

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 October 2011	Meeting Name: Education and children's services scrutiny sub-committee
Report title:		Support for parents – review of short breaks services	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Rory Patterson, Deputy Director, Specialist Services, Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the information in this report, in particular the intended next steps in reviewing and developing short breaks services in response to feedback from children, families and practitioners.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Local authorities are required to publish a short breaks services statement under the 2011 Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations. A cope of the regulations is included in Appendix 1.
3. To inform the development of Southwark's statement, the local authority commissioned an independent consultant to carry out a targeted consultation with children, young people, families and practitioners from the statutory and voluntary sectors.
4. The consultation took place in August and September. It involved seven organisations including local authority teams, as well as families through the Parent Carer Council and young people using services. The resulting reports, as set out in appendices 1-4, included:
 - a) Short breaks programme consultation: stakeholder views on current provision, highlighting their issues and concerns
 - b) Short breaks wish list: A 'wish list' of how stakeholders would like to see services improved
 - c) Shaping future service delivery – stakeholder proposals: Potential service actions to take forward stakeholders' views and wishes
 - d) Workforce development and training plan – consultation summary: Potential training opportunities to support future service arrangements
5. The consultation confirmed that children and their families value their short breaks very highly. Families see these breaks as essential as they provide much-needed respite as well as ensuring that children and young people have access to social and recreational activities away from home.
6. The outcomes of the consultation have assisted in setting the priorities for the statement and for developing the framework for future service arrangements. They have also helped to identify some service gaps and areas for development, which the local authority is committed to working with services, providers and families to address.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Southwark's short breaks services statement

7. Southwark's short breaks services statement will be published by the end of October. It is acknowledged that the deadline set in the regulations has passed. This is in part due to services' recognition that the statement has to be informed by, and respond to, the views of children, families and practitioners.
8. In listening to these views, the authority recognises that although families value highly the quality support they receive, there are opportunities to make access to them simpler and more transparent. Consequently, alongside publishing the statement, the local authority intends to set out how it will address the issues identified through the consultation phase.
9. This will take the form of a service review over the winter and spring, with the intention that the services families receive from next summer are easier to access and better targeted to support their needs. It will build on the outcomes of the consultation and will involve significant further consultation and collaboration with families, services and providers to define and test simpler, more transparent criteria and ways to allocate resources, and assessing the impact of any changes.

Developing a new local offer

10. The consultation responses highlighted areas where improvements could be made, and which the local authority is committed to working with families, services and providers to address. Broadly, these are:
11. **Simpler, more transparent access:** Parents and carers said they want clearer definitions of what constitutes short break services and the criteria for accessing them, as well as easier access to information about what's available, especially at the universal level. They also said that referral routes were sometimes unclear and that assessment sometimes took too long. The local authority intends to use the coming review to clarify the eligibility criteria, simplify the referral process, improve the assessment process and strengthen review and communication processes.
12. **Activities tailored to need:** Disabled children and young people said they want to do the same 'fun things' that their non-disabled friends and siblings are able to do, and to take part in activities that increase their independence. Their parents and carers would like to access short breaks in more universal and inclusive settings, as well as in settings which can provide parallel activities for siblings and/or the whole family. They also want a wider range of activities tailored to ages and abilities as well as holiday clubs which run during all school holidays. These are options the review process will explore with families and providers.
13. **Greater use of direct payments:** Families requested greater flexibility around the use of direct payments, such as being able to purchase the level of one-to-one support their child may need to access universal services, alongside support and signposting to suppliers which can provide a variety of services. The authority intends to explore with families and providers the desirability and feasibility of extending the use of direct payments to access a wider range of

support, and to moving towards offering personal budgets which offer families more choice and control.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	2011 Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/707/made
Appendix 2	Short breaks programme consultation
Appendix 3	Short breaks wish list
Appendix 4	Shaping future service delivery – stakeholder proposals
Appendix 5	Workforce development and training plan – consultation summary

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Deputy Director, Specialist Services, Children's Services	
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Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
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