



Proposed changes to Hampshire County Council's Short Break Activities Programme for Children with Disabilities

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Department: Children's Services
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Description of current service/policy

Hampshire Children's Service's Short Breaks Activity Programme meets the requirements of The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 to provide a range of services which are sufficient to assist carers to continue providing care to a disabled child or young person, or to do so more effectively.

The programme provides breaks for carers whilst enabling children and young people with disabilities to join in with safe, fun and interesting activities. The programme is currently available to children from 0-19 years with a disability or additional need that either live or attend a school in the Hampshire local authority area.

Geographical impact: All
Hampshire

Description of proposed change

It's proposed to reshape the Short Break Activities Programme to deliver activities reflecting the needs of service users, within a reduced budget. It's proposed to reform commissioning processes and to implement consistent charging and hardship policies. It's proposed to reduce the age of eligibility to 18 in line with statutory requirements and to only fund children living in the Hampshire County Council authority area. Reforms to the Gateway Card system are proposed. The proposals seek to ensure activities meet the definition of a short break. Therefore it is proposed to only fund short breaks where parents can leave their child and stop funding swimming lessons as a short break activity.

Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out?

Yes

The consultation ran from 12 March to 3 June 2018. It sought views on the options to achieve £1m savings from the short breaks programme from service users, parents, carers, short break providers, other stakeholders and the wider public.

The consultation gathered views through online/ paper questionnaires. An Easy Read version of the Information Pack and Response Form was available online or on paper by request.

Prior to consultation, engagement with parents, carers, Hampshire Parent Carer Network and providers was undertaken.

Children and young people, their parents or carers, and other stakeholders had the opportunity to attend a number of consultation event(s).

Statutory considerations	Impact	Mitigation
	<p>The impact in relation to 'Age' as a protected characteristic is deemed to be high because the children and young people who are currently eligible for the programme are aged between birth and twenty years of age. Any reduction in specific activities for children within a certain age range may have an impact on these children. In addition, siblings of the disabled</p>	<p>Short breaks are currently provided to children and young people aged 0-19. Any potential impact of a reduction in activities aimed at a particular age group would be mitigated by matching the commissioning of activities to local priorities and demand.</p> <p>Reducing the age that short break activities are offered to the date of the young person's 18th birthday brings the provision in-line with the County Council's statutory responsibilities and with other local authority practice.</p> <p>Hampshire County Council's Adults' Health and Care department (AHCD) has a responsibility to provide social care support to people over the age of 18 under the Care Act. Advice and guidance is provided to everyone via the Connect to Support Hampshire website which offers information and advice, including connections to local groups and activities that the person could access. AHCD also completes needs assessments for individuals over 18 to determine if they, and/or their carers have care and support</p>

Age:

High

children and young people are likely to include children in this age range. It is proposed to reduce the age range of children and young people who are eligible to access the short break programme from birth up to their 18th birthday, bringing the provision in-line with the County Council's statutory responsibilities. Analysis of current short break usage data shows that 89 18-20 year olds access the short break activities programme.

Consultation responses identified strong concerns about stopping funding for those people aged 18 and over. The main concerns raised related to the mental health and wellbeing of young people in this age bracket, as well as concern about their transition to other care and respite services. Similar concerns were raised at drop in events and additional concerns that this cohort would not meet adult social care eligibility criteria for support and a lack of a similar provision for young adults.

needs which are eligible for support from the County Council under provisions for adult social care in the Care Act. If an individual or carer has eligible needs then the AHCD will help them to identify the support they might need as a result.

Of the 89 young people aged 18-20 who are currently accessing short breaks; 74% of these are known to AHCD. If the proposal to stop funding short breaks for those over 18 is approved, and if these individuals and/or their carers are assessed as having eligible care needs (under the Care Act) which then become unmet, the AHCD would undertake a review and work with the individual and their carers on how best to meet those needs. For those young people and their carers are not currently known to AHCD, they would be written to and given information about their options, including how they can access an assessment from AHCD. This will mean that young people over 18 who are currently accessing short breaks activities may stop attending and receive an alternative provision under the Care Act or they may have the opportunity to continue to attend the activity using a direct payment or may self-fund their place.

From 2016/17 monitoring data, the highest users were those aged 8yrs, however there is a significant peak between the age range of 6-14yrs. Targeting provision to local priorities provides opportunities to ensure that there is sufficient provision for this age group and could provide greater access to activities for the age groups with highest demand.

The proposed introduction of a requirement to provide evidence of eligibility for the short breaks programme would ensure that short

Disability:

High

The impact in relation to 'Disability' as a protected characteristic is considered to be high because the programme supports disabled children and young people. Any reduction in the level of provision available could reduce the potential access for disabled children and young people.

breaks are targeted at children who have a disability or additional need and who need support to take part in leisure activities. The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with this proposal.

The proposed introduction of a requirement to reconfirm eligibility and continued requirement for a Gateway card would enable the County Council to have a better understanding of demand to inform the provision and development of services.

There is a proposal to require providers to put in place a system that ensures payments, or a deposit, for an activity is taken at the point of booking. This could benefit families by guaranteeing their child a space on an activity and also enable better management of waiting lists and vacancies to ensure spaces are used. This is being proposed in response to parental feedback about the lack of available spaces on popular activities.

