

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Young People's Select Committee
Date:	17 January 2019
Title:	Reshaping Short Break Activities – Progress Update
Report From:	Director of Childrens Services

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1. Recommendation

- 1.1. That the Children and Young People's Select Committee are asked to note the progress of the implementation of the reshaped Short Break Activities Programme.

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1. In July 2018, Children and Young People's Select Committee considered a report from the Director of Children's Services regarding the reshaping of the Short Break Activities offer. The changes proposed were approved by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services at his decision day on 12 July 2018. In addition to approving the changes to Short Break Activities, Councillor Mans requested that an update on the implementation of the changes was presented to the Children and Young People's Select Committee six months following the decision and this report provides such an update.

3. Contextual Information

- 3.1. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 bring into effect Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008), requiring local authorities to provide services to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.
- 3.2. The Short Break Activities Programme seeks to offer a range of fun and educational activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs so that their parents or carers can have a short break from their caring responsibilities.

- 3.3. The prolonged period of austerity has led to significant reductions in government grant for the County Council. In response, the County Council has worked diligently to stretch every penny and deliver more with less money – achieving over £340 million in recurring savings, whilst protecting the quality of services as far as possible and keeping Council Tax low.
- 3.4. The Children’s Services Department (excluding schools) has a savings target of £30.1million to be delivered by 2019, representing an overall budget reduction of 18%.
- 3.5. The current budget for Children with Disabilities is £19.5m of which £16.5m supports families eligible for social work support and interventions through children with disabilities social work teams. The budget also includes £3m of funding for a short break programme and £2.4m of this is used to provide open access short break activities delivered by third sector and charitable providers.
- 3.6. The decision taken to reshape the current Short Breaks offer is estimated to save £1million (a 5% reduction in the Children with Disabilities budget) and will enable resources to be diverted towards enabling Children’s Services to focus on its statutory responsibilities relating to child protection and looked after children.
- 3.7. The County Council carried out a twelve-week open, public consultation from 12 March to 3 June 2018 to seek residents’ and stakeholders’ views on proposed changes to its Short Break Activities Programme.
- 3.8. During the consultation period, communication took place in a range of ways to raise awareness of the consultation and provide opportunities for parents and carers to both raise questions and to have their say.

4. Changes

- 4.1. The proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme that were approved for implementation were:
 - Proposal 1: To commission the Short Break Activities Programme on the basis of priorities, agreed with a representative parent/carer panel
 - Proposal 2: To require parents and carers to pay in advance for Short Break Activities, and for providers to collect advance payment of parents’/carers’ contributions for those activities
 - Proposal 3: To require providers of Short Break Activities to apply consistent parental/carer charges and hardship rates. A charging policy setting out the consistent parent/carer contributions and hardship rates formed part of the approval and has been published
 - Proposal 4: To move to a new online Gateway Card application system

- Proposal 5: To require evidence of eligibility from a professional as part of the new Gateway Card application to access the Short Break Activities Programme
- Proposal 6: From 1 April 2019, to stop funding Short Break Activities for young people aged 18 and over
- Proposal 7: That Short Break Activities would only be funded for children who live in the Hampshire County Council authority area
- Proposal 8: To only fund Short Break Activities which allow parents and carers to leave their child
- Proposal 9: To stop funding swimming lessons as a short break activity

5. Communication and Engagement Update

5.1. Following decision day, a series of letters were sent to stakeholders and interested parties:

5.2. Letters to families:

5.2.1 A letter was sent to **all** families who access Short Break Activities detailing the changes. A one page summary was also included to provide a simple overview of the changes in an easy to read format.

5.2.2 For those families of young people over 18 currently accessing Short Break Activities who are **not** known to Adult's Health and Care, a letter was sent which signposted them the Connect to Support and Local Offer resources. These contain details of services and support available to over 18's. Contact details were provided for the Contact and Resolution Team (CART) in case any families wanted to speak to a member of the Adults' Health and Care Department or request an assessment of their child's needs or their needs as carers.

