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| <b>TITLE</b>                | <b>Disabled Children’s Family Support and Short Breaks</b>         |
| <b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b> | The Executive on 26 January 2017                                   |
| <b>WARD</b>                 | None specific  |
| <b>DIRECTOR</b>             | Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services                        |
| <b>LEAD MEMBER</b>          | Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children’s Services |

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

This report outlines recommendations arising from a strategic commissioning review of short breaks provision, which engaged with all internal, external and voluntary and community sector providers. This review has developed a strong body of intelligence on which to develop a new approach as outlined in this report.

**What will the changes mean for disabled children and their families?**

- Greater choice and control for families of disabled children through Direct Payments and Personal Budgets.
- Greater personalisation through the introduction and use of Pre-Paid Cards so families have direct control of the purse strings.
- A broader offer of breaks for families of disabled children to choose from.

**What does it mean for providers of disabled children’s short breaks?**

- New opportunities for providers to develop their share of the short breaks market and remodel their services to align with greater personalisation.
- The motivation for providers to join a Preferred Provider List to secure the Wokingham Borough Council “seal of approval”.
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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) approve the development of a new short breaks preferred provider list leading to more effective quality assurance and market management;
- 2) support the 2-year period of phased transition from the existing arrangements to the new model, to enable change whilst not impacting service delivery;
- 3) approve the phased introduction of pre-paid cards to enable families to take control of the purchasing of short breaks care for their children;
- 4) support full and detailed consultation, with parents, young people and providers, on the proposed changes.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

During 2016, officers have conducted a review of the range of disabled children's short breaks provided across Wokingham. There were around 17 providers in-scope for this review including internal and voluntary sector providers and there has been extensive consultation with disabled children and their families.

The review identified a number of important factors:

- On the whole, providers have developed excellent short breaks services from horticultural therapy through to youth clubs and sitting services via a range of block contracts with the council. Services appeal greatly to disabled children, parents/carers and siblings who have provided glowing testimonials about their experiences. This included how these services provided a "life line", were fun, safe, interesting and pushed boundaries.
- Voluntary and Community providers have a strong value base and commitment to empowering disabled children and their families.
- There are opportunities to improve the way in which short breaks are administered for disabled children and their families to enable greater choice and control over access to services.
- There are also opportunities to remove inefficiencies in the manner in which Wokingham Borough Council commissions short breaks. The Council currently spends £284k per annum via Direct Payments (spot purchases) and a further £245k per annum via block contracts with providers and a further 20k on additional spot purchases. Presently there is a significant under-utilisation of the block contracts. The Council needs to ensure it is maximising its use of its scarce resources by avoiding spot purchases where there is available block contract capacity.

Officers are currently considering an improved and more personalised short breaks model with an increased focus the offer of "early help" to families of disabled children and greater choice and control through Pre-Paid Cards.

In advance of this, this report recommends a new commissioning infrastructure, with more effective quality assurance and market management, to increase choice and control for service users while reducing the possibility of inefficiency within the council's purchasing arrangements.

## Background

The council is supporting around 200 Disabled Children at any one time including 60 open cases for Bridges Resource Centre (the council's internal short breaks and early intervention resource) and 60 open cases for the Disabled Children's Team. In total there are around 928 disabled children on the CAN network – an internal council network that offers information, advice and support to families and carers of disabled children across the wider community.

The options and opportunities provided through the Bridges Resource Centre are also being reviewed and the outcome and emerging recommendations reported to the Executive later in 2017. Bridges provides overnight respite care as well as other forms of short break and family support services to families with disabled children. It is rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding'

Short Breaks services for disabled children were initially developed in 2010 as part of the national policy around HM Treasury's "Aiming High for Disabled Children – Better Support For Families". Short breaks include respite care, activities and opportunities for children and young people with additional needs to participate in mainstream activities, with support, as well as with bespoke facilities.

Children's Services undertook a strategic commissioning review of these services in 2016 in order to:

- Identified what services were being purchased as well as review the commissioning arrangements
- Speak to disabled children, carers and families about the services they use, and would like to have access to.
- Identify any added value provided by the internal services and the voluntary and community sector.
- Generally assess the "fit-for-purpose" nature of the services.

