

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	14
TITLE:	UPDATE ON SHORT BREAKS - OUTCOME-BASED CONTRACTS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE	WARDS:	ALL
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report gives an update of Reading Borough Council (RBC)'s current position on Short Breaks.
- 1.2 Following a 90 day formal consultation last year, a paper was approved at RBC's Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee (ACE Committee) in December 2016. The report recommended that RBC provides support to children and families with disabilities and special educational needs through a range of Direct Payments and the provision of Short Breaks.
- 1.3 The provision of Short Breaks is to be secured and delivered through outcome-based contracts with a range of providers to ensure that varied services achieve appropriate results for Reading's children in need of support.
- 1.4 The Access to Resources Team (ART) is currently in the co-production stage with key stakeholders. This will help to develop appropriate bidding lots for Short Break provision to be advertised before awarding outcome-based contracts with successful providers starting 1 April 2018.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the content of this report be noted and future activity to secure outcome-based contracts with a range of providers to ensure that varied services achieve appropriate results for Reading's children in need of support approved.

3. CURRENT PROVISION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 3.1 RBC currently accesses their provision of Short Breaks through a range of in-house provision, Direct Payments and grants to community and Voluntary Sector providers. This arrangement addresses RBC's legislative requirements.
- 3.2 The current grants to providers of Short Breaks were due to expire on 31 March 2017. This grant arrangement has subsequently been extended until 31 March 2018. The expectation is that outcome-based contracts are in place for provisions of this nature by 1 April 2018. Previous reports to members suggested a grant extension of six months. This proved impossible as the Short Break provisions in question were provided at different times throughout the year. Therefore an annual agreement with providers was needed.
- 3.3 The ART is currently in the co-production stage. The team is working collaboratively with Reading Families' Forum, RCYVS and a number of Voluntary Sector providers to inform and construct the bidding lots to be advertised.
- 3.4 **Appendix 1** shows the latest message to the voluntary sector requesting their input. This includes data collated from a Reading Families' Forum exercise to identify current gaps in provision. Below that you will find the responses from voluntary sector providers collated by Reading Children's Voluntary Youth Services (RCVYS).
- 3.5 RBC will identify the outcomes required for children accessing Short Break intervention from providers. RBC will then invite providers to tender for Short Break contracts. Once awarded, the contracts will be robustly managed to ensure the right outcomes are achieved for the right families.
- 3.6 **Appendix 2** gives a timeline of the project plan for Short Breaks and outcome-based contracts.
- 3.7 Key findings from the consultation concluded that many families are not aware of their entitlement for Short Breaks or Direct Payments. The key success of either provision would be flexibility, choice and periods including holidays, weekends and afterschool being the primary focus of provision (including overnight respite). The eligibility criteria currently published on the Local Offer is not up-to-date. There are families entitled to support who do not access it, and conversely, there may be families accessing support at an inappropriate level in relation to their need. The SEN Team is currently working on a full review of the Short Breaks Statement on Reading Services Guide. SEN will make amendments to include a new threshold document covering eligibility criteria. This will ensure access to support is appropriate and equitable for those children and families in need.

- 3.8 Ensuring the right children are receiving the right services at the right time will require modernisation of the Short Breaks offer. RBC must evidence outcome-based accountability and sound financial decision making. A robust system of assessment and review will ascertain the needs and requirements of individual child and family circumstances in order to ensure the approach requested is appropriate.
- 3.9 It is also expected that an increased demand for personalisation through the Direct Payment option will exist. If children and families opt for Direct Payments, RBC will ensure the Local Offer is maintained and accessible in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 so families can use it when securing their own individualised support. RBC's Finance Team and the Children & Young People's Disability Team (CYPDT) are currently looking into spend towards Direct Payments, uptake and assessments for families. This is as part of the current CYPDT review and will contribute to the new-look Short Breaks offer.
- 3.10 In-house Short Break services and CYPDT support provisions are also being reviewed. Team members have been tasked to pull together data from Cressingham Short Breaks Unit, Greenslade's homesitting service and Family Link. This information will include numbers of children using each service, numbers on waiting lists and total spend. This will help contribute to the overview of RBC's Short Break offer. RBC can then create an accurate budget towards spend on Short Breaks for 2018/19. Providers will be given a realistic expectation on standards within outcome-based contracts.
- 3.11 This piece of work therefore ensures RBC is compliant with legislation in offering a range of support. It also ensures appropriate families are identified for support and that providers are directed to deliver appropriate results to safeguard and promote the welfare and opportunity of Reading's Children.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The provision of a range of services to address the needs of children with disabilities, Special Educational Needs and their families is established in three key pieces of legislation, the most recent (Children and Families Act 2014) places a duty on the Local Authority to provide a range of access to provision across universal to specialist services.
- 4.2 Under the provision of these acts, the Local Authority has a duty to provide a range of support. They must give young people and their parents more say about the help they receive. Local Authorities have to keep checking whether their Local Offer provides enough help for children and young people with a disability or Special Educational Needs. They must ask young people and their parents for their opinions. If families say they don't think there is enough help, RBC must respond and explain what they are going to change.
- 4.3 Contracts will be advertised in line with RBC Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 4.4 It will be necessary for RBC to enter into contracts with the successful bidders of Short Breaks provision.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In 2016/17, RBC had a budget of £80,000 to spend on Voluntary Sector Short Break groups. The amount spent in this area was £67,305. Providers who were not seeing attendance from as many Reading children as agreed when drawing up grant arrangements have seen funding cut or removed. RBC now funds six Voluntary Sector providers who see over 200 children a year attending their groups. The current Short Break groups offered by Voluntary Sector providers are set to cost RBC £67,305 for 2017/18 against the £80,000 budget.
- 5.2 The overall budget envelope designated for Short Breaks run by external providers is being reviewed ahead of the upcoming tendering process for Voluntary Sector Short Break groups. This pot of money also pays for home-sitting services and an RBC run Short Break group. The money must be split accordingly to meet the needs, age groups and gaps identified through co-production, and give families options when accessing a Short Break.
- 5.3 For 2016/17, RBC's total expenditure on Direct Payments, which includes elements of Short Break services, was £132,000. The budget was £84,000. This budget has increased to £164,000 for 2017/18 to allow for growth in Direct Payment packages.
- 5.4 RBC's Finance team is currently working on a way to demonstrate spend on all Short Break areas. This is part of the current CYPDT review and will give a better idea of the budget needed for 2018/19.
- 5.5 This Short Breaks work acknowledges the ongoing reduction in funding for RBC. In response, any commissioning will be carried out with this significant reduction considered. Existing and future contracts will need to evidence ability to deliver a statutory requirement and contribution to service, directorate and corporate aims. Activity carried out by the ART is seen as vital for identifying and delivering a contribution to the savings required, and to the stability of delivering services to children, young people, their families and carers in Reading under a significantly reduced budget.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 **Appendix 2** gives a timeline of the project plan for Short Breaks and outcome-based contracts.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to ACE Committee - December 2016
- SHORT BREAKS COMMISSIONING PROCESS 2016-17

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/8897/Adult-Social-Care-Childrens-Services-and-Education-Committee-03-FEB-2016>

- The Local Offer

<http://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/family.action?familychannel=3-7>

- To view the current Short Breaks Statement 2015/2016 (this will be updated by the summer of 2017)

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/reading/enterprise/files/rbc_short_breaks_statement_2015-16_v6_2_1.pdf

LETTER TO RCVYS - 10/05/2017

**2018/19 SHORT BREAK GROUPS FOR READING CHILDREN
CO-PRODUCTION TOWARDS OUTCOME-BASED CONTRACTS**

Introduction

In December 2016, following a formal 90 day consultation, a report went to RBC's ACE Committee proposing the approach to Short Break and Direct Payment provision.

The recommendation was to provide support to children and families with disabilities and special educational needs through a range of Direct Payments and the provision of Short Breaks.

The provision of Short Breaks must be secured and delivered through outcome-based contracts with a range of providers to ensure that varied services achieve appropriate outcomes for Reading's children in need of support.

RBC is now in the co-production stage ahead of advertising bidding lots for outcome-based Short Break groups. Reading Families Forum kindly contributed to the following information. RBC would now like to ask the Voluntary Sector to consider the services and gaps identified and give them a chance to contribute.

Reading Families Forum contributions - submitted 7 May 2017

Following a survey of families' views in January 2015 and several coffee evenings since gathering parent carer views, these are the short breaks lots that need to be covered for Reading families.

Most parent carers (approx. 60%) said that their children did not have enough time with their peers doing things that they enjoy. Some were not able to get out during school holidays with their children at all because of the level of their children's needs.