5.2.3 For those families of young people over 18 currently accessing Short Break Activities who are known to Adult's Health and Care, the letter advised that the family would be contacted by the Learning Disability Team to review their child's support plan and explore possible future alternatives.

5.2.4 For families of young people over 18 accessing Hampshire Short Break Activities who live outside of Hampshire County Council area, the letter sent advised them of how to contact their Local Authority for information on services local to them.

5.3. A letter was sent to funded Short Break Activity providers detailing the changes and outlining the actions that they were required to take. A one page summary was also included to provide a simple overview of the changes in an easy to read format.

5.4. In addition to these letters to the key stakeholders, communications were also sent to Hantsnet, Disabled Children's Teams, relevant colleagues in Adults Health and Care, Special School Heads and the Hampshire Clinical

Commissioning Groups. The Local Children's Partnership (LCP) Chairs were updated in person.

- 5.5. All the letters offered the recipient the opportunity to contact the County Council's Contracts and Grants team to discuss the changes.
- 5.6. In addition to written correspondence being issued, meetings were held with representatives groups:

Hampshire Parent Carer Network

- 5.7. Input to, and views on the composition of the priority setting panel were the substantive topic of discussion. It was agreed that monthly meetings would be held between HPCN representatives and the Head of Procurement, Commissioning and Placements to ensure that parents and carers could be regularly updated on implementation progress. HPCN feedback was sought on the letters sent to parents and carers following the decision and on the priorities to be used for grant applications for the 2019/20 financial year. HPCN have tested the new gateway card application form and, following HPCN feedback on parental involvement in short break activities grant evaluation, 'voting button' technology was used at HPCN Get Together sessions across the County to ensure wider views and feedback on the allocation of funding for 2019/20.

Young People's Engagement Group (YPEG)

- 5.8. Council officers met with the YPEG group at one of their Saturday clubs to answer any questions the young people had following decision. A constructive discussion about how young people wanted to be involved in implementing the reshaped Short Break Activities programme resulted in agreement for young people to form part of the priority setting panel and being heavily involved in the design of the new gateway card. Following the meeting, YPEG produced a video for other young people to explain the changes being made to Short Break Activities. This has been published on Hampshire County Council's Local Offer:

<https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/advice.page?id=J3YNLVb-UBI>

5.9. Proposed designs and colour schemes for the new Gateway Card have been shared with YPEG who have feedback, influenced and approved the final designs for the new Gateway Card:



Current Short Break Activity Providers

5.10. A provider forum was held on 11 September 2018 and all funded Short Break activity providers were invited. The session detailed the changes and what this would mean for the providers. The providers had the opportunity to ask any questions and raise any concerns that they had.

5.11. Key areas of discussion at this event were:

- The removal of swimming lessons from the Short Breaks programme;
- Some providers felt that the feedback from the consultation had not been taken into consideration in the decision making process;
- 18-25year cohort; what provision would be available for these young people and how schemes could fund for this cohort via other income sources;
- How providers could re-shape their provision to take into account the requirements for parents/carers to not have to stay at the activity;
- The new Gateway Card system;
- Commissioning process going forward; who should be involved, the process and associated timescales;
- Exceptions grant pot;
- Charging and concessions policy;
- Key outcomes/actions.

- 5.12. A further provider forum will be held early in 2019 to outline the proposed priorities for future commissioning and to identify from providers the support they may require in understanding and participating in a formal commissioning process and how to tender.

