

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Young People Select Committee
Date:	23 July 2014
Title:	Short Breaks Task and Finish Group Report
Reference:	6003
Report From:	<i>Short Break Task and Finish Group</i>

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline the work of the task and finish group, set up as a result of deliberations by the Children and Young People Select Committee, in scrutinising the proposed budget reduction measures in relation to short breaks for disabled children.
- 1.2. The report makes a number of recommendations which are to be presented to the Children and Young People's Select Committee on 23 July 2014.

2. Contextual Information

- 2.1. In January 2014, the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services considered a proposed budget for the Children's Services Department for 2014/15, subsequently approved by Full Council on 20th February 2014 in setting the Council Tax precept. The Children's Services Department must now take steps to live within the parameters set for it, and proposed, among a range of measures, a reduction in the budget for the Children with Disabilities Service of between £2.5m - £3.5m. The proposal for the short breaks programme was to realise a saving of £1.85m from an overall budget of £3.1m as one element of that objective, the rationale being that this is one of the more discretionary elements of services for children with disabilities.
- 2.2. The Children and Young People Select Committee discussed the proposal regarding the short break budget on 22 January 2014, including receiving representation from the Hampshire Parent/Carer Network. To further understand the proposal and the impact upon the short break programme, the committee made arrangements for the creation of a task and finish group, comprised of members of the committee (Appendix A), in order to scrutinise the proposal and report back to the committee.
- 2.3. The terms of reference of the group were as follows:

- To fully understand the Short Breaks Service and its budgetary framework in the context of the service budget for Children with Disabilities.
- To consider the possible effect of the proposed cut on parents/carers and the children/young people who use the Short Breaks Service.
- To consider what alternatives are available for families.
- To consider how the service could be delivered more effectively.
- In the event that the group considers there should be any additional financial protection offered to these grants the group will give consideration and advice as to how else the subsequent necessary additional savings should be identified.

3. The Meetings of the Group

- 3.1. The task and finish group has met six times and was presented with a number of reports from officers, as well as receiving delegations from Hampshire parent/Carer Network, a number of voluntary sector representatives and young people themselves.
- 3.2. The first meeting on 11 March 2014 agreed the terms of reference as detailed above. The meeting received a presentation from officers about the current short break service, the wider children with disability service and some options from officers to achieve the required savings.
- 3.3. The second meeting on 18 March 2014 received a number of presentations from Hampshire Parent/Carer Network, the Rose Road Association and Parent Voice, Disability Challengers and KIDS. The group was particularly impressed by a young man who has accessed the short break programme and who provided a short presentation to the meeting on his experiences and views.
- 3.4. The third meeting on 1 April 2014, received a summary briefing from officers of the information provided to the group up to that point, the questions that members of the group had raised and answers where possible.
- 3.5. The fourth meeting on 29 April 2014 received a petition from SCARF (Supporting special Children and their Relatives and Friends), a local parent led charity based in the New Forest which organises regular social and holiday events for children/young people with special needs and their families. The petition requested that the short breaks budget be protected and highlighted the benefits they believe the scheme brings to children, young people and their families.
- 3.6. The fourth meeting also received further information from the voluntary sector representatives who had presented at the second meeting. This information was provided in response to questions the group had asked during the presentations.
- 3.7. The fourth meeting also received a representative sample of the grant applications submitted to the short breaks programme for the current year in

order to fully understand the nature of the applications and the associated costs. The group defined a list of options that they wanted to pursue further and requested a report from officers to consider at the fifth meeting which provided further details regarding that list.

- 3.8. The fifth meeting of the group took place on the 4 June 2014 and considered the report requested at the previous meeting. The group determined that they would meet again on 1 July 2014 to agree their report for the Children and Young People Select Committee on 23 July 2014.
- 3.9. The sixth meeting of the group took place on 1 July 2014 and agreed the content for this report.

4. Final Areas of Consideration

- 4.1. The task and finish group considered a wealth of information from officers, parents/carers, voluntary sector providers of short breaks and a presentation from a young person. In scrutinising this information, the group considered a wide range of ideas and posed a number of detailed questions. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the areas the group considered could make the scheme more efficient or which should form part of the proposals being developed.
- 4.2. The group considered the provision of after school clubs and other schemes in publicly run organisations such as leisure centres which benefit from grants delivered by the short break programme. The group was keen to explore whether any of the costs for these services could be shared with the providers themselves or the venues hosting them. Over £600k of the grants awarded are for such services, £360k of which are allocated to provision operating in conjunction with Hampshire County Council schools, including some academies. The group would encourage the development of closer relationships between these organisations including the sharing of costs and a reduction in charges such as venue costs.
- 4.3. **Recommendation 1: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the potential for sharing costs with schools, academies and other venues hosting short break activities with a view to achieving between £250k - £360k of savings.**
- 4.4. The group considered the option of seeking a strategic partner for the delivery of the short breaks programme. This would involve tendering for bids from the voluntary sector to organise and co-ordinate Hampshire's short break offer on the County Council's behalf. The group believe that a voluntary sector partner could enhance fundraising activity across the network of providers in the county raising additional funds for short break activities. Such fundraising activity may in time produce matched funding to the County Council's contribution. The group were also concerned at the duplication of management and overhead costs across such a myriad number of organisations as currently deliver services and considered that a single, county wide strategic partner could improve the collaboration across the sector to reduce these costs whilst maintaining the range of activities available for children and young people.