Approximately half felt that their children could attend mainstream clubs with support; the other half felt that their children needed specialist clubs.

Lots needed for those children who can attend mainstream clubs with support:

An organisation to provide capable PAs to enable children to attend mainstream clubs and/or take children out to enjoy activities, similar to Me2 in Wokingham and the Children's Opportunity Group that used to exist in Reading.

Clarification is needed towards how many children access the *Greenslade Support Solutions* and how many of these children Greenslade home sit for. The majority of the parent carers we have heard from want their children to be able to go out more, enjoy more sports and hobbies and socialise with their peers.

It should be noted that Crossroads Care Reading provide support in the home, so do not provide the stimulation outside the home that parent carers say they want for their children.

Afterschool activities for mainstream 12 - 19 year olds with SEND (currently provided by Smiles Youth Club 13 -18 for mild to mod learning diffs.)

For those children at special schools who are not able to access mainstream clubs, even with support:

Easter and holiday clubs for 5 - 11 year olds (currently provided by Brookfields, for Brookfields pupils and some at Thumbs Up but *a gap for Avenue, TVS and Holy Brook pupils*)

Easter and holiday clubs for 12 - 19 year olds (currently provided by Brookfields, for Brookfields pupils, Thumbs Up and Challengers plus 8 - 18 year olds at TAG with ASC)

Afterschool clubs for 5 - 19 year olds (currently provided by Brookfields, for Brookfields pupils and Addington for Addington pupils but *a gap for Avenue, TVS and Phoenix College pupils*). There is a small Saturday performing arts club 9 - 14 year olds KEEN and youth club Phab for 9 - 18 year olds.

Information still needed to ensure that money is spent to ensure investment is made to help as many families as possible. NB This information was originally requested in February 2015.

1. Numbers of children using Cressingham, number on waiting list and total budget
2. Numbers of children using Greenslade, number on waiting list and total budget
3. Numbers of children using Family Link, number on waiting list and budget
4. Numbers of children using direct payments and total budget

Other areas of work needed

1. To minimise the need for more specialist short breaks:
 - A safe, accessible play space for family activities. These exist at TVAP and Camp Mohawk in Maidenhead borough, Our House in Wokingham, Swings and Smiles in Thatchum. In Reading there are just monthly stay and play sessions at Dingley Promise for under 5s only.
 - Making Local Authority holiday and after school clubs more accessible for SEND children is important.
2. Improving the system for parent carers to apply for short breaks.

RCVYS RESPONSE

Co-Production - Short Breaks Proposals - May 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the initial proposals for Short Breaks Groups, as part of the Co-Production exercise promised at the end of 2016.

As we have previously discussed, RCVYS has shared these proposals with all Voluntary Sector organisations who have expressed an interest in working with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Reading. This included all existing providers. They were given two weeks to submit any comments or views, and RCVYS collated these views into this response document. Responses were received from 9 organisations, and where specific statements and comments have been made, these have been included in the attached Appendix. The key themes of the responses are included below.

The proposed bidding lots do not include any mention of Saturday Clubs

Saturday Clubs were highly valued by parents within the two previous consultations, and yet they are missing from these proposals. Whilst there are not many providers, there is currently provision for Primary and Secondary-aged children. Not providing these clubs would significantly impact children and parents who are not able to access mainstream provision, even with assistance.

An organisation to provide capable PAs

Reading Borough Council (RBC) reference Me2 Club and Children's Opportunities Group, but these do/did not offer 'PAs'. They offer/offered a 'buddying' programme to enable children and young people with SEND to access mainstream social activities. RBC needs to be clear whether it means PAs or whether it means a 'buddying' programme. PAs generally offer a high level of support for children/young people with very complex needs. We have stated previously that PAs are often very difficult to find, and parents/carers who can find a PA then have the additional procedural and legal burdens of becoming employers. This puts off a number of parents who need that level of support, but don't feel able to take on that level of responsibility.

The proposed bidding lots do not include any mention of Short Breaks provision for the Under 5s.

The current provision does not include any allowance for children with SEND under the age of 5. Children who have a disability from a very young age are often some of the most vulnerable children in our town, and generally cannot access any other mainstream provision. These children are frequently under school-age and their parents/carers often care for them without any break at all. Currently, Short Breaks provision for Under 5s is available and funded in Wokingham and West Berkshire, but parents/carers in Reading are disadvantaged because of the post code they live in.