6. Implementation

6.1. Changes for Providers (to be implemented by Providers):

- 6.2. A number of the changes relate to policy changes which will need to be applied by service providers, or activities that will not be funded from April 2019. This is the case for:
- Change 2: Parents and carers are required to pay in advance for Short Break Activities, providers must collect advance payment of parents'/carers' contributions for those activities;
 - Change 3: Providers of Short Break Activities must apply consistent parental/carers charges and hardship rates;
 - Change 6: From 1 April 2019, Short Break Activities will no longer be funded for young people aged 18 and over;
 - Change 7: Short Break Activities will only be funded for children who live in the Hampshire County Council authority area;
 - Change 8: Only Short Break Activities which allow parents and carers to leave their child will be funded;
 - Proposal 9: Swimming lessons will no longer be funded as a short break activity.
- 6.3. For these changes, communications through HPCN, provider forums and letters have been issued, alongside clearly published advice on the Short Breaks website. All affected families (particularly in relation to cessation of funding at age 18 and cessation of funding for children who live outside of the Hampshire area) have been contacted to ensure they are aware of the changes. This is described in detail in section four of this report.
- 6.4. In relation to Change 3 (to require providers of Short Break Activities to apply consistent parental/carers charges and hardship rates), a policy has been written, approved and shared with providers as well as published on the Short Breaks website.
- 6.5. A number of the changes to the Short Break Activities Programme will be implemented through this communication, and via application of the policy guidelines at the point of seeking access to Short Break Activities. However, some changes require more planning and implementation, the progress of which is outlined in paragraphs 6-9 of this report.

7. Change 1: To commission the Short Break Activities Programme on the basis of priorities, agreed with a representative parent/carers panel

- 7.1. In order to ensure a more effective, consistent and equitable way of distributing funding, and to ensure there is a sufficient range of activities

across the county in the places where they are needed, a new approach is proposed to the allocation and management of Short Break Activities funding to providers.

- 7.2. Historically, all short break activities have been funded through grants and a move away from grants and towards contracts for some activities will require the development of service specifications with families. It was always the case that a priority led approach would take some time to develop, and so interim arrangements would be required to ensure that there is provision in place while the new priorities are set.
- 7.3. This new approach to the allocation and distribution of funds will reduce duplication and facilitate closer joint working arrangements with providers. The County Council will 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.
- 7.4. In the future, it is likely that there would be a mixed economy of funding arrangements. This would mean there would be a combination of tendered contracts, (where it had been identified as beneficial to do so) and these would be supported by grants where that would be more appropriate.
- 7.5. The public consultation identified the following priorities from families, in order of preference:
 - Having a break within the school holiday periods (including: half-terms, Easter, Christmas and summer holiday periods);
 - Having a break that's available on weekends;
 - Having a break that's available on weekdays, during the school term
- 7.6. In order to maintain sufficient Short Breaks for all Hampshire parents and carers requiring a break from caring the County Council would also seek to set priorities regarding:

After school clubs; and
Youth clubs.
- 7.7. Following decision day, all providers were contacted and details of the changes were shared with them, with an opportunity to discuss any issues with Council officers, as described in section four of this report.
- 7.8. In September, a grant window was opened inviting applications from voluntary sector organisations to seek funding from the County Council for the delivery of short break activities from 1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019. This is some six months shorter than activities have historically been funded for and recognises the need to develop the commissioning strategy for short break activities along with stakeholders following the Executive Member Decision.
- 7.9. In support of the new priority led approach, a planning workshop took place in December 2018. Representatives at the meeting included HPCN, Services for Young Children, Family Support Service, Supporting Families and Local Children's Partnerships. Further input from Disabled Children's Teams, Special Heads and the voluntary sector will be received. YPEG will

also be engaged to ensure that children and young people's view are taken in consideration.

- 7.10. Once the new priorities are set by the panel, a commissioning strategy will be developed. This may propose that some services are formally commissioned via tender where that will achieve better value, or via grants. Providers would be supported throughout any new application process, and where formal commissioning arrangements are deemed beneficial, the County Council would ensure that opportunities are available for organisations with little or no experience of tendering to learn about the tender process and to understand the requirements.
- 7.11. The proposed timeline for this activity is:

Identify priorities with representative panel	December 2018
Present commissioning strategy to providers	January 2019
Service specification and document development	February/March 2019
Tender and/or grant application window	April-June 2019
Contract/grant award	July 2019
Mobilisation period	August-September 2019
Services commence	October 2019

8. Changes 4 and 5: To move to a new online Gateway Card application system and to require evidence of eligibility from a professional as part of the new Gateway Card application to access the Short Break Activities Programme

- 8.1. The County Council is currently introducing a new online application system for the administration of Gateway Cards. For parents and carers, this proposal means a mandatory requirement to apply for, and use a Gateway Card, in order to access Short Break Activities.
- 8.2. Working with colleagues in the County Council's IT department, a new Gateway Card application process and database has been developed. This enables families to apply and receive their Gateway Card electronically, and allows for the Gateway Card to be printed at home or stored on a mobile device by parents/carers. The new application form was tested by HPCN representatives as well as County Council officers.

- 8.3. The new Gateway Cards contain a 'QR Code' (a form of barcode) that is linked to the individual Gateway Card holder and which can be scanned to capture regular and accurate data on attendance at activities.
- 8.4. As described in paragraph 4.8, young people were heavily involved in the designs for the new card.
- 8.5. From April 2019, Short Break Activity providers will have the ability to scan Gateway Cards, and for that data to be sent automatically to the County Council.
- 8.6. In October 2018, all 9,500 current Gateway Card holders were written to, requesting that they reapply for the new gateway card, and provide evidence of eligibility to support their applications.
- 8.7. Evidence of eligibility needs to take the form of:
- A letter from family's General Practitioner (GP), Paediatrician or Health Visitor;
 - A letter from Child's Teacher/Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo);
 - Evidence of being in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP);
 - Confirmation of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or;
 - A letter from another associated professional involved with the family, selected from the following list:
 - Professional from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
 - Social Worker.

No other forms of evidence, or letters from professionals not listed above are accepted.

- 8.8. As at 4 December 2018, 1,074 applications have been received. Of those applications, 252 have been approved and only four declined as they do not meet the eligibility criteria. Of the remaining applications received, 442 have submitted electronic evidence and are being processed by the team. The remaining 376 applications are on hold whilst evidence is awaited from the applicant.
- 8.9. Gateway Card holders will be asked if there are any changes to their circumstances every 12 months through an automated reminder in the new Gateway Card system.
- 8.10. The new Gateway Cards are time limited and expire after three years, at which point a new, full re-application would need to be made and evidence of eligibility provided again.

9. Proposal 6: From 1 April 2019, to stop funding Short Break Activities for young people aged 18 and over

- 9.1. The current Short Break Activities programme provides over and above the County Council's statutory duty for Short Breaks: the Programme is currently available to young people until they become 20 years of age.

- 9.2. In order to bring the Short Break Activities Programme in line with the County Councils statutory duty under the Short Breaks for Disabled Children Regulations, and to be consistent with the majority of Hampshire's neighbouring local authorities, young people aged 18 years and over will not receive funded access to The Short Break Activities Programme from 1 April 2019. Any provision for young people over 18 and their carers would be under the Care Act.
- 9.3. As described in paragraph 4.2, all gateway card holders and families of young people aged over 18 accessing Short Break Activities were contacted following approval to make the changes.
- 9.4. Of the 50 families contacted:
- 24 were not accessing Short Break Activities;
 - Six had moved;
 - Five did not respond to contact from Adults Health and Care;
 - Seven were accessing Short Break Activities but did not require a change in support;
 - One was accessing Short Break Activities and required a change in support;
 - Seven are subject to further follow up..