- 4.5. **Recommendation 2: The Task and Finish Group recommend that a full business case is developed for appointing a single strategic partner for the delivery of the short break programme with a view to it realising a further £100k in savings by removing the infrastructure within the county council.**
- 4.6. Regardless of whether a strategic partner is identified or not, the group considered there might still be scope to encourage providers to collaborate further in sharing infrastructure costs. The typical share of grant allocated to management costs is between 10% - 15%, though this excludes smaller parent run activities which often do not request or require infrastructure funding. It is difficult to quantify the reduction in expenditure this approach may realise but the concept was raised at a recent short break provider forum and prompted a lively debate with many organisations clearly open to further discussion.
- 4.7. **Recommendation 3: The Task and Finish Group recommend that all providers seeking short break funding submit details of their collaborative proposals to share management and overhead costs with other non-uniformed providers as feasible. The group consider that this could realise a further £200k - £250k of savings.**
- 4.8. The group was aware of the wide range of capital and revenue grants provided by Hampshire County Council to a range of organisations across the county. The group wanted assurance that these grants were provided with a clear requirement that every effort must be made to ensure full access to disabled children and young people. In addition, the group posed the question as to whether the conditions could go further in requiring the receiving organisation to offer a regular short break activity, perhaps making use of a volunteer scheme overseen by the new Early Help Hubs. The requirement for access and inclusion has already been passed to those undertaking a corporate review of the council's relationships with the voluntary and independent sector which is currently in progress.
- 4.9. **Recommendation 4: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the viability of using the volunteer recruitment scheme currently being set up as part of the Olympic Legacy or via the Early Help Hubs in order to support the use of HCC grant funded organisations to develop short break provision where they have the use of appropriate venues. The group consider that this could realise a further £100k of savings.**
- 4.10. The group were very interested to hear about the fundraising activity of providers and whether recipients of short break grants could be required to match fund the contribution from the County Council. The group acknowledged that many organisations across the sector make efforts to raise additional funding but posed the question as to whether more collaborative and concerted efforts by the voluntary sector could improve the level of fundraising currently achieved. The idea was presented to a recent short break provider forum and received great interest, particularly from providers unable to afford investing in fundraising staff. A number of providers suggested that assistance from the County Council in this area would be

warmly welcomed. The group consider that if match funding was required to be identified by recipients of short break funding, this would increase the expenditure on short break provision by £1 million and off set the reduction in the local authority contribution. The group were aware that for providers to be in a position to meet this requirement, it is likely to require a longer preparation time than is available by April 2015. They therefore are making a recommendation that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services should consider whether funding could be identified for the year 2015/16 that would provide this preparation time and ensure the programme can be maintained at that level.

- 4.11. **Recommendation 5: The Task and Finish Group recommend that providers be encouraged to collaborate with other providers to enhance and maximise their fundraising activity.**
- 4.12. **Recommendation 6: That all recipients of short break funding are required to provide match funding in order to deliver their short break offer. This would ensure that an additional £1 million would be made available for the delivery of short breaks sourced from the voluntary and independent sector. The group further recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children Services identify temporary additional funding of at least £800k for the year 2015/16 in order to provide a reasonable time period for providers to source that match funding.**

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The working group scrutinised a significant range of information from a variety of key stakeholders and was in no doubt as to the value of sustaining the short break programme. The group was able to identify a number of recommendations detailed in Sn.4 of this report which will reduce the impact of the budget reductions and enhance the sustainability of the short breaks programme following the reduction in County Council funding.
- 5.2. The group wanted to make an additional recommendation, not discussed in the report, regarding the exploration of the use of Direct Payments and their use for families to purchase short break activities.
- 5.3. **Recommendation 7: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the opportunities for Direct Payments to be used for families to purchase short breaks themselves.**
- 5.4. The group wish to ensure that the wide range of opportunities for short breaks has not been diminished by these proposals.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. **Recommendation 1: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the potential for sharing costs with schools, academies and other venues hosting short break activities with a view to achieving between £250k - £360k of savings.**
- 6.2. **Recommendation 2: The Task and Finish Group recommend that a full business case is developed for appointing a single strategic partner for**

the delivery of the short break programme with a view to it realising a further £100k in savings by removing the infrastructure within the county council. Further, the group recommend that if a strategic partner is appointed, it will be required to distribute a proportion (tba) of the funding to other organisations via an application process.

- 6.3. Recommendation 3: The Task and Finish Group recommend that all providers seeking short break funding submit details of their collaborative proposals to share management and overhead costs with other non-uniformed providers as feasible. The group consider that this could realise a further £200k - £250k of savings.**
- 6.4. Recommendation 4: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the viability of using the volunteer recruitment scheme currently being set up as part of the Olympic Legacy or via the Early Help Hubs in order to support the use of HCC grant funded organisations to develop short break provision where they have the use of appropriate venues. The group consider that this could realise a further £100k of savings.**
- 6.5. Recommendation 5: The Task and Finish Group recommend that providers be encouraged to collaborate with other providers to enhance and maximise their fundraising activity.**
- 6.6. Recommendation 6: That all recipients of short break funding are required to provide match funding in order to deliver their short break offer. This would ensure that an additional £1 million would be made available for the delivery of short breaks sourced from the voluntary and independent sector. The group further recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children Services identify temporary additional funding of at least £800k for the year 2015/16 in order to provide a reasonable time period for providers to source that match funding.**
- 6.7. Recommendation 7: The Task and Finish Group recommend that officers explore the opportunities for Direct Payments to be used for families to purchase short breaks themselves.**

Appendix A

Membership of the Short Breaks Task and Finish Group

Councillor Ray Bolton (Chair)
Councillor Ann Briggs
Councillor Criss Connor
Councillor Jonathan Glen
Councillor Marge Harvey
Councillor Jackie Porter
Councillor Christopher Wood

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Revenue budget report for Children's Services for 2014/15	<u>Reference</u> 5445	<u>Date</u> 22 January 2014
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. An equalities impact assessment will be completed once proposals have been agreed for consultation.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. There is no identifiable impact on crime and disorder

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Not applicable

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Not applicable