The role of Reading Crossroads

Reading Crossroads are commissioned by Adult Services, and whilst they may have an indirect benefit for families, they do not provide 'Short Breaks', and do not provide any support outside of the home. The child is an indirect beneficiary of their service.

Information is still not forthcoming about the numbers of children accessing RBC provision

In February 2015, and in each of the previous consultation exercises, information was requested to establish the take up and budgetary allocations for RBC Short Breaks provision, so that the whole range of services can be considered together. It is very disappointing that this has yet to be received, and needs to be made available through this Co-Production process to ensure that the whole Short Breaks offer for children, young people and families is publicised, and made available. This includes:

- Numbers of children using Cressingham, number on waiting list and total budget.
- Concern has previously been raised about the under-utilisation of this much-valued facility.
- Numbers of children using Greenslade, number on waiting list and total budget.
- For those who can access this service, it is much valued, but getting onto the assessment process is very difficult.
- Numbers of children using Family Link, number on waiting list and budget.
- Numbers of children using direct payments and total budget.

School-based Holiday Clubs

Questions have been asked around the provision of school-based Holiday Clubs, and the ability to access these clubs for children who do not attend that specific school.

This element stems from historic scenarios where Addington School, The Avenue School and Brookfields School all ran their own Holiday Clubs for their own pupils. Several years ago, Addington School Holiday Club separated and essentially became Thumbs Up Club, and now take children from across the area, although the majority of their children attend Addington School. The Avenue School Holiday Club ended, but until recently, Disability Challengers delivered a club for Secondary-aged children at the school. This has now moved to Brookfields School for a variety of reasons. Brookfields School still run their own Holiday Club, which is currently only open to children who attend that school, albeit that the majority of children who attend the school live in the RBC area. It has been recognised that this arrangement is exclusive, and that it would be difficult to continue this arrangement with the new contracts. This presents a number of challenges for the school, particularly with regards to capacity, if they had to offer places to other children. A full set of their comments are included in the Appendix.

Provision for children who attend The Avenue School and Thames Valley School is currently very limited, and excellent, publically-funded facilities are lying unused for periods during holiday times. Tilehurst Autistic Group (TAG) offer some provision through Thames Valley School to some of these children, although this is limited to those with a diagnosis of Autism, and only runs for certain periods during the holidays.

Thumbs Up Club have also commented that the information previously circulated which described their provision was not accurate, and have provided the correct information, which has been included in the Appendix. Consideration could be given through this

process to encourage additional provision using these facilities, to help to meet the potential demand for places.

Information and Advice Services, especially for BME groups

The second consultation exercise included reference to funded Specialist Information and Advice Services, which included specific provision to provide this to BME groups. This specialist service is essential to ensure that parents can navigate the complex pathways to accessing Short Breaks and other support for children with SEND. There is no mention of this service within the proposed bidding lots, and we are very concerned that any proposal to remove this service will mean that there would be no specialist Information and Advice service for parents left in Reading. This would also disproportionately impact on BME groups, who are already under-represented in the number of families who take up Short Breaks.

Changes to delivery model in Wokingham

Whilst not directly relevant to this Co-Production process, it should be highlighted that Wokingham Borough Council have recently announced that they are going to transition to an entirely 'Personal Budget' approach to delivering Short Breaks. This is important to highlight, as this does affect a number of current providers, who will have to operate with two different financial models. In addition, it could mean that families with identical needs in different areas, may not be able to access the same provision, due to financial differences. This will add complication for providers, and could present confusion for families.

As was been agreed at the end of last year, this whole commissioning process also has to include the following elements: An exercise to determine, and publically communicate the criteria for access to Short Breaks for Disabled Children in Reading. The national guidance¹ needs to be interpreted locally, which should then be publically communicated to all stakeholders, including parents/carers, practitioners and Social Workers. The previous lack of clear criteria has contributed to the inconsistent take-up of families' entitlement, and many potentially qualifying families not being aware of Short Breaks provision. Once a clear set of criteria have been established, a sufficiency exercise will need to be undertaken. As Short Breaks for Disabled Children is an entitlement service, it is vital that any commissioning process understands approximately how many children and families might be entitled to access this service. This in turn should influence the number of places which are planned for, and consequently, the financial budget potentially required. Reading Borough Council has consistently quoted that "*Only 200 of Reading's 6,635 children with disabilities and long-term illness have claimed their right to short breaks.*" (<http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/low-take-up-short-breaks-10849553>). These figures have also been quoted in papers to Council Committees. Service Managers and Commissioners are very clear and agree that 6,635 children are not entitled to Short Breaks, and agree that the number is likely to be around 300-400, depending on how the national criteria are interpreted. Clarity on this, and an agreed approximate number of eligible children and families is essential for the success of this process. Addressing the issues previously raised on multiple occasions about the difficulties in accessing Social Care and Carers Assessments for Disabled Children and their families. Families have a Right and an entitlement to access assessments, and these are still very difficult and long-winded to access. A quality and transparent assessment process is an essential 'first domino' issue for families wanting to access any form of support in caring