10. Proposal 9: To stop funding swimming lessons as a short break activity

- 10.1. Through the consultation, respondents told us what they considered a sufficient short break to be. Respondents generally mentioned a time frame of between 5-7 hours being the length of time a parent or carer receives as respite. Taking this into consideration, it was decided that the Short Breaks Activities Programme would no longer fund swimming lessons, which includes group lessons and one to one lessons, as it does not offer parents or carers a short break from caring as described in paragraph 15.1. This is due to lessons being short in duration (a typical lesson is 30 minutes), which means that parents/carers are not able to have a sufficient break.
- 10.2. The implementation of this proposal means that from April 2019, the Short Break Activities Programme will no longer fund swimming lessons and as a result they will be excluded from the commissioning process for Short Break Activities.
- 10.3. In reaching a decision on 12 July 2018, the Executive Lead Member requested analysis of the effect of this proposal to be specifically addressed in this report.
- 10.4. The statutory guidance for the national curriculum for physical education programme of study in England states that: *All schools must provide swimming instruction either in key stage 1 or key stage 2. In particular, pupils should be taught to: swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres; use a range of strokes effectively;*

perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations. Schools should therefore be able to be part of the solution for children currently in receipt of swimming instruction via the Short Breaks programme.

- 10.5. Since August 2018, Council officers have worked with 'Energise Me¹' and a number of opportunities for schools and swimming providers have been identified that have the potential to minimise the effect of the withdrawal of Short Break Activities funding for swimming. These opportunities can be categorised into three themes:
- Government funding opportunities;
 - Voluntary and third sector offer;
 - Support to swimming providers and self-funding

Government Funding Opportunities

- 10.6. A review by the Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety Review Group in 2017 (see Appendix 1) provides further guidance to schools and made a number of recommendations to Government regarding how to achieve the national curriculum requirements in respect of swimming. This review identified anecdotal evidence that while Special Educational Needs' Schools recognise the additional benefits of providing regular swimming opportunities for pupils, SEND pupils in some mainstream schools are being denied the opportunity to take part in sessions because of the perceived difficulties in going to the pool.
- 10.7. Recommendations from the review that should support schools in delivering of swimming or children and young people with SEND include:
- Government to support a new national Top-up Swimming programme to ensure all primary school children reach the statutory standards for swimming and water safety. Initial resources should be targeted at Group 1 schools;
 - The Department for Education to support the national roll-out of a new Curriculum Swimming and Water Safety Resource Pack to all primary schools and curriculum swimming providers, including promotion of a new achievement award for pupils;
 - Government to fund specific training for school teachers and teaching staff who deliver swimming lessons to ensure high quality lessons, starting with Group 1 schools;
 - The Department for Education and Swim Group to create a Teacher's summer school to upskill teachers in the delivery of curriculum swimming and water safety lessons;

¹, a partner organisation to the County Council who aim to promote community participation in sport and healthy recreation for the benefit of everyone living in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

- Department for Education to add a condition as part of the Primary Premium monitoring that primary schools must publish curriculum swimming and water safety attainment levels;
- Swim England and Swim Group to support schools and local authorities to explore different types of facilities such as demountable and mobile pools, and utilising safe outdoor swimming opportunities, especially where access to water space is difficult or areas of aquatic deprivation have been identified;
- Government to encourage all Local Authority areas to develop a school swimming and water safety delivery plan to support primary schools to meet their PE national curriculum requirements;
- Ministers and Swim Group to meet private operators, and the Swim Group to explore the possibility of providing tax breaks for private operators to open their pools to schools.

- 10.8. Guidance has been made available to schools with regards to implementation of the review recommendations and a comprehensive resource pack is currently being developed by Swim England.
- 10.9. Schools are able to access additional funding from Government for physical education through the PE and Sport Premium. Guidance in respect of appropriate uses for their funds indicates that it can be used to support implementation of the recommendations identified in paragraph 9.7.
- 10.10. Further funding is available from Government to improve swimming facilities, where access is an issue through the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund. Six schools in Hampshire are accessing this funding for this purpose.

Voluntary and third sector offer

- 10.11. A number of leisure and swimming lesson providers provide concessionary rates for children with disabilities and/or their carers.
- 10.12. Level Water is a charity that provides free 1:1 swimming instruction for children with disabilities. Looking at their map, they are operational in Winchester, Portsmouth and Gosport:

<https://www.levelwater.org/>

Support to swimming providers and self-funding

- 10.13. Working with Council officers, Energise Me a meeting was arranged with all swimming providers historically funded by short breaks grants to explore the challenges that the changes in funding might bring and whether there are opportunities to work together to overcome some of these. This might include support for providers to develop their workforce.

- 10.14. One provider attended this session, who was keen to continue supporting children and young people with swimming and will look to reshape their current delivery model. The provider is also keen to develop the school curriculum offer and will contact and work with their local schools to ensure children are able to meet the minimum standards by the end of Key Stage 2.
- 10.15. Where families choose to continue accessing swimming privately they could self fund and pay for lessons directly to the provider. Providers could look to reshape current provision to provide smaller group lessons, instead of private one to one lessons, ensuring there are the correct staffing ratios in place. This could make the activity more affordable for families.

11. Other potential effects identified in the public consultation

- 11.1. The public consultation identified some more general issues regarding the current Short Break Activities Programme and accessing the Buddy Scheme, and potential mitigations for these were identified in the decision day report and progress in relation to these areas are described in paragraphs 10.2-10.6.
- 11.2. A new search filter for the Family Information Services Hub (FISH) is being developed which will enable parents/carers to search on 'Gateway Card'. This will then provide a list of all activities which Gateway Card holder could access and will ensure that families can identify potential suitable Short Break Activities that they may be able to access.
- 11.3. Parents raised concerns about providers that receive funding from the Council but not wanting to support children with additional needs. The Family Information and Services Hub (FISH) enables members of the public to provide such feedback via a "[Contact Us](#)" page. This enables the Council as a commissioner to work with those providers through grant monitoring to ensure provision within the Hampshire Local Offer can be developed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- 11.4. The County Council has been working with Parent Voice/Rose Road who manage the Buddy Scheme on our behalf, to explore ways to address the issues of capacity and responsiveness of the service. The following recommendations are being implemented:
- Introducing a minimum notice period;
 - Introducing a requirement for regular hours to be utilised;
 - Clarification of appropriate referrals to be provided for professionals;
 - Simple contract for parents to be introduced to outline expectations;
 - Service scope to be clarified via service literature and communications to better manage parent/carer expectations;
 - Pre-payment to be explored where appropriate;
 - Group outings to be explored to promote social outcomes and make better use of staff.

- 11.5. Hampshire Scouts have been proactive in recruiting a 'Carers in Scouting Administrator'. The officer in this role has undergone the Autism Ambassador Training and it is anticipated there will be a further nine officers trained across the county. The Carers in Scouting Administrator is working with young people, parents and Scouting carers to ensure they are effectively matched and where possible increasing the ratios of carers to young people. All volunteer leaders undergo an initial classroom based safety and safeguarding training and this is renewed online every five years.
- 11.6. Nationally, the Scouts are committed to being fully inclusive and this is embedded into their values. The Scouts have reviewed their policies and strategies in order to provide more support to their volunteer leaders. This includes:
- Building relationships with the young person and parents or carers;
 - Providing clear and simple communication strategies;
 - Allowing young people time to process information;
 - Providing visual aids;
 - Providing structure, routine and predictability;
 - Planning ahead.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1. The implementation of the changes to the Short Break Activities programme is progressing well and all key stakeholders have been communicated with.
- 12.2. The changes come into effect from 1 April 2019 and so it may be the case that some individuals and organisations become more aware of the effect of the changes at that time.

Appendix1: Swimming & Water Safety Review

https://www.swimming.org/assets/Swim_England_Curriculum_Swimming_and_Water_Safety_Review_Group_Report_2017.pdf