The proposal to commission the Short Break Activities Programme on the basis of priorities, agreed with a representative parent/carer panel could enable activities to be commissioned specifically based on needs agreed by the parent/carer panel. This could encourage provision that is better suited to service users by understanding local priorities, having more control over what is available and where, and removing duplication.

There was a split response to this proposal with 50% of respondents saying they agreed, 39% disagreeing and 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This new approach would mean the County Council could more easily be able to identify where any gaps are and target funding to ensure

		there is more equitable provision across the county, in line with demand.
Sexual orientation:		
Neutral		
Race:		
Neutral		
Religion and belief:		
Neutral		
Gender reassignment:		
Neutral		
Gender:	<p>The impact in relation to 'Gender' as a protected characteristic is considered to be medium. The 2016/17 monitoring data evidences that significantly more males access the scheme than females (1344 unique males accessed provision vs 531 unique females), therefore male disabled children and young people could be affected more than females.</p> <p>With regard to parents and carers, the feedback from the previous public consultation suggests that it is predominantly mothers and female carers who receive the greatest benefit from their children accessing the short breaks programme and therefore may be most adversely affected by any reduction in the programme.</p>	<p>The proposal to move away from a grant based system, towards developing a priority-setting structure for the funding and provision of short breaks, could further create opportunities to shape provision at all levels of need and ensure that services are targeted to local needs and priorities. The procurement of services could ensure that service provision takes into account the predominance of males who access the services and the needs of female parents and carers.</p>
Medium		
Marriage and civil partnership:		
Neutral		
Pregnancy and maternity:		
Neutral		
Other policy considerations	Impact	Mitigation

<p>Poverty: Medium</p>	<p>The risk to those whose lives are affected by poverty is considered to be medium. There could be an increase in parental cost contribution for some short break services compared to the current charge, or the introduction of a charge by providers, as a result of the proposal to enforce the current charging policy. This may mean that the cost of accessing short breaks increases for some families compared to current practice. The guidance to providers recommends that families pay a parental contribution to access a short break activity equivalent to the standard amount for a similar activity for all children in that local area; however the guidance is applied inconsistently.</p> <p>Consultation responses raised some concern that there could be an impact on parents and carers, as some parents and carers could struggle to meet the cost of the short break activity in advance. Overall, there was widespread agreement with the proposal to require upfront payment from parents/carers, but this needs to be carefully balanced with the requirement to implement a consistent and robust hardship policy. with 68% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. 76% of organisations agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal. 17% of respondents overall disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal.</p> <p>There were also concerns that some respondents might not be able to afford activities if the full market rate for the activity was charged. These concerns were also raised at the drop-in events; with parents/carers identifying that they would need providers to be flexible with payment plans to enable them to spread out payments.</p>	<p>It is proposed that the County Council enforces the requirement for providers to adhere to the application of a fair parental charge. Currently, hardship arrangements are determined by providers and are inconsistent. It is proposed that a hardship policy is applied consistently across all providers of short break activities. Hampshire County Council would ensure that providers offer a hardship rate against an agreed policy. This would help to make the short break activities programme more equitable. Parents in receipt of income related benefits would not be disadvantaged as they would be eligible for hardship funding, allowing their child to attend the activity.</p> <p>If the proposal to pay for activities upfront is approved, providers will be required, through their contract or grant conditions, to have payment options in place that mitigate the impact on those families that may struggle to pay upfront in order to ensure that they can still access short breaks provision as and when necessary.</p> <p>The proposed hardship policy is set out in section 10. By introducing this policy, it is anticipated that this would enable all parents/carers on lower incomes to have a fairer opportunity to access Short Break Activities provision.</p>
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<p>Rurality: Medium</p>	<p>The risk to those living in rural areas is considered to be medium. Currently, the geographical spread of available short break activities is limited due to how funding is managed and distributed. For some families, this means that their journey time to access a short break is greater for those living in rural areas.</p>	<p>A recent review of the use of the short breaks programme demonstrates a lack of provision in some rural areas, despite high demand. It is proposed that the grant process could be amended to introduce a local priority setting mechanism that allows for a priority-led grant process that can adapt each year to the needs of a particular area. These would be considered in the awarding of grants to services in rural areas. Transport links and ease of access to services would be considered. The consultation findings support this approach; respondents with a connection to the Short Break Activities Programme were asked what was important to them in regards to the location that they receive a short break. The vast majority of respondents prefer to access Short Break provision in close proximity to where they live (84%).</p>
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Any other information

The Children with Disabilities Service (CwD) has a savings target of £3million, approved by Full Council in February 2017. This represents a 15.3% reduction in the overall Children with Disabilities budget, currently £19.5m. A number of workstreams are aiming to contribute to these savings as part of the County Council's savings target. Options for the delivery and management of short breaks were put out to consultation on with a view to reducing the Short Breaks Programme budget by £1m, while continuing to provide services that enable the County Council to meet its statutory duties.

Currently, £2.23 million from Hampshire County Council is distributed in grants to organisations funding play-schemes, youth clubs and similar leisure activities. The programme supports 2,045 children and young people (based on 2016/17 data). The short breaks programme also funds the 'Community Buddy' scheme supporting 94 children to have a buddy to support them to access activities and give their parents and carers a break. Additionally, the County Council funds the 'Support for Individuals' grant supporting 87 children to access primarily mainstream activities and supporting providers to develop a more inclusive service.