

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
3RD MARCH 2020

**EARLY SUPPORT AND INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH A SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEED AND/OR A DISABILITY.**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding Early Help Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support to families where a child has a special educational need and/or a disability.

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 parents/carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays
3. The Children and Families Act 2014 (the SEND reforms) gives local authorities a duty to support children and young people with SEN to facilitate their development and help them achieve the best possible outcomes.
4. A report was considered by this Committee on 4 June 2018 which provided assurance that there had been a continuity of services to families since the ending of the contract with Menphys in December 2017.

Background

5. Since January 2018 the service has been delivered in house by Early Help Services, now known as the Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS). The role of SEND Family Support Worker was created, with staff in these roles providing holistic responses to the identified needs within the family. These staff are supported by a Play, Leisure and Inclusion Officer who matches families with universally available play and leisure opportunities suitable to the child's needs. This is in line with the aim to develop inclusive local provision within the play and leisure sector.

6. The service is delivered against the following specification:
- To deliver good quality early support to disabled children/young people and parent/carers living in Leicestershire. Providing the necessary help for coordination, that can improve accessibility.
 - To provide a good range of opportunities for disabled children/young people to access fun and adventurous activities.
 - To provide signposting, advice and support for disabled children/young people and parent/carers on accessible resources. Further to this basic requirement, the information should be without delay and available in places where families with children routinely go.
 - To provide support and information that focuses on issues and updates regarding economic and social wellbeing matters, as they relate to (or affect) disabled children/young people and parent/carers i.e. benefit advice, counselling advice, housing advocacy, volunteering opportunities, training and employment opportunities.
7. Where a family requests access to Short Breaks, the CFWS SEND workers undertake a Short Breaks Assessment. This identifies the short-break needs for the child, taking into account the wider family needs, including parent/carers and siblings.
8. If the family also need additional support, they are offered a full early help assessment to identify wider needs. This can lead to a range of coordinated support for example, behaviour management and parenting, education and employment support and also draws on services identified within the Local Offer.
9. All referrals for short breaks, are received through the First Response front door. This means that right at the start of the process there is oversight from a qualified social worker. In this way, the referral can be passed to the relevant social work team if it is identified that there may be safeguarding issues or that the child requires a Child in Need Assessment.
10. Upon completion of the Short Breaks Assessment the worker's assessment and recommendation is considered at the Short Breaks Panel, which meets on a fortnightly basis and is chaired by a Service Manager, Disabled Children. This means that there is further social work oversight of decision making.

Progress to date:

11. Since January 2018 the service provided to families by CFWS has grown considerably and the level of support provided to families significantly exceeds that which was provided via the Menphys contract, as the wider service supplements and adds to the work of the five dedicated workers. The process now considers summer schemes, short breaks, direct payments, occupational therapy and domiciliary care. Close working with the Disabled Children's Service (social care) has greatly enhanced provision to families, ensuring that the most appropriate level of support is given to families in need and council resources are used to greatest effect.
12. Additionally, CFWS has invested in specialist training for a range of family staff. From January 2020 the parenting programme Stepping Stones is being rolled out

across the county. This is an approach developed by Triple P, an organisation recognised by Early Intervention Foundation as one of only three evidence-based approaches to supporting parents with behaviour management and building the parent-child relationship. Stepping Stones is a specialist programme for parents of disabled children and is aimed at those with children age 0-12.

13. During the summer of 2019, the Disabled Children's Service and CFWS worked together with support from the Early Years Improvement and Inclusion Service to host two family fun days. These were made available for up to 200 people at each event and encouraged families to attend and try out new activities together. Both events received very positive feedback from families, with activities provided by Leicester City Football Club, the District Councils, Wheels for All, and staff from across the services. Grant funding was secured through the summer holiday food scheme distributed by Barnardo's.
14. The Disabled Children's Register was also re-launched at this time. This is a voluntary register of children with disabilities and families are able to 'opt-in' to the register and receive for example the regular SEND newsletter and information from the Local Offer.
15. Whilst most families who are assessed for a short break do receive some element of a funded package, a proportion are found not to meet the criteria. In these cases, families are given support from the Play, Leisure and Inclusion Officer to access community schemes, sometimes providing additional adult funding or training to the provider to enable the child to attend safely. CFWS has developed SEND Youth Groups around the county and again these can be offered as an alternative to a short break for young people wanting to attend a leisure activity which meets their needs. These popular groups are supported by youth and family workers and run from CFWS buildings on a weekly basis.
16. During the financial year 2019-20 there are 260 children in receipt of support via an early help package. Currently, the total value of this support is £718,462. This compares to 112 families receiving a commissioned early help play scheme only in 2018-19, and 142 referrals for summer schemes under the Menphys contract, all of which were from Disabled Children's Service (so there were no early help assessments).
17. These 260 children are a combination of those who have been assessed by CFWS and a package agreed, as well as children assessed by social care as part of a child protection or child in need plan, but where their package of support is stable, and they are suitable to be 'stepped down' to CFWS.

Breakdown of support provided.

18. **Direct Payments:** This method provides parents/carers with the means to purchase agreed services. The parent becomes the employer of any staff (non-family members) who they pay to provide support, often in the form of a personal assistant. Typically, these staff members will take the child or young person out to access community facilities and leisure activities. These are particularly popular for slightly older young people who are wanting some independence from their parents but require support to safely access opportunities.

Number of Children and young people receiving direct payments	126
Total Value of direct payments	£353,463

19. Of the 126 children, 16 also receive a short break and summer playscheme, and 21 receive both direct payments and a short break.

20. **Summer schemes:** These are commissioned places at specialist summer schemes which are run by external providers around the county. A typical offer for summer playschemes is five days during the school summer holidays.

Number of Children and young people receiving summer schemes	144
Total Value of summer schemes	£80,498

For 39 of the 144 children, this is the only service they receive.

71 of the 144 also receive a short break and 33 of the 144 also receive a direct payment

21. The number of children receiving a summer scheme will continue to increase over the next two months as families begin to plan arrangements for summer 2020.

22. **Domiciliary Care:** This is where commissioned services are provided within the family home to undertake specific tasks such as personal care.

Number of Children and young people receiving domiciliary care	11
Total Value of domiciliary care	£100,425

23. Of these 11 children, three also receive a summer scheme and two receive domiciliary care, short break and summer scheme.

24. **Short breaks:** These are commissioned specialist activities such as Saturday clubs which provide social and recreational opportunities to the child and respite for the family to allow them to do other things.

Number of Children and young people receiving short breaks	102
Total Value of direