

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – 11th SEPTEMBER 2009

AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN COMMISSIONING REPORT

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on progress on the Wirral Local Area Implementation programme for Aiming High for Disabled Children in relation to Short Breaks provision, further to reports provided in January and March. The Government are requiring the Council and NHS Wirral to provide for a stepped change to short breaks services and to deliver on what is termed the Full Service Offer, designed to meet the needs of all groups of disabled children. The report advises on action taken in meeting the reporting and performance requirements set out by Together for Disabled Children, who are administering the Short Breaks programme on behalf of the DCSF; over the next two years to March 2011.

1. Background

1.1 Context

The approach seeks to transform services across sectors to provide support to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people with disabilities and enable children and their families to live ordinary lives. Over the next two years, as the funding and programme reforms take effect, the Government expects local authorities to realise the ambition that:

- Disabled children will have the same opportunities to develop and fulfil their potential as all other children.
- Families with disabled children will get the support they need, when they need it.
- Universal children's services will be more genuinely inclusive of disabled children, including those with complex needs.
- Disabled children will be at the heart of the ongoing change programme for children's services.

The new national indicator, NI 54 on services for disabled children will measure the experience of families with disabled children; and will involve an annual survey of 200 families within each Council area. It involves feedback on the performance of Education, Health and Social Care, against the "Core Offer" standards ; a national set of expectations around information, transparency, participation, assessment and feedback. The Council and PCT will receive the results on the first survey within the next month.

1.2 Governance arrangements

The new Governance structure has been submitted and approved by the Childrens Trust Board, and also by Cabinet. This structure has now been introduced, with terms of reference and group membership confirmed. The Executive Group will be extended to include representation from the Link Forum and a parental

representative, and will oversee all elements of the Aiming High programmes. It is also proposed to review the Learning Disability and Difficulty Group and Plan to ensure we respond fully to the key themes of the Core offer of the wider Aiming High programme.

The Short Breaks programme envisages significant workforce development – which Council and NHS services will need to support. A Workforce Group has been established with the remit of ensuring a coherent workforce plan. The likely recommendations will need to be considered jointly by the Council and NHS, as they should also drive planning across other service areas.

1.3 Short Breaks programme

1.3.1 Reporting requirements

The Short Breaks programme is the major delivery programme at this time, which is dealt with in this report, in addition an update is provided on two other programme strands. Together for Disabled Children published a new set of reporting requirements, called the Staged Progression Framework, with expectations that the Council and NHS will evidence progress in working towards meeting the Full Service Offer for Short Breaks.

This sets out 4 key objectives with 4 stages to be met, in terms of:

- Completion of an Initial Needs assessment and embedding consultation
- Evidencing via the Delivery Plan and effective data management, increased levels of provision
- Producing revised eligibility criteria for short breaks provision which parents feel are fair, and are consistently communicated and applied
- Providing a Workforce Plan which addresses the needs of universal service providers and specialist service providers

Together for Disabled Children have written to each Director of Children Services in July to confirm they see this Council as needing medium support at this time. There is no indication within the letter of what the support levels will provide for, or when these will be reviewed. The distribution of authorities at the current time stands at: Intensive (4), High (26), Medium (44), Low (78). Further evidence logs were submitted in July and the Council is at this time on target with reporting deadlines. Now the Project manager and are in post we would also expect to confirm further improvements in our performance over coming months.

1.3.2 Project Management

A Project Manager has been appointed for the 2 year period to oversee the delivery of the programme and Transformation Plan. Three further fixed term posts have been created within the project team to provide for capacity to ensure the programme now moves forwards at pace, in line with reporting requirements.

- *Inclusion and Development Officer (Specialist services)* the post incumbent will focus on ensuring young people are consulted, that specialist services continue to develop person centred models of working and to set up an emergency support scheme. This post has been filled by a temporary secondment from the residential service into this position.
- *Inclusion and Development Officer (Universal services)* the post incumbent will focus on ensuring that new activities are developed and that young people are readily able to access universal provision. The post incumbent will also ensure effective monitoring of contracted activity. This post has been filled after both internal and external advertisement.
- *Team Support Officer* – this post holder will support the team in all administrative functions and support the team in improved data management, and information provision. This post has now been filled by after both internal and external advertisement.