The review revealed that there was an abundance of added value offered. For example, ASD Family Help, a small voluntary sector provider, offered quarterly bowling sessions for over 200 families along with a multitude of activities, way beyond expectations of the £4,000 per annum service commissioned by the council. ASSIST, an internal service, are offering a plethora of specialised training and early intervention services, often pre-diagnosis for children of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and their families with a small training budget of £5,000 per annum.

Parents were keen to share their insights about what they valued from these short breaks and any gaps they perceived in the current provision. This intelligence underpins the recommendations arising from this review. The gaps will be captured in the new outcome focused specification for the future short breaks provision.

The review identified the views of disabled children and their families on what is important to them in relation to short breaks - the opportunity for disabled children to interact, to have fun and to gain important life and social skills through structured activities, which are key to their development.

Parents also identified gaps in service coverage that included weekend breaks,

overnight stays and early morning term time support, improvements which are likely to make a significant difference to their everyday lives. These gaps can be addressed by improving the future commissioning arrangements for short breaks.

## **Family Support and Short Breaks**

This report is an aspect of a broader improved vision of support to disabled children and their parent/carers, which officers are developing at the present time.

A “Family Support” model would be focused on providing the earliest intervention for families of disabled children, providing targeted support at the first signs of not coping and providing strategies to be self-reliant. This will contribute to delaying the need for more costly statutory provision such as residential placements.

Due to the importance of tackling some of the commissioning inefficiencies revealed by the review, this report focuses on this area for immediate attention.

### **The case for improved commissioning of short breaks**

This report sees the completion of the strategic commissioning review of short breaks.

The council has a range of **block contracts** with short breaks providers. These have a total value of £244,021. The contracts however provide the platform for the provision of only 45% of the short breaks purchased from providers.

At present the block contracts are not fully utilised. This leads to some duplication of provision and avoidable cost. The duplication involves the fact that the council also (directly or indirectly) **spot purchases** a further £304k from short breaks providers - £284k via direct payments to service users and £20k via spot purchases commissioned directly by the council.

At the same time as under-using the existing block contracts, the council is therefore paying additional sums for services with a number of providers (including a number of the same providers with whom the council has block contracts).

This provides a strong case for change for the council to target its resources through a new, improved commissioning platform. To do this, the council will need to move away from the block method of commissioning providers and enable a purchase model which both avoids financial waste as well as enabling service users to take greater control of the purchasing of services.

### **Proposal for a preferred provider list**

An improved method of commissioning services would be via a preferred provider list that would have the following elements:

- Open invitation to all providers to enter the process
- The ability to ensure that providers are offering services with consistent terms and conditions via a standardised specification
- Quality checks
- A list open to service users to purchase short breaks which has the council’s seal

of approval

- No commitment for the council to purchase services from any provider
- A more direct relationship between provider and service user which helps to maintain the focus on service user needs
- Service users with more direct choice and control over what is purchased and who it is purchased from
- A process which rewards provider innovation and their ability to react to service users needs and demands (or the needs of the market)

A detailed model of the Preferred Provider List and the process that will be used to establish it will be developed with providers, service users and officers within the new People Directorate.

### **Transition to the new arrangements**

The council is committed to working in strong partnership with the voluntary and community sector and the proposals in this report are designed to support local organisations providing vital services.

During this commissioning review, an early “temperature check” was taken with voluntary and community sector providers in understanding their journey so far in preparing for changes around personalisation – including the use of personal budgets, direct payments and the transition from core Council funding for service delivery. Many of these providers (large, medium and small) were very conscious and understanding of this national and local direction of travel. A number of providers have other sources of income and/or were seeking to maximise their income streams as part of their longer-term sustainability. Some felt more confident and prepared for the moves towards personalisation. Others, particular among the smaller providers, appeared more reliant on core Council funding.