for their disabled child. This long-standing issue needs to be addressed as a priority before any Short Breaks process can start. If Reading Borough Council insists that 6,635 children are entitled to Short Breaks, then the current resource to undertake the backlog of assessments required is wholly inadequate and it could be many years before all these current families can go through the assessment process. This does not include any new families who have not yet been included in that initial number. Once again, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. We would be happy to discuss any of these points in more depth in due course. RCVYS looks forward to continuing our positive and constructive relationship with Reading Borough Council and our other partners on Reading Children's Trust and Reading Local Strategic Partnership, as we work together to continue to ensure that the needs are met of Reading's most vulnerable children.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Cross
RCVYS Development Worker

Responses Received from Voluntary Sector Organisations

Reading Mencap

Comment on RBC Co-Production Proposal for RCVYS Disability SIG

In making these observations about the Short Breaks proposals outlined in Reading's document I am mindful that short breaks are meant to give the families of disabled & SEN children a break from caring and the guidance is particular to say that this is "not just breaks for families who would not be able to continue without a break". However, this service provision inevitably has to be seen as set against the backdrop of reducing local authority funding with the consequent need to prioritise individual families and children's needs to ensure that those who have the greatest need are those who will be provided with a service. Up to date assessments seem therefore to be essential to determine that need as part of any eligibility criteria as well as individual consideration of each case, as the Guidance requires.

Reading Families Forum Findings

RFF Survey Coverage- Although RFF have extensively surveyed the parents who attend their events there is no information about the overall needs profile of the children or families who contributed to their findings of whether they are children currently receiving a service from CYPDT or from Early help.

Neither was there any information about how or if they were able to include any information from hard to reach families, including those from BME communities of need.

Inaccuracies and omissions - from the proposals, these are:

- There is no longer any Saturday performing arts provision called KEEN for 9-14 year olds. This was replaced over a year ago with the agreement of RBC Children's Early Help and Commissioning to be replaced by two Saturday Clubs from 9am - noon and 2pm - 5pm for 8-11years and 11-17years for significantly disabled children. Capacity is around 20-25 children.
- Reading Crossroads are not commissioned by RBC to provide for children to my knowledge, however they do still offer a service and it is not confined only to care in the home. Whether it is purchased privately or by Direct Payments or both is unknown. East Midlands Carer's Trust who now run Reading Crossroads are currently interested in providing care to take children to activities and their rate per hour is, we understand, similar to that which is currently given as a Direct Payment to parents to employ the services of a PA. However, the service is provided by a care provider such as Reading Crossroads it does not involve the parent with the full responsibilities which an employer is currently legally obliged to provide to an employee or PA.

- Me2 does not provide PAs it provides, trained, supported and DBS checked volunteers to take SEND children to mainstream activities. COG did the same but is no longer in operation in Reading. Me2 is currently, under its Articles of Association, unable to work outside the Wokingham area and may not be interested to change its service offer to become a PA provider. However, although their area of operation can be changed if the members of the charity wish, this is a far different model of provision to an organisation that provides PAs. Furthermore, recruiting volunteers in Wokingham is a far more viable option than it is in Reading. Firstly, PAs for children are not viable in the same way that they are for adults with disabilities as parents of children do not have a need for a service that could provide sufficient working hours employment for a PA unless the PA had another permanent job in the remaining part of the day. A teaching Assistant in a school would be an example of this arrangement and to our knowledge TAs comprise the majority of the current PA workforce for children. The rates paid to parents for PAs are, we understand, similar to those paid to a Care Agency to employ a care worker, so it appears nonsensical to ask a parent to take on the onerous task of being an employer with all its attendant responsibilities, even with another organisation doing the payroll for instance. Therefore, why not commission an agency like Crossroads or Greenslade to do the job instead. In this way economies of scale can become a factor to ensure that the whole operation becomes financially viable.

Weekend Provision – There is no mention of weekend provision in this document. It is our experience that parents value a break at the weekend to undertake essential household duties or to take time with their other children who are at school during the week. Why is this provision omitted?

Short Breaks Providers – There is no consideration in the document about the constraints, disadvantages or opportunities for providers in the document. If there is to be a choice to have a combination of purchase by direct payment and/or direct access by assessment/care plan (i.e. up-front funded provision) then careful consideration needs to be given as to how this will work to ensure that voluntary sector providers, with no financial reserves from which to operate, are not disadvantaged. Many existing clubs are successful because parents trust the providers, the children have friends at the clubs and change can be anathema for many children.

Provision of Information and Advice – The RFF surveys did not include questions around the need for information and advice services for parents of disabled children. Short Breaks funding currently funds a local voluntary organisation to provide information and advice to BME families of children with disabilities and/or health problems. We believe that this provision is essential for parents and that it needs to be retained in order for there to be equality between the provision of services to both disabled adults and disabled children. However, the funding, if it is to be offered at all, should be fair and equitably offered to all communities in the Borough.

Co-Production & the Voluntary Sector – So far the voluntary sector has not been offered a voice in the reconsideration of the process by which short breaks are offered to families of disabled children. Voluntary sector organisations are not only providers of short breaks they also provide a voice for parents through the issues they raise when they seek support and advice about the problems in getting an assessment of need and in obtaining a service for their child and sometimes also for themselves as carers.

For and on behalf of Reading Mencap
Leslie Macdonald
Chair of Trustees 15th May 2017

Dingley Early Years Centres - My view is very strongly that a Short Breaks offer must include services for children in the early years. In the early years, children do not have to go to school, and so in some cases families are caring for those children on a full time basis. These families must be able to access short breaks in order to provide them with respite from caring which is proven.

Dingley's Promise provides holiday playschemes which are a traditional short breaks activity, but we also provide regular sessions during term time for children - some of whom are unable to access any other activities. For some of those children and carers, the term time sessions are the only break that they get, and we believe they are vital for the long term mental health and wellbeing of local families with children with SEND. 76% of parent carers nationally say they have experienced stress or depression (EDCM), and 66% say that accessing short breaks services for their children has caused them stress (SENDirect). In the early years, families are not only struggling with these odds, but the situation they are in is very new to them, and they also have to contend with trying to understand the challenges their child faces and the services that are available to them.

In this situation, it is vital that short breaks are available for children with SEND in the early years.

Best regards

Catherine McLeod MBE

Reading Families' Forum

RFF UPDATE FOR SEND SIG MAY 2017

In response to concerns from parent carers about a lack of short breaks, the Forum conducted a survey of their views in Jan 2015. Since then, we have held coffee evenings with 20+ parent carers to discuss short breaks in Oct 2015 and in Mar 2016 with Wendy Fabbro. We also hosted 2 of the RBC public consultations with families. The new SEND youth forum, Special United, also discussed short breaks.

We have already outlined in a summary paper to RBC, the gaps that parent carers have identified:

1. workers to take children to mainstream clubs
2. Afterschool activities for young people at secondary school
3. Easter and summer holiday clubs for 5 - 11 year olds who can't access mainstream clubs

Young people were clear in their forum meeting that they liked clubs with activities such as drama, singing, swimming, bug hunts and cinema trips. For those that could, they also liked going to mainstream clubs such as Scouts.

Parent carers need clubs that can provide one to one support for their children and/or personal care when required.

Information still needed to ensure that money is spent to ensure investment is made to help as many families as possible. NB This information was originally requested in February 2015.

1. Numbers of children using Cressingham, number on waiting list and total budget
2. Numbers of children using Greenslade, number on waiting list and total budget (£42K?)
3. Numbers of children using Family Link, number on waiting list and budget
4. Numbers of children using direct payments and total budget (*informally we are told there are 47 children accessing direct payments.*)

Existing Clubs

It should be noted that parent carers tell us they value existing provision. Young people (with mild to severe learning difficulties) have told us they enjoy Challengers and Brookfields. Parent carers have told us their children enjoy the Reading Mencap and Autism Berkshire Saturday clubs, Thumps Up, Challengers, Brookfields, TAG and Phab. It should be noted parent carers represent views of those children who have not accessed Special United.

