of consistency, accessibility and availability across the county. There is also a shortfall of provision for children needing 1:1 and 2:1 support to access groups, children with behaviours that challenge, children with personal care needs, and children with disabilities without learning needs.

- 4.2 The highest cost and largest hourly packages are in place for children assessed for day and night support at home – which predominantly relies on spot purchasing from providers and agencies, due to a lack of framework providers who are CQC registered for personal care and who offer overnight respite. Agency packages are high-cost and do not provide the same level of assurance over service quality and outcomes.
- 4.3 Overnight beds, activity breaks and holidays are in high demand but with historically limited provision and are not accessible county-wide. Matching children for overnight respite puts significant pressure on available beds, with more solo and two-bed opportunities needed for older children and children with behaviours that challenge.
- 4.4 A full audit and analysis of current packages is currently underway and will provide clearer intelligence on the demand for services for 2025/26 onwards, to inform the redesign of this service.
- 4.5 The new service model is being co-produced with parent/carers and young people, including a review and refresh of Warwickshire's Short Breaks Statement, webpages and wider communications to improve parent/carer access to information.
- 4.6 Current and prospective providers are being consulted to better understand the opportunities, challenges and dynamics of the short breaks and family care market for children – including ways of bringing new providers into the market for the first time. This learning will feed into the procurement activity and model design.
- 4.7 Through evaluation and engagement completed to date; children, young people, parent/carers, practitioners, and providers have said they want Warwickshire County Council to:
- Improve information, choice and referral processes for families and social work staff, with clarity on which providers are available for which type of provision
 - More closely align family voice (feedback, views and experiences) with the short breaks offer
 - Improve contract and performance monitoring and quality assurance processes
 - Improve availability of and access to local evening, weekend and school holiday clubs across the county
 - Expand opportunities for supported exploring and gaining independence, particularly for teenagers and families who struggle to safely travel with their children
 - Improve access to domiciliary care for children with personal care needs
 - Provide more overnight beds in targeted areas of the county
 - Reduce costs and risks associated with agency provision and extra care for 2:1, overnight and 24/7 packages
 - Improve access to solo and 2-bed 'home from home' overnight stays, particularly for young people with behaviours that challenge

- Improve emergency, unplanned and short-term provision for families in distress and crisis
- Help children, young people and families with complex needs to access bespoke groups, activities and holidays
- Better support young people into adulthood and through transitions pathways, including those who want to gain skills to live more independently
- Improve the use of assistive technology to drive greater independence for children, young people and families using short breaks and respite

4.8 There are interdependencies between the re-designed Children’s Short Breaks and Family Care Service and a two-year proof-of-concept that is being commissioned as a Family Wraparound Service - to improve support available for families in distress with children at risk of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) crisis. The Wraparound Service is being commissioned in two phases:

- Phase 1 is due to be implemented in Autumn 2024. It will provide a whole-family wraparound service to families in distress and at risk of crisis, with children facing barriers to good social, emotional and mental health, where regular support pathways are not reducing risk and need.
- Phase 2 is integrated within the Children’s Short Breaks and Family Care Service model from April 2025 and will add an urgent outreach service into the current short breaks offer, offering intensive, daily support with routines and activities for families at significant risk of breakdown.

4.9 If Cabinet approves the above recommendations, the specific procurement proposals for Children’s Short Breaks and Family Care, which will include phase 2 of Family Wraparound, will go to Joint Social Care and Health and Children and Families Directorate Leadership Team in the Summer for consideration prior to final decision and sign-off by the Executive Director for Children and Young People in accordance with the recommendations.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 Engagement, procurement and implementation timescales are as follows:

Activity	Timescales
Engagement, market testing and development of the service model	May 2024 – July 2024
Governance	June 2024 – July 2024
Procurement and Mobilisation	August 2024 – March 2025
New Contracts Start	1 April 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Service Scope

Background Papers

None.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None – this is a County wide report

Other members: Councillors Brown, M Humphreys and Roodhouse

Appendix 1 – Proposed Service Scope

Provision Type	Offer Description
Activity, Hobby, and Friendship Clubs	Opportunities for children and young people to attend centre-based clubs in the evenings, at weekends and in school holidays – to meet a variety of needs, age ranges and interests – primarily on a 1:3 basis but also in smaller groups that can offer 1:1 or 1:2 support to children who need it, as well as whole-family activities.
Supported Exploring / Gaining Independence	Out and about in public and community spaces – after-school, Saturdays and school holidays – to match to a range of needs, ages and interests, on a 1:1 basis or 2:1 basis
Day Support at Home	Provision of care and support in mornings, daytime, and evenings (including weekends and holidays) at home – to provide breaks and support with care, routines, activities and hobbies, life skills etc – to include options for whole-family care, support for SEMH and behaviours that challenge, and providing personal care, on a 1:1 and 2:1 basis
Night Support at Home	Provision of overnight support at home – to provide breaks, care and support with routines – to include options for whole-family care, support for SEMH and behaviours that challenge, and providing personal care, on a 1:1 and 2:1 basis
Home from Home Beds	Regular beds in familiar settings – overnight weekday, weekend and school holidays – including multiple bed and solo bed provision
Activity Breaks, Day Trips, and Holidays	Day trips and overnight stays in new places – at weekends and in school holidays – to match to a range of abilities and interests – including supported trips and holidays for the whole-family