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To: Social Care & Public Health Cabinet Committee – 11 January 2013

Subject: SHORT BREAKS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the short breaks for disabled children offered in Kent, eligibility, variety, take-up and budget allocation and spend.

Recommendations: Cabinet Committee members are asked to Note and Comment on the report.

1. Introduction

- 1(1) The Government Aiming High programme from 2008-2011, for which Kent was a Pathfinder authority, gave opportunities through both revenue and capital funding for a substantial increase in the number and range of short breaks and the upgrading and building of new facilities for disabled children.
- 1(2) Since then the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations (April 2011) has made it a duty on every local authority to provide a range of services to assist carers and to publish a statement about how they will provide short breaks, which cover day-time care, overnight care, leisure activities outside the home and support to carers in the home at evenings, weekends and during school holidays. This report sets out how we are currently meeting this requirement across Kent.

2. Financial Implications

- 2(1) Using the Early Intervention Grant as well as base budgets Kent County Council continues to make significant investment in services for disabled children, not only through our own resources but also through partnerships with Health, parent-led organizations and the Voluntary Sector, which enables families to be supported in the care of their disabled children, reducing stress and the number of children who become subject to Child Protection plans or require to be Looked After. The overall budget for the Disabled Children Service for 2012-13, including the in-house overnight short breaks units, is £18.142m.

- 2(2) Previously, members had queried the reported -£320k forecast underspend on short breaks for disabled children reported at the end of Quarter 1. As at the end of Q2, the overall forecast underspend on this budget has increased slightly to -£358k on a net budget of £2.07m.
- 2(3) As well as covering directly commissioned short breaks, this budget includes both independent sector day care and other related spend such as the Multi Agency Specialist Hubs (MASH) for disabled children. The -£358k forecast underspend is made up of a -£500k forecast underspend on core activity, a -£46k forecast underspend on independent sector day care and a +£188k forecast overspend on the MASH.
- 2(4) This underspend on directly commissioned services is expected as increasing numbers of parents and carers are choosing the option of direct payments to meet the needs of their children rather than directly commissioned service. As at the end of Q2, there is a forecast budget pressure of +£492k on direct payments, on a net budget of £2.85m.
- 2(5) When direct payments to parents of disabled children are included in the overall spend on disabled children there is a forecast overspend.

3 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

- 3(1) The short breaks provided to families through Direct Payments and the partnerships with parent-led organizations and the Voluntary Sector contribute to the aim to give citizens control over their own lives, determining what services they require and how they will organize them. It also meets the need to tackle disadvantage as disabled people, including disabled children and their families, frequently experience discrimination and exclusion from society.
- 3(2) The multi-agency approach is to provide services that enable disabled children to live “as normal a life as possible” providing the levels of support required to enable them to do so. The responsibility is a shared one and is being incorporated into both the SEN and the Disabled Children Strategies, currently being worked on.

4. Short Breaks Services

- 4(1) Short breaks are provide in five categories – mainstream/ universal, targeted, specialist by referral, multi-agency children’s continuing care packages, and supporting services.

4(1)(a) Mainstream/Universal

A key element of our short breaks planning is to support services such as leisure centres, youth clubs, children’s centres, District Council playschemes, to include disabled children. Children may need support to access these.

4(1)(b) **Targeted**

These services are aimed at disabled children whose needs are less complex than those of children who require a more specialist service. Children may choose to be with their disabled peers for some activities, as opposed to being included in a mainstream setting. Services such as holiday playschemes, afterschool clubs, befriending services fall into this category and families can access them directly rather than coming through the specialist Disabled Children's teams. The majority of these services are commissioned from the Voluntary Sector including parent-led groups.

4(1)(c) **Specialist**

These services are aimed at children with a severe and complex level of disability whose needs are over and above what can be met by universal or targeted provision. Access to some of these services is by referral from a specialist social worker from Kent County Council's Disabled Children's Service, or a key health professional. Our overnight short break units and short break foster carers fall into this category as do those children who are eligible to receive a Direct Payment to purchase their own care.

4(1)(d) **Multi-Agency Children's Continuing Care Packages**

There is a need for a small group of disabled children who have highly complex health, social care and education needs to receive a children's continuing care package and these are commissioned and funded jointly with Health and Education colleagues.

4(1)(e) **Supporting Services**

Some children may need support to access mainstream services e.g. a befriender accompanying them. This support may be temporary, until the service is confident it can successfully include a child. In some cases, where the needs of a child are more complex, support may be more long term.

These are the principles by which we organize services

4(1)(f) **Families' Experience of Service Planning and Provision**

The outworking of our short breaks statement in practice is illustrated by the following information:

- There are 11, 500 children in Kent in receipt of some form of Disability Living Allowance, both Care and Mobility allowances.

- An estimated 7,000 disabled children in Kent will receive short breaks this year – afterschool clubs, holiday playschemes, befriending, Family Fun Days, support from Personal Assistants through Direct Payments, weekend fun clubs, short breaks foster care, overnight stays etc.
- We have provided in-house or commissioned a total of 520,000 hours of short breaks this year, provided by over 80 commissioned services.
- The Disabled Children's Teams are working with 1700 of the most disabled children including those with Sensory impairments.
- 765 of these families were in receipt of a Direct Payment as of November 2012 to enable them to purchase their own care and support.
- 292 children with learning disabilities aged 5-18 with the highest level of need stay overnight in one of KCC's 5 residential short break units. The service operates to a dependency criteria and consistently exceeds capacity. Families accessing this service are asked for their views via annual questionnaires and through the reviewing process and the evidence is that they are very satisfied with the service they receive. This is in part reflected in 4 of the units achieving "good" overall Ofsted ratings and 1 achieving "outstanding".
- The Disabled Children Service works closely with the voluntary sector and parent groups to develop services and plug gaps.
- 3 new Multi-Agency Specialist Hubs in East Kent have been built with co-location Government grant and KCC and NHS capital so that multi-agency teams can all be based together and provide a one-stop shop for families. Short break services are also delivered at these hubs. We will use this model to develop similar services in West Kent when we can.
- New legislation from 2014 will require Local Authorities and Health to jointly plan and commission services for disabled children and those with SEN up to the age of 25. A Pathfinder programme in Thanet is working out some of the details including Personal Budgets.
- Information for families about short break services is provided through the 5 parent-driven charities across the County. They also collate families' views about services and co-ordinate all the local services through a consortium of providers and communicate the information to families through their websites, newsletters and via other organizations.
- We have a Young Inspectors programme, a Participation Worker in one Area and regular feedback to ensure that young people's views are collected and used to inform development or changes in services
- Parents sit on a number of strategic boards, funding and interview panels to enable them to be fully involved in shaping services.

5. Conclusions

5(1) The report outlines the statutory requirement to provide short breaks to disabled children and their families and the wide variety of ways in which we are fulfilling that duty. The service is responsive to feedback from users and is constantly changing and developing ways of working in order to meet the needs of disabled children and their families.

6. Recommendations

6(1) Cabinet Committee members are asked to Note and Comment on the report.

7. Background Documents

7(1) The full Short Breaks statement is available on KCC's website:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/childrens-social-services/disabled-children/short-breaks-statement.pdf>

8. Contact details

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