1.3.3 Consultation and Engagement

The views of children, young people and parents/carers are at the heart of the funding proposals. We have undertaken a comprehensive consultation process to develop our Short Breaks vision and understand the needs of children and young people and parents/carers. This involved:

- A Consultation event in October 2008 to start developing the vision and understand needs from a parent and carers focus.
- A Children and young people's event during October inclusion week.
- A Questionnaire sent to all parents (whose children have Special Educational Needs (SEN) in November 2008
- A feedback event in January 2009 – to confirm the vision and develop the priority areas in developing the Delivery Plan.
- Fun days were organised in July for young people and their families to talk to parents and young people further
- Further consultation has been undertaken with groups of young people – across the range of special schools and youth groups. A further series of consultations are planned across several mainstream schools in September
- A newsletter is being produced every 2-3 months to keep parents and carers up to date with developments.

Ongoing consultation throughout the next two years is a requirement of the programme, to evidence that change is being driven by children and families, and truly reflects their needs.

1.4 Transition

1.4.1 Transition reporting requirements

Aiming High for Disabled Children produced in May 2007 identified Transition as an area for further investment by the Government. Transition Guidance was produced on behalf of the Government by the Council for Disabled Children. Helen Wheatley

who authored the guidance was involved in helping initially review of our transition work programme and in April of this year to launch of our local protocol. The guidance defines disabled children as including young people with special educational needs in its broadest terms as those young people who receive support at a school action and action plus level besides those in receipt of a statement. This element of the Aiming High Programme, is being overseen on behalf of the Government by the Transition National Support Team.

Wirral received £10,000 in 2008/9 to undertake a self assessment of current arrangements, and a similar sum in 2009/10 to develop its action plan further. Following submission of its first self evaluation, it has been rated as requiring a medium offer at this time.

1.4.2 Transition priorities

An action plan has been developed and the further self assessment questionnaire has now been completed.

1.5 Parent Consultation and Support

Parent carer consultation and involvement forms a key strand of Aiming High programme, and is driven throughout the Core Offer standards and reporting standards for Short Breaks and Transition. The Council and PCT are required to report its performance against benchmarks which were provided as part of our initial assessment in 2008, and update the tracker to evidence improvement.

Local priorities have been the development of the Family Information service and adoption of a Carer Consultation Strategy by the Council and the NHS. A Consultation Strategy has been developed with parents, which Cabinet has been formally noted. The newly formed Engagement & Involvement Group is developing a second action plan to develop our consultation activity further.

Within the 0-19 Parenting commissioning programme the SEN Parent partnership service was drawn together with Parent Support activity. Wired who were successful in tendering for this service started their new contract in July.

Wirral Family Consultation Forum has been supported to secure a further £10,000 grant from the Government to support the development of parent forum support and structures in Wirral.

A training programme for parents and carers in engagement has been delivered and is currently being evaluated.

2.0 Short Breaks Development Strategy and Delivery Plan

The Short Breaks Development Strategy confirms our needs assessment, vision and key objectives and confirms our strategic direction; key principles being:

2.4.1 Early intervention and prevention

We know that disabled children do best when they and their families are enabled to lead as ordinary lives as possible. We also know from families that regular and reliable short breaks from caring, make a significant difference in their ability to cope.

Early intervention means intervening soon after the identification of a need. It does not necessarily mean intervening in the early years of a child's life, although frequently the two go together. Early intervention and prevention has been central to our redevelopment of residential and family support services over a number of years.

2.4.2 Personalisation / equipping young people for independence in adult life.

Direct Payments, individualised budgets and supported living initiatives indicate that social policy is moving in the direction of enabling disabled people to manage their own care, choose how they lead their own lives and control the services they need. The aim is to improve outcomes for people: and ensure that they are treated with greater dignity, are safer and lead more fulfilling lives rather than be passive recipients of services.

This policy shift, whilst predominant in adult social care, is also relevant to a strategy for disabled children and young people. It is relevant to a strategy for disabled children and young people in three ways:

- Many parents who use carer support services benefit from being in control of those services;
- Some parents also receive support from adult services in their own right
- Equipping young people with the skills and mindset to achieve their potential for independence and fulfilment as young adults must start long before the transition to adult services.

2.4.3 Engagement and Involvement

These principles permeate all strands of the Aiming High programme. Paragraph 1.5 set out our actions in this area

2.4.4 Financial sustainability

Successful implementation of this Strategy depends on managing the twin pressures of rising demand for services and severe financial constraints for the Council and the PCT. Long term pressures remain in terms of rising numbers of children with more complex health needs and ASD specifically which will continue to require fundamental changes are made in the commissioning and delivery of services.

The additional Government funding for short breaks in the region of £2m revenue and £0.75m capital is a significant boost for services. This programme was first announced in May 2007 and has been accompanied by significant publicity since

then. With the new money have come greater expectations from an increasing number of families, who may feel their needs have not been met over time, and having been consulted are keen that they receive increased support.

In essence meeting the needs of disabled young people is a three-way responsibility between universal services for all children, specialist disability services and parents. For this programme to achieve the right balance will involve :

- ensuring commissioning rigour by the Council and PCT working in partnership,
- increasing choice by removing the barriers to universal services for all disabled children and young people. With suitable support, participating in universal services can be a more cost-effective, as well as child-centred, way of supporting families.
- taking children with lower levels of need out of bureaucratic processes to access "ordinary" services., or being required to have an assessment or care plan or this purpose.
- equitable arrangements whereby parents who can afford to do so, contribute to the cost of services.
- a continued shift of resources from residential short breaks services to home and community based support; with improved early intervention, parenting and specialist family support services working in a more co-ordinated fashion,
- reducing „life-time costs" by making sure that disabled people have every chance when young to develop their potential for economically active and independent adult lives.

The Revised Delivery Plan attached, sets out how we will implement the programme in detail.

3.0 Commissioning of services

3.1 Commissioning update

New services have now been commissioned using the Joint Strategic Commissioning Framework ; designed to ensure that services are planned and secured to meet the needs of children, young people and their families and provide best value (considerations of quality and cost). Within the programme requirements we have been able to evidence due rigour with regards to establishing the principles of contestability and in stimulation of the market. Parents and young people have been fully involved with Officers in evaluating tenders.

Existing service level agreements for play scheme were reviewed within this process, including those for Wirral Play Council, Crossroads and Merseyside Autistic Childrens Society.

A report on the process and outcomes will be presented to the next Cabinet later this month.

3.2 Capital

Proposals continue to be developed via the Capital Group of the Aiming High programme. Fresh guidance has been produced by Together for Disabled Children which reinforces

- Needs assessment - The programme plan should have a clear link to the local area's needs assessment and demonstrate additionality
- Consultation – The programme should reflect the outcomes of consultation with parent and children and young people
- Commissioning strategy - Capital programme planning should flow directly from the local area's joint strategic plan for the development short breaks.
- Consider and plan for longer-term sustainability
- Link with revenue funding - Planning for capital spend should link clearly to revenue spending plans
- Cost/benefit analysis - A cost/benefit analysis should be carried out as part of the planning process
- All planning should be joint with the PCT.
- Capital spend should directly support short break provision. General access should not be the primary aim of the expenditure.
- Carry over of funding against planned expenditure may be allowed up to end of March 2011, but will not be permitted after that date

At this stage a number of options have been advanced :

3.2.1 Residential

Cabinet have now approved a service review of the residential units at Willow Tree and Rosclare House – it being expected that we will move all short breaks services into Rosclare House. This will compliment the modernisation of these services and improve value for money. A scheme of work has been developed for Rosclare House linked to the Capital programme for children`s homes. This will only require minor additional funds.

3.2.2 Resource Centre

From our initial consultations Parents were keen for a one stop approach and for information services to be improved. Our thinking would be to evaluate the potential of Willow Tree Resource Centre to become this new information hub.

3.3.3 Changing Places

Involves providing toilets with hoists and changing beds at a number of key venues across the Borough to improve the potential of young people with profound and multiple disabilities, who have continence needs, to be able to go out with their families and with short breaks carers. The lack of this specialist equipment being available, often means restricted opportunities for such children to go out, or being changed on the floor of public toilets which is both undignified and unsafe. There is a national programme which has produced information on how schemes might be developed. For this part of the programme to successfully move forwards will require

a corporate approach to this issue, and ensuring it is effectively linked into the strategic asset review.

3.3.4 Sports and leisure facilities

It is proposed that schemes of work be considered at the Europa Pools, and other key sites. This will in both circumstances provide enhanced changing facilities which would be accessible during leisure activities and as a venue of a changing place. Other minor works are being considered to improve parking, to improve immediate access.

3.3.5 Play equipment

Within the Play Strategy it is proposed to develop 4 play sites with enhanced facilities across the Borough. It is also proposed to allocate some funding to enhance Leisure services / other providers specialist equipment to improve the offer for young people with physical disabilities

3.3.6 Community based provision.

It is proposed to investigate the funding of a minor scheme of works with voluntary sector providers. A bidding scheme has been developed similar to that for the Extended schools

3.3.7 Adaptations

In relation to the capital element of the Aiming High programme, this will support the adaptation of properties for the Contract Carer scheme and the provision of equipment. A nominal allocation has been proposed at this time based on providing several larger schemes of work and a number of smaller schemes. The Council will need to put in place legal agreements with families where significant adaptations are made. It is envisaged that a several schemes of work will need to be undertaken, which should be able to be managed in a timely fashion given our current adaptation expertise in the Council. The use of *pod* designs are also being considered, as they offer a quick and ready adaptation which can be put in place in weeks, and moved if the foster carer does not want to continue with the scheme.