These proposals include a period of transition and some additional support for the cohort of providers in the event of short-term financial difficulty. To support the transition for voluntary and community providers:

- Only 25% of the block contract grants will be removed in Year 1; a further 50% in year 2; while from year 3 all of the council’s funding of services will be offered via direct payments to service users.
- Additional support will be available from INVOLVE, the umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector to prepare and work through these proposed changes. This could involve developing marketing capacity and enhancing business planning skills.
- An “opportunities fund” will be managed by INVOLVE so that targeted support can be offered to providers during the transition.

Given the robust intelligence gathered during the reviews it is suspected that there are a number of providers who are in a stronger position to adapt to changes in the market place including: Camp Mohawk, Disability Challengers, Explorers Group, Go! Opportunities, KIDS, Me2 Club, MENCAP, Sports and Leisure and Thumbs Up Club.

## Greater choice and control for parents

The opportunity for offering parents greater choice and control for their disabled children is paramount. Currently, if a disabled child is eligible for social care support and decides through their family to take a Direct Payment to organise their own care services, the Council issue payments to them by BACS. This can require service users to open a bank account just for this purpose.

This year the council supported 67 disabled children to access a Direct Payment for short breaks, and the council is currently making payments to 50 of these children.

With a longer experience of direct payments, the council's Adult Social Care function has approximately 450 customers drawing on Direct Payments to a total value of £4.5 million per annum. There is an opportunity to draw on the strong developments taking place regarding direct payments in the Adults function, in particular the move to pre-paid cards. Pre-paid cards have the potential to act as a vehicle for offering direct control to families of eligible disabled children to access their allocated funding. These cards are now increasingly common - typical examples are the currency card that can be taken abroad by a holidaymaker.

Nationally, around 45 councils already use pre-paid cards in the field of Adult Social Care direct payments. There are also a number of local authorities that have put in place cards for children's social care including Brent, Lewisham and Hertfordshire County Council.

The Council has a contract with PFS for the use of pre-paid cards. Cards acquired by Wokingham Council through PFS are backed by MasterCard. On this basis, the card can be used anywhere that a MasterCard is accepted. This could be through a face-to-face transaction, by telephone or across the internet.

Officers recommend undertaking a phased approach to the introduction of Pre-Paid Cards for short breaks during 2017.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

|                                 | How much will it Cost/ (Save) | Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall | Revenue or Capital? |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Current Financial Year (Year 1) | 0                             | Yes   | Revenue             |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2)    | 0                             | Yes   | Revenue             |

|                                   |   |     |         |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----|---------|
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | 0 | Yes | Revenue |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----|---------|

**Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

The current disabled short breaks are purchased through the following arrangements:

£284k per annum – Direct Payments (spot purchases).

£245k per annum – Block Contracts.

£20k additional spot purchases.

Total spot           £304k

Total block           £245k

This equates to 55% of disabled children’s short breaks being spent through spot purchases (including Direct Payments) and 45% of short breaks purchased through the block contracts.

**Pre-Paid Cards Funding**

The council has set up a contract with PFS for a period of 3 years, and up to 2 optional years may be added. This is through a fixed fee option for Adult Social Care with the opportunity to add in “new programmes” e.g. from other areas of service. There are economies of scale for the council to add in new programmes to this contract based on the number of additional cards. This contract has been secured through Surrey County Council’s “Framework Agreement.”

Initially Adult Social Care is undertaking a pilot. Given the approach to this pilot it is expected the fee in the first year of the contract to be around £10,800 plus the set-up fees of £2,500 to PFS and £350 to Surrey County Council.

Subsequent years will be £14,400 with an additional cost of around £2,000 to replace all cards at the end of year 2 / beginning of year 3.

Against these costs the council is likely to accrue non-cashable savings in terms of reduced administration time of at least 1,500 hours (or 37 weeks) per annum. The council will also be able to immediately recover overpayments without the need for sundry debtor activity and the risks that can bring to eventual recovery.

Finally, all schemes that have been implemented nationally across a range of local authorities to date have produced cashable savings against the Direct Payment Budget because of the ease of administration and recovery.

**Cross-Council Implications**

The implications of this review and its recommendations are restricted to Children’s Services. However, these changes see the development of a stronger commissioning relationship including pro-active quality assurance, contract, risk and market management infrastructure. This development will support Wokingham Borough Council’s changes through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century proposals towards a “commissioning organisation”.

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