

OPTION: SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

BUDGET SAVING: £300,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council provides funding for children with disabilities to go on short breaks, which provide respite both for the children but also their carers and/or families.

The Short Breaks Service (Aiming High) introduced in 2009 has provided social workers (both within the District Teams and Children with Disabilities Team) with a broader menu of options to offer families. These commissioned providers manage the referral and access processes independently in many cases which reduces the level of involvement required from the social worker

The option would be to reduce the number and range of short breaks which are funded for children with disabilities.

The Short Breaks Service currently has a budget of £1,463,000. The proposed savings would be £150,000 in 2013/14 and a further £150,000 the year later.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

These short breaks are seen to provide 'good value for money' as providers spread their resources well, often exceeding outputs required and offer additional services to families. With some of the more difficult to reach families they will engage with external agencies better than they will with the local authority and this has enabled us to gather better learning on the needs of this population. However, the reductions proposed are not out of line with decisions taken by neighbouring local authorities and DFE benchmarking data indicates that Wirral's spend is high compared to statistical neighbours, with a spend per child aged 0-17 of £39 compared to an average of £17.

IMPACT

Since the service started in 2009 there has been a significant increase in the number of children with disabilities accessing short breaks and also in the hours of delivery. As families have been in receipt of these services for some time a reduction may impact their family functioning.

Children and young people with disabilities would not have the same choice or access to the service they get at the moment. It is also expected there would potentially be more pressure put on Council services as parents will request alternative support.

The proposed savings would also mean that less money would be invested with the voluntary sector. For some of these specialist providers this may effect their functioning long term.

The service is Wirral wide so this would not affect any particular wards..

The project team will be unchanged (post of Project Manager, 2 x Inclusion Development Officers and a team Support Officer).

MITIGATION

The commissioning process for 2013/14 has begun, and savings would be taken into account when it is decided what services to buy. Service specifications already allow for them to be delivered more effectively or for units of delivery to be reduced. Parent/carers and existing providers were consulted regarding service design for this commissioning process. They were not informed directly of the need to reduce costs.

The proposed reductions would be informed by data from the current commissioned services to maintain required services where possible and manage/limit any disruption.