3.3.8 Equipment

It is proposed to reserve funding for the purchase of hoists and beds which might permit other family members to offer support. Currently children are only allocated one set of equipment

3.3.9 Transport

It has been proposed to fund new vehicles for the use of families to improve community access

3.4 Community Grants

Within the programmes it is proposed to make money available to community organisations and parent led groups who provide short breaks for disabled young people and their families. The purpose is to stimulate activity within this sector; this approach is viewed as good practice within this programme. It is proposed that these grants would be between £500 and £5,000 per year. This process will be less demanding than that of the commissioning brief, and more proportionate given the lower level of grant funding. Organisations would also be offered further advice within the process of other funding streams which they could apply to for funding. We are currently evaluating requests for grants by using a panel approach, to bring key stakeholders into the decision making process. This approach has been used by other Councils, and is seen as good practice within the Aiming High programme. Clear criteria will be attached to this funding to ensure it meets the targeted groups of young people. It will also be the expectation that groups receiving funding will support the programme by acting as a conduit for information distribution and to support consultation activity.

4.0 Residential Service Review

Cabinet have approved a service review being instituted of residential short break provision, to scope out the next stages of service development, and provide recommendations for the structuring and best positioning of these services.

The Government review by Price Waterhouse Coopers (2007) "*Market for Disabled Childrens Services – A Review*" reinforced the view that there should be a separation between commissioning and provision of services within both the Council and NHS. Within Aiming High guidance the Council will be expected to review it's provision to consider whether services should be commissioned with an external provider, or develop a service level agreement with in house services. A more robust approach to the monitoring of costs and outcomes is similarly required.

The Children with Disability residential service has, over a number of years, changed from providing long term provision, to one of shared care and short breaks services to ensure children can remain happily within their families. The numbers of children looked after and / or placed out of Borough has significantly reduced has reduced over the last few years, by the delivery of improved parenting support. A tendering exercise was completed last year which has identified a number of local providers who could provide placements as and when the need arose.

A number of young people are shortly to move into Adult provision which will leave significant capacity within the residential service at Rosclare House. It is proposed that a thorough review should be undertaken of both Willowtree and Rosclare to determine the future configuration of residential short break provision within Wirral, which reflects the further shift in balance to providing increased family based short breaks and family support. An increased alignment between the Children with Disabilities Service (CYPD) with the Learning Disability CAMHS service will underpin this approach, and reinforce effective parenting strategies.

5 Financial implications

The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme is grant funded. The revenue and capital allocations for 2009-10 and 2010-11 are shown in paragraph 2.1.

There are no indications of the level of funding from 2011-12 onwards, although it is likely financial commitments for Short Breaks will increase.

6 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Increased Project Management capacity is now in place using the increased funding provided.
- 6.2 The service review may recommend changes to the residential and family support teams.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 The changes are driven by the imperative that disabled youngsters should have personal and developmental opportunities and be supported to lead an ordinary life as valued members of their community.
- 7.2 Short breaks should therefore not just be used as a crisis intervention, but should also be used routinely to help parents and carers to maintain and improve the quality of care they naturally wish to provide.
- 7.3 Within the first stages of the Transformation Plan a needs analysis will be undertaken to identify if there are groups of disabled children who currently do not receive effective support.
- 7.4 Involving parents in the design of services is a critical part of this programme and the delivery of the Core offer.
- 7.5 Young people with disabilities have more significant difficulties in communicating their preferences and will need more imaginative and individualised approaches in ensuring their involvement.

8 Human Rights Implications

Decisions on all aspects of the proposed changes will be informed by the Convention on Human Rights to ensure that the rights of children in our care and our employees are protected.

9 Local Agenda 21 Implications

No specific implications emerging from this report.

10 Community Safety Implications

Improved commissioning of care provision should reduce the vulnerability of disabled young people to bullying and for some young people to being engaged in or subject to crime.

11 Planning Implications

None at this time

12 Local Member Support Implications

Disabled young people live in all wards.

13 Background Papers

Aiming High for Disabled children

Updates on these and other measures are available at

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc

Recommendations

1. To confirm the strategic direction of the Short Breaks Strategy and provide any further direction on implementation.
2. To note the Consultation Strategy and approve formal launch.
3. To note the Commissioning Brief and Capital proposals.

Further information in the form of appendices is available from the report author on request.

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