

EXECUTIVE DECISION

From: **Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services**

Sarah Hammond Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education

To: **Children's and Young People's Cabinet Committee – 12 September 2023**

Subject: **23/00084 - Targeted Short Breaks for Disabled Children and Young People**

Key decision – **Overall service value exceeds £1m and affects more than two Electoral Divisions.**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee with the background and rationale for running an open grant application-based model for Short Breaks for a two-year period (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026). This will allow the continued development and implementation of the Short Breaks Strategy whilst also further researching and testing Short Break models of delivery to ensure Kent has the most appropriate, most beneficial for families and best value services.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, on the proposed decision to:

- a) Approve the provision of grants to external providers to deliver Short Breaks for Disabled Children and Young People Service by commencing an Open Grants Process for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2026.
- b) Delegate authority to award grants to providers to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.
- c) DELGATE authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

1. Introduction

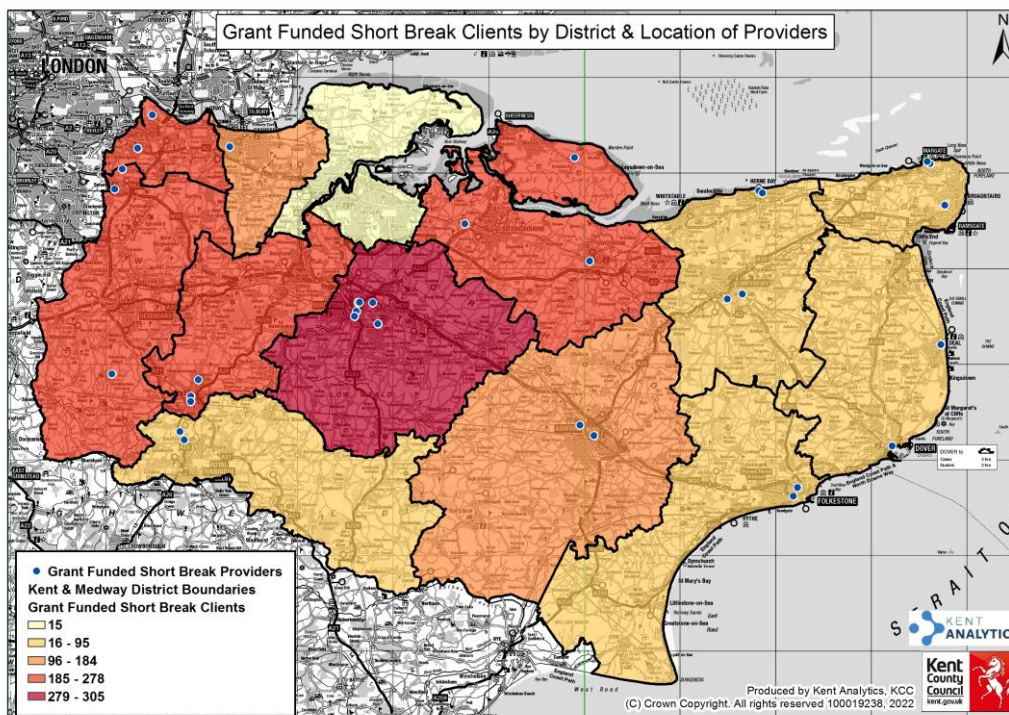
1.1 This report sets out our approach to meet the statutory responsibility to provide

secure, safe, and appropriate Short Breaks for disabled children and young people, as well as providing parents and carers with the opportunity to have a break from caring to pursue other activities.

- 1.2 Targeted Short Breaks are a preventative family support services aimed at families with a disabled child or young person to allow them to have a break from caring. They provide disabled children and young people the opportunity to have fun and learn while doing activities in a new environment outside of the home. They provide a chance to spend quality time within their community with other children and young people who may have similar life experiences, helping to build friendships and connections beyond the family. For parents and carers, Short Breaks provide regularly planned breaks from their caring responsibilities allowing time to pursue other activities, education, chores and spend time with other members of the family.

2. Current Provision

- 2.1. The current Short Break grant agreements went live on 1 April 2022 and are due to end on 31 March 2024. There are currently 19 Short Break providers across Kent delivering 2,258 Short Break sessions per year with 21,523 places available across a range of locations.



Ref: Data via Kent Analytics Provider Location October 2022

- 2.2 To access Targeted Short Breaks, families do not require a Social Care assessment. Families may be referred to a Short Break service via a Social Worker, Teacher, Early Help Worker and can also self-refer. When accessing Short Breaks, children and young people have their needs assessed by the Short Break provider to ensure they can be offered the correct level of support. Short Breaks services can respond to a spectrum of need from mild to complex depending on staff training, access to the right resources and level of experience. Short Breaks take place over school holidays, after school and at weekends.