Further work

Dan Cook has agreed to attend the next meeting of Special United to hear directly from some young people with SEND. SU is for 14 - 25 year olds, but mainly 14 - 18 currently.

AC/PH/RB

Parenting Special Children

Hi Ben comments in short break

Should be up to 19 not to 18

Saturday clubs are very important , weekends can be v difficult - challengers offer a Saturday - can this be an option for primary school children as well

V little short breaks for families complex needs at avenue - support at Brookfields and addington - why not avenue?

Something similar to Me2club would be cost effective and meet needs on those without complex needs

Cressingham not child & family led, families need to fit Cressingham model, not other way round. Child was only able to attend if had overnight stay, child anxious only able to go during day they therefore lost their slot. Child no longer attends Cressingham.

Thanks

Ruth Pearse

Brookfields School

We believe there is a suggestion that RBC would want Brookfields to provide a holiday club which is not inclusively open to Brookfields students. Please find below our comments and concerns from the schools management team and Governing body:

1. The school population is 227 (133 Reading, 82 West Berks, 12 other). We offer places to children and young people (5-19yrs) with a wide range of needs and behaviours from all Local Authorities not just Reading. We currently can't meet the demands for places from our own parents.
2. By offering our service to other children outside Brookfields School we will be cutting down the number of days we can offer to our own pupils. Our parents will view this as a reduction in Short Breaks.
3. Disability Challengers is also based at Brookfields and offers a Saturday and Holiday Youth Scheme (13-19yrs) during all school holidays. They currently have little demand from pupils from the Thames Valley School and The Avenue School.
4. Parents tell us that the strength of the Holiday Club is the experience and knowledge that our own staff have of the children attending.
5. How many children and young people from other schools would we need to accommodate.

6. It is likely that we would need to employ staff from TVS and The Avenue School; this would incur extra recruitment costs. We would need to visit the pupils not known to us to assess needs and provide further training for staff which would again incur further costs.

7. Is there any opportunity for TVS and The Avenue School to develop their own clubs?

8. Some parents have indicated that they would be interested in using the school facilities for Stay and Play sessions (parents stay with the children and siblings can also attend there would be minimal staff to facilitate). Could this be included in any bid as we believe the council wish to develop this kind of service?

Thumbs-Up Club

As you will no doubt remember when grants initially made to us it was because commissioners found it cheaper to give a grant, than make direct provision, as being a charity we could raise funds elsewhere to ease financial burden on families and much of our current income comes in this way. We were also able to charge families a similar rate to mainstream clubs for our service. The contribution from RBC was to support families who could not access other services owing to complex needs and/or behavioural difficulties therefore the figures given to RBC on the monitoring was for these families and did not include some less complex needs.

The RBC grant is therefore a very small part of our funding (as opposed to Wokingham but that's another story) and in fact is often paid late (still awaited for last 2 years I think certainly this year) so I suppose not crucial to our continuation. However if we get no funding from any LA then it will make a significant difference. Currently we make no distinction to parents for contributions whatever the need for support and manage through good management team and organisation to give 1:1 support etc if needed. (In the past LAs had to provide if needed but quality was so variable we decided to take in house) Like many of the other groups if we go to a "commercial model" as Wokingham are suggesting this may have to change, or we may have to think more deeply about which clientele we accept. We would not wish to do so but we will need to review things if not immediately as time goes on and funds become harder to obtain in the current climate of more need less funds.

When we have in the past asked what parents would like they have told us "more of the same" i.e every school holiday, evenings weekends etc. We are currently because of operational factors, getting staff etc and a very small voluntary committee unable to extend our services beyond what we do at present. We are now always oversubscribed and have to limit our initial offer to families, and cannot meet all requests. This is becoming more of a problem each year we operate as number of eligible children/youth grow. We know that our service does allow some parents to continue working particularly during the long summer break and it is well thought of and we take members that have been unable to find any alternative provision owing to their severe needs be it medical, physical or behavioural. We do not discriminate and try our best to meet all needs with a good success rate. As a grandparent, as above, needs got more as got older, of course families with younger children do not know this, till their children get older. Some children have less need if can access mainstream or family activities and are physically able, others with behavioural problems and/or high physical needs need more support (in some cases 2 or more carers needed). Once reach adulthood, in our case, very little locally, if anything, available in Reading area for personal care needs not even PHAB. (Currently we access Disability Challengers in Basingstoke and Guildford.)

