



## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**COMMITTEE:**  
**10 SEPTEMBER 2018**

### **EARLY HELP AND INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED AND/OR A DISABILITY**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the latest position regarding early support to families where a child has a special educational need (SEN) and/or disability. This follows the ending of the previous contract with Menphys in December 2017, and the Cabinet decision to establish an in-house SEN Early Help Service from the same date.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. In April 2011 the short break duty came into effect and created a legal duty on local authorities in England to provide a range of short break services to children with SEN and/or a disability, including where assessed as necessary:
  - Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
  - Daytime care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
  - Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes
  - Services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays
3. Under the Children and Families Act 2014 (the SEND reforms), local authorities have a duty to support children and young people with special educational needs to facilitate their development and help them achieve the best possible outcomes.
4. A previous report on this matter was considered by this Committee on 13 November 2017. Arising from discussion the following points were noted:
  - i. The contract procedure rules prevented a further extension of the contract with (the then provider) Menphys;

- ii. Delivery of Early Support and Inclusion Services after December 2017 would be carried out in-house by the Children and Family Services Department, which remained committed to offering high quality services to all children that it supported. Officers had a high level of expertise in working with children with special educational needs and disabilities and assured the Committee that service delivery would be enhanced by the services already offered by the Department;
  - iii. A robust communications plan had been developed in conjunction with Menphys; the Director of Children and Family Services had written to all parents of children at Menphys letting them know of the change in service delivery and offering the opportunity to discuss their future support requirements. Additionally, plans were in place to ensure that potential new parents were made aware of the new service offered;
  - iv. Where families needed additional support, or where their needs were not sufficiently clear or more complex, they would be offered an early help assessment to identify needs and deliver required support.
5. The matter was considered by the Cabinet on 15 December 2017 and the decision was taken to cease the Menphys contract and to bring the service in-house.

### **Background**

6. Children and Family Services provides a range of services to children with disabilities and their families, including the commissioning of services for Early Support and Inclusion. The provision of such services aims to address equality issues for disabled children and help improve access to essential provision by parent carers across Leicestershire's diverse communities.
7. Prior to December 2017, Leicestershire County Council had been commissioning Early Support from Menphys, with an initial contract value of £80,000 increasing to £213,700 for the final contract, awarded in 2009, extended to 2016 and subsequently to December 2017.
8. Following a full service review and tendering process in which no providers were able to meet the specification at the required cost, the contract was brought in-house. Since January 2018 the service has been delivered in house. The focus of the service is:
  - To deliver good quality early help to disabled children/young people and parent/carers living in Leicestershire, including the provision of information, advice and signposting, assessment, family support and coordination.
  - To provide a good range of opportunities for disabled children/young people to access fun and adventurous activities, whether through specialist commissioned provision or supported access to universal services.

- To provide signposting, advice and support for disabled children/young people and parent/carers on resources, opportunities, non-statutory sources of support.
  - To provide support and information that focuses on issues and updates regarding economic & social wellbeing matters, as they relate to (or affect) disabled children/young people and parent/carers, for example benefit advice, counselling advice, housing advocacy, volunteering opportunities, training and employment opportunities.
9. As part of the work to strengthen the support to children with special educational needs and disabilities, and in order to reduce demand on specialist high cost services, the Department has developed the SEND Early Help Team which offers a more holistic response to children and young people with SEND and their families. The team provides information and advice about available services, including wider early help provision whilst maintaining a specialist SEND focus, and the team is integrated with the wider early help offer to ensure families are able to receive the most appropriate support according to need.
10. Staff have been 'TUPED' over from Menphys into the role of SEN and Disability Family Support Workers. They were successfully inducted and have been undertaking priority activity, in particular with regard to assessment for short breaks and summer play schemes.

**Progress to date:**

11. The Short Breaks (play and leisure) and domiciliary care for disabled children's framework went live on 1 April 2017. The framework currently has two lots;
- Lot 1 - Short breaks (play and leisure) and
  - Lot 2 - Domiciliary Care
12. In the first year of the framework there were 79 referrals for short breaks (play and leisure) and 63 for domiciliary care.
13. In 2017 there were 142 referrals for summer schemes, all of which came from the Disabled Children's Service. Since February 2018, 153 early help assessments have been completed by the new SEND Family Support team for summer schemes. A panel was established to support consistent and high quality decision making, with membership coming from the Disabled Children's Service and Early Help. The outcome of these assessments is as follows:
- 112 families received a commissioned play scheme from a specialist provider.
  - 38 families did not meet the threshold for a specialist play scheme. Of these, 32 families were signposted to universal play schemes and six of

these were supported through 'additional adult funding' to enable the universal provider to cater for the child's additional needs. This has been achieved with the support of the Early Learning and Childcare Service, working with both providers and families to ensure they are able to meet any additional needs. This has been an additional beneficial outcome of the new way of working, ensuring greater access to universal provision for families with SEND children.

