

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee		
DATE:	3 February 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	SHORT BREAKS COMMISSIONING PROCESS 2016-17		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	Cllr Gavin	PORTFOLIO:	Children's Services and Families
SERVICE:	Children with Disabilities	WARDS:	Borough wide
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the plan to create a more personalised approach to short breaks services in Reading through the creation of unique and individualised packages for families. The current traditional approach to 'grant funding' organisations will need to evolve to enable families with direct payments to purchase the care they want at the time and quality which is right for them, and to purchase those services from their chosen provider. The consultation process will determine a timeline, but we aim to have the new process in place by the end of the 2016/17 financial year.
- 1.2 In 2015/16 Reading Borough Council's spend on short breaks was £102,000. This budget supported around 200 families using short breaks services. The number of young people in Reading aged 0-19 living with a disability or longstanding illness is estimated at 6,635 (*Public Health England, 2011*). Better value for money through improved choice and control for service users will be achieved by delivering services through Direct Payments to those who are eligible.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 ACE committee are asked to approve the proposal for Reading Borough Council to evolve the current short break grants mechanism into specified contracts and to start providing short break services through Direct Payments. Further consultation work will take place with key stakeholders and timescales will be announced.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide short breaks care for children with disabilities and their families/carers. Care options will continue to be provided to those in need, both directly and through VCS organisations and other providers. In the increased uptake of Direct Payments, freedom is provided to those in receipt to buy and choose services tailored to their needs, rather than solely those provided by the Council and or its partners.
- 3.2 The current grants with short break providers expire on 31 March 2016. Interim arrangements will be put in place to extend current agreements and services until the consultation is complete and a new bidding round has concluded.
- 3.3 In 2015/16 approximately 200 of Reading's young people have taken part in a short break by attending an afterschool, evening, weekend or holiday club. This is out of an estimated 6,635 children with disabilities or longstanding illnesses. There are currently eight providers receiving funding.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Discussions with family forums, the voluntary sector and short break providers will take place from February through to June 2016. RBC will identify the organisations, groups and families that will be affected (see Appendix 1). Clearly this will need to engage families who are not currently receiving a short break as well as those who do to ensure equality of access based on assessment of need. Families will be made aware of the full scope and options involved in the Direct Payment process and given links to the Family Information Service. They will give families options on where a wide range of short breaks can be purchased.
- 4.2 Providers will go through a bidding process to demonstrate how they plan to run the new Direct Payment funded short break groups. RBC will be represented at meetings for key stakeholders to explain what this bidding process will look like.

- 4.3 Consultations will identify any stand-alone services that need to be commissioned to ensure families' choices can be met.
- 4.4 We anticipate that tendering will commence from June 2016. Bidders will be notified whether successful or not. Talks on setting up groups will follow, as will exit strategies.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 5.1 RBC has already consulted with with Reading Families' Forum, the voluntary sector and short break providers. The Short Breaks Working Group met a number of times in 2015. This group discussed the future of short breaks for Reading. The current services were reviewed and gaps for certain demographics were identified. We hope to continue these relationships and build on this analysis to work together through the proposed changes.
- 5.2 RBC will have representatives at meetings for each of the key community groups to discuss short breaks and co create how we plan to move forward into a Direct Payment funded service. We want to know thoughts, questions, risks, etc.
- 5.3 All parties included in the consultation process will be kept in the loop. RBC will send out information including a 'You Said, We Did' document.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The current grants expire on 31 March 2016, so some contracts will need to be extended and VCS and other providers will need to prepare for a formal bidding and contracting process.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The total spend on voluntary sector short break groups for 2015/16 is currently at £ £102,000.
- 7.2 RBC hopes to save money in certain service areas for short breaks. We expect to achieve better value for money by providing services to only those eligible for a Direct Payment, and by ensuring that families have better choice and control over the services they wish to purchase.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 A variety of options need to be available including the option for families to be supported to 'club' together in using their direct payments, voucher systems to be created with provider agencies, etc
- 8.2 It is not yet clear what issues will need to be resolved for providers to fully embrace working with families who will have choice and customer control in the short breaks funded by children with Direct Payments. However, as this option is a key feature of the Children and Families Act, both RVA and RBC will support providers.
- 8.4 Quality assurance processes will need to be refreshed to provide confidence for purchasers using a direct payment
- 8.5 It is possible that additional capacity will be required to deliver the assessments necessary to set up Direct Payments.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Additional short breaks data for 2015/16 and previous papers/timelines on changes to the short breaks process are available from the Children's Commissioning Team on request.

APPENDIX 1 - Consultations on Short Breaks Process

Proposed timeline for consultation:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
January - June 2016	July - November 2016	December 2016 - March 2017
Preparation & consultation	Bidding for start-up funding	Successful bidders are notified and set up their operations in Reading.

Consultations on Short Breaks Process

As part of the process to modernise our short breaks offer and move towards a model of personalisation and direct payments Reading Borough Council (RBC) proposes to undertake further consultation with service users, providers and other stakeholders.

RBC plans to move towards a model of Short Break groups funded by Direct Payments. There are a variety of individuals, providers and representatives involved in the current Short Break arrangements, as well as a large number of children with disabilities who do not currently receive funded short breaks services. A series of consultation meetings and focus groups will be scheduled between February and June 2016 and will focus in particular on the following:

- An introduction to direct payments, what they are and how they work (from both a provider and a service user perspective), plus the support available to administer them
- An assessment and analysis of the type of Short Break groups currently available
- An understanding of the type of Short Break activities families would like to see on offer in the future
- An understanding of the issues and concerns that stakeholders have relating to the proposals

Stakeholders to Consult Include (but are not limited to):

Name	Role
Brookfields School	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Tilehurst Autistic Group	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Disability Challengers	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Thumbs Up Club	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Reading Mencap	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Berkshire PHAB	Current provider of RBC short breaks
Alafia (ACRE)	BME information service
Reading Families' Forum	Part of RBC's short breaks working group
RCVYS	Represent voluntary sector providers in Reading
The Avenue School	Host venue for one of the current short breaks service
Service Lead(s)	CYPDT
Service Lead(s)	Early Help & Family Intervention
Children's Centres	
Short Breaks Working Group	
Other potential providers, service users, partners and stakeholders	The wider range of stakeholders will be reached through open consultation meetings promoted through schools, other support services, primary care etc.

Many of the above providers will meet regularly at Reading Families' Forum or RCVYS' Special Interest Group. Feedback from these groups indicates that although they have been consulted a number of times on this topic, they would very much like further opportunity to discuss the direct payments model in particular. RBC also needs to ensure that the same opportunity is offered to those who are not currently receiving (or providing) a short break service.

Timeline

RBC aims to have consultations with all key stakeholders completed by the end of June 2016, and for a bidding process to commence between July and December 2016.