2.3 Universal Services, commonly known as Open Access services, are accessible to all; however, it is recognised some disabled children and young people may require additional support to attend. Examples of universal services include Youth centres and community leisure centres, sports and interest clubs, dance classes and Children centres.

2.4 Our Short Breaks offer is informed by an up-to-date understanding of the numbers of children and young people with SEND in Kent, the districts where they reside and the types of disabilities they have. We draw this data from several different sources. Those being:

- Children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Children and young people who have a social worker.
- Children and young people who are registered on the Kent Children’s Disability Register

2.5 Children Young People and Education directorate has five in-house residential Short Breaks centres and one Short Stay centre, providing both overnight and Short Break Day opportunities. The units form part of the Strengthening Independence service. Overnight Short Breaks are not part of this current commissioning exercise but do form part of a wider Short Breaks strategy coproduced alongside disabled children, young people, and their families.

3. About the Short Break Strategy:

3.1 In the development of the Short Break Strategy, we spoke in-depth with families, Short Break service providers, Social Care practitioners and Health partners to ensure we have captured views, ideas and lived experiences. We connected with parents and carers, disabled children and young people in a variety of ways such as surveys, interviews, group work and workshops.

Groups	Engagement Method	Engagement Numbers
Parents and Carers	Short Break online survey to understand views on the current Short Break offer.	157 individual responses
Parents and Carers	Online interviews	34 Parents and Carers
Children and Young People	Face to face workshops at provider setting and open access services	52 Children and young people
Parents and Carers	Follow up online survey regarding vision and objectives, issued through providers, parents who responded to initial survey and Kent PACT.	350 Individual responses
Children and young people	Follow up workshops held with providers and open access services, engagement on Vision and Objectives.	28

3.2 Through surveys, workshops and interviews, families, children and young people who can access Short Breaks shared the current provision is highly valued with 90% of parents stating the quality of Targeted Short Break was good, very good or excellent. Similarly, 86% of parents and carers agreed their child benefitted from the activities, with respite and 'space' for the family, and socialising for the child being the most stated reason.

Parents, children, and young people have commented:

We loved doing the pizza workshop, the chocolate making workshop, the football workshop and the bushcraft and fencing. We are really excited about doing the Snodland workshops on Tuesdays too. You are AMAZING! Thank you so much.

I made new friends and I had a good time. The people are really nice and so are the staff. Its super fun and the activities are free. It's nice to have a group of people that understand me. It brings people together. People are like us in a group and not judged.

My son has severe and complex needs, including medical needs. He has very little/no opportunity to attend clubs etc. He needs 1-1 care. We have struggled to get PA's to support us. At Beams he gets to enjoy time away from us, as a typical mainstream child would typically do. He gets to go out in a safe environment. He has fun, they help with developing his confidence. He enjoys his time and we therefore don't feel guilty. As a family, it gives us a needed break, his needs and challenging behaviours are constant. So it allows us to spend time with our daughter doing what she wants to do. We get to

My son attends session with SNAAP one Saturday a month and he absolutely loves it. He is well looked after and it is very suited to his needs. He can get frustrated easily at home and at school but at SNAAP we never have much frustration for him. It gives us a break from caring and his brother a day when he has his parents to himself and we can do fun things like going to places that my son would find difficult.

Parents and Carers also identified several areas of improvement:

- Families whose children have complex or high needs struggled to find suitable clubs or activities for their child, often due to limited staff numbers which meant children needing one-to-one provision or assistance with personal care could not always be supported.
- Some parents and carers felt the activities and groups on offer were too far away or for too short a period for them to properly benefit from having a break, suggesting preparation and travel time meant taking their child to a Short Breaks activity was sometimes more tiring than having them stay at home.
- Parents and carers expressed concern and frustration their child or young person could no longer access activities because of their age, and they were unclear what would be available to them once they transitioned into adulthood. They suggested more preparation should be in place for families whose children are about to make this transition.

4. Options Considered

4.1 The options considered are detailed below:

(i). Do nothing.

Option	Risk	Benefit
<p>Do nothing –The existing grants arrangement will expire on 31 March 2024.</p> <p>Families can access Direct payments and other specialist services available</p>	<p>KCC would fail in its duty to ensure sufficiency of Short Break activities available to families of disabled children and young people living in Kent.</p> <p>Direct payments and other specialist services are in place, but current processes require a Social Care assessment resulting in increased case loads for social workers across the county and unintentional impacts on the commissioner Direct Payment Support Service Contract.</p> <p>Vulnerable families not receiving Short Breaks risk escalation to more specialised services.</p> <p>Risk of family breakdown through lack of breaks from caring.</p> <p>Strong partnerships with the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector could be negatively impacted potentially leading to less support services within the community.</p> <p>Risk of destabilising the VCSE sector through cessation of funding.</p> <p>Reputational damage to the Local Authority</p>	<p>May generate a saving to support KCC increasing budgetary pressures.</p>

(ii) Extend the existing Short Break Grants for a further two years

Option	Risk	Benefit
<p>Extend the current service provision beyond the length of the grant agreement for a further 2 years.</p>	<p>Missed opportunity to apply learning derived from the development of the Short Break Strategy such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More focused work around strengthening independence. • Coproducing Short Break specification and commissioning process. • Market development • Engaging special schools. • Building the market around complex needs <p>Such an approach does not account for the intelligence collected via engagement and family views, such as current lack of provision for children and young people with neurodiversity and complex needs.</p> <p>Does not resolve capacity concerns.</p>	<p>The current providers are well known to the families who use them. This would provide consistency of provision for families.</p>

(iii) Competitive open grant application-based model for a period of two years (preferred option)

Option	Risk	Benefit
<p>Competitively Open Grant application process</p> <p>New grant agreements start 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026</p>	<p>Grant model can impact on oversight of service providers. However, performance frameworks have been developed to mitigate this.</p>	<p>Opportunity to develop and test alternate models of support for children and young people who are neurodivergent, and those with more complex needs.</p> <p>Opportunity to develop and test alternate models of Short Breaks.</p> <p>Opportunity to incorporate improvements that have been identified through the</p>

		<p>development of the Short Break strategy.</p> <p>Grants based model ensures continued strong relationships with providers, which will be essential for the implementation of the Short Breaks strategy.</p> <p>Contribute to financial stability to VCSE providers.</p>
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4.2 The preferred option is to have competitive Open Grant application process for the provision of Short Breaks for disabled children and young people from 1 April 2024 to the 31 March 2026. Throughout this period the Strengthening Independence Service, Health partners children, young people and families will continue to develop an alternate delivery model for Short Breaks as well as implement improvements derived within the development of the Short Break Strategy.

5. Financial Implications:

5.1 The available funding for Short Breaks Grants is expected to be £1,060,000 per annum and will be funded from the Strengthening Independence 0-18 Commissioning Revenue Base Budget. Additional funding from Kent and Medway Integrated Care System may be available to support children and young people who are Neurodiverse, and discussions are currently ongoing.

5.2 It is not expected this programme will deliver savings, although the bids received will be tested for value for money prior to award.

6. Legal implications

6.1 Section 25 of the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 requires Local Authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children and imposes a duty on local authorities to provide, as part of the range of services they provide for families, breaks from caring to assist parents and others who provide care for disabled children and young people.

6.2 The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 requires each Local Authority to produce a Short Breaks Service Statement so that families know what services are available.

6.3 The Children Act 1989 and 2004 requires all Local Authorities to provide a range of social care services to support children in need.

6.4 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 there is a requirement to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) screening was completed, and no high negative impacts were identified. The EQIA will continue to be developed and reviewed as this project progresses.

8. Other corporate implications

8.1 Support from the VCSE lead will be sought in making sure the engagement, running and promoting of the grants programme is in line with the Civil Society Strategy.

8.2 Finance, Safeguarding and Health and Safety teams will be required to support the evaluation of grant bid submissions.

8.3 Legal support will be required if deemed necessary.

9. Governance

9.1 Accountability for the Short Breaks for disabled children and young people is with the Corporate Director for Children Young People and Education. The responsibility is with the Director for Children's Countywide services.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The Short Breaks Offer is a statutory requirement under section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 and The Children Act 2004.

10.2 Children and Families report that Targeted Short Breaks are highly valued and has benefited their child or young person.

10.3 Option 3 is the preferred option, to commence a competitive open grants process for the provision of Targeted Short Breaks for a two-year period, starting on the 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026.

11. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, on the proposed decision to:

a) Approve the provision of grants to external providers to deliver Short Breaks for Disabled Children and Young People Service by commencing an Open Grants Process for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2026.

b) Delegate authority to award grants to providers to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

c) DELGATE authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

12. Background Documents

None

13. Contact details.

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