14. In addition, 225 families have received a family support service, for example parenting and behaviour support, help to apply for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, grants and aids. This number includes 17 early help assessments undertaken for short breaks, with 12 families receiving a commissioned short break or direct payment. Additional to this activity, 70 families have received telephone support and information.
15. Since January 2018 it has been possible to transfer 121 families from the Disabled Children's Service to the Early Help SEND Family Support Team. These are cases where stability has been achieved in the packages of support put in place and the family no longer require a social work response. The Early Help SEND Family Support Workers will continue to review these packages of support every six months with the family to ensure it is still fit for purpose.
16. All of the above represents a significant amount of activity following the transfer in-house of the service previously provided by Menphys.

### **Feedback to date**

17. To date there have been a number of parents reporting that they are satisfied with the placements made and feel that the offer for families has improved. The service has been working closely with the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum to enhance communications with parents and monitor and review systems and processes. This has been very helpful in ensuring that parents and carers are involved and heard and that a service is being provided that appropriately responds to need. The service continues to work collaboratively with the Forum on providing clear guidance and criteria to ensure the system is transparent.

### **Resource Implications**

18. The Early Help and Inclusion contract was reduced from £213,700 to £170,000 in April 2017 as the specification for the service to be delivered was revised. Particular changes to the specification were the removal of the requirement to provide brokerage of summer play schemes as this would be provided in house, and to recruit specialist childminders, as this requirement had never been met.
19. The expenditure in 2017 for commissioned Summer Schemes was £87,000. The 2018 expenditure has been £76,000. The decrease in expenditure is considered to be largely due to the assessment process leading to

identification of support that was already available within the existing local offer. There has been no decrease in the number of families that have been offered support.

20. The Children and Family Services Management Team had agreed, in March 2017, to fund a Commissioning and Compliance Officer from the savings to broker requests for support on two DCS Frameworks (Lot 1 - Short breaks (play and leisure); Lot 2 - Domically Care) to ensure that the services commissioned were cost effective and appropriate to meet needs.
21. The Children and Family Services Management Team agreed in October 2017 to use the £170,000 that was attached to the specification, in the first instance, to fund:
  - 2 SEND Early Help Family Support Officers
  - SEND Development/Inclusion Officer
  - Benefits training
  - Training and support to universal providers
22. This amounts to a total annual commitment of £137,000, held within the Early Years and Early Help budgets, which facilitates the integration of the 'TUPED' staff into those teams. The remaining £33,000 remains within the Disabled Children's Services budgets and is available for further commissioning. In order to enhance the early help offer a further reconfiguration of resource has taken place internally to ensure the SEND Family Support Worker Team is suitably resourced.
23. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

24. There are no further decisions to be made at this time.

### **Conclusions**

25. The decision to bring the SEN Early Help Service in house can be viewed as a success. Not only has it generated savings, but has also co-ordinated the Early Help Offer to both consolidate, and in some situations, improve the service offer.

### **Background papers**

- Report to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny: 13 November 2017 - Early Support and Inclusion for Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability - <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1043&MId=4851&Ver=4>

- Report to the Cabinet: 15 September 2017 - Early Support and Inclusion for Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability - <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4863&Ver=4>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

26. None

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

27. The service works with vulnerable children, young people and families in the County. The above arrangements for delivery provide a holistic approach to the identification of need and delivery of services to meet the identified need. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken in October 2016 as part of the original commissioning process for the new specification.

### **Officers to Contact**

Name: Ellie Lowe, Service Manager, Early Help Information and Assessment Service.

Telephone: 0116 3056511

Email: [ellie.lowe@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ellie.lowe@leics.gov.uk)

Name: Tom Common, Head of SEN and Disability,

Telephone: 0116 3057813

Email: [tom.common@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tom.common@leics.gov.uk)

Name: Jane Moore, Assistant Director, Education and Early Help

Telephone: 0116 305 2649

Email: [jane.moore@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jane.moore@leics.gov.uk)