From a young person's perspective prefer/need peer support rather than family to develop socially/emotionally as they get older.

I have also been attending Wokingham events for club as they are our main funder and going into direct payments at rapid rate. I have a 1:1 meeting with their new interim next month.

Pauline Hamilton

Autism Berkshire

Thank you for asking the local voluntary sector to respond to your paper. As a charity we provide support to parents via a Helpline, Workshops and leisure activities. We feel that there is a need to differentiate between Short Breaks and Respite, for children with autism and challenging behaviour, as the eligibility criteria is not always clear.

Autism Berkshire provides Short Breaks for children and young people with autism who attend mainstream schools, and some who attend PRU and special schools. In Reading, Games Club (previously Pokemon club) provides a short break for parents on second and fourth Saturdays of the month for 8 to 15 year olds from 2 pm until 4pm at Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre, where they can play Xbox, Wii, play card games, board games, do arts and crafts or access the outside space. Children and young people need to be able to work in a 1 staff member to 4 children ratio. The club promotes friendship skills and reduces isolation as many parents say this is the only out of school activity their children attend. We currently have two children who are Edge of Care, and we taxi them to the club, so that they attend regularly.

For young people aged 16 to 25 we run Level Up club providing a Short Break on first and third Saturdays, from 2 pm to 4pm again at Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre, where they can play Xbox, card games or board games. This group is designed to act as a bridge to adult services and is run by our Benefits adviser, who supports young people when they transfer from DLA to PIP, and runs our Adult Social Group in Reading, which meets twice a month on a Monday evening. The group has two members of staff with a diagnosis of autism.

We run accessible leisure activities funded by BBC Children in Need. We run 4 classes of Trampolining, with special needs trained coaches, at the Meadway and Crosfield schools in Reading, with 6 classes per term on a Saturday lunchtime. Trampolining helps children with autism, as it improves core stability and reduces hyper-mobility. Parents need to stay, so it is not a Short Break, but many parents enjoy meeting other parents, and some make friends and meet up outside the club. We also have classes in Bracknell, and some Reading parents travel to these classes. There is currently a waiting list of 27 children (May 2017) for Trampolining.

Secondly we run a monthly autism family swim at the Rivermead, this is free of charge for families and all the family can come, not just one parent and the autistic child. As it is a family activity it does not qualify as a Short Break. The music and lights are turned down, and with fewer swimmers, the pool is less busy and more autistic friendly. Finally, we run Family Fun Days at Thames Valley Adventure Playground 6 times a year, on the first Sunday of the month. These run from 12noon to 4pm and we provide tea, coffee and cake. We have introduced a charge of £5 per family and have 40 families attending with 75 children (maximum number allowed under fire regulations). We have many families from Reading would come over to TVAP as a family, including dads, and grandparents. Feedback from families has been that TVAP is wonderful as

they meet other families, their children can play safely and no one will judge them or ask, "What's wrong with your child?"

Autism Berkshire has identified that there is a need for Stay and Play sessions for the under 8's as there is a gap between where Dingley helps and we take over with Games Club and Trampolining.

Autism Berkshire would be happy to provide a "Stay and Play" on the First and Third Saturdays of the month at Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre in the Creche room, with access to outside play area. The room has changing table and small toilets (as used to be used by the North Reading Children's Centre), and there is a disable toilet in the entrance area. There is also parking onsite. Autism Berkshire would require funding to provide this service.

Jane Stanford-Beale
May 2017

Short Breaks Procurement Timetable 2017/18

*Funding for Voluntary Sector Short Break providers rolled over for 2017/18.
All correspondence sent out.

Task	Deadline	Duration
Final meeting with Reading Families' Forum on co-production	08/05/2017	
Consultation/co-production with service users & key stakeholders (RCVYS & Voluntary Sector)	22/05/2017	1 month
Specification finished in consultation with Legal	22/06/2017	6-8 weeks
Terms & conditions sent to Legal for them to draw up	15/07/2017	6 weeks
Terms & conditions confirmed/returned by Legal	01/09/2017	
Request for quotations published	01/10/2017	1-2 months
Deadline for quotations	01/11/2017	1 month
Recommendation of award of contract decided	01/12/2017	
ACE report deadline	December 2018	
ACE acceptance	January 2018	
Send out contract award intention letter	22/01/2017	10 days cooling off
Send out contract award letter	01/02/2018	
TUPE and implementation		
Outcome-based contract start date	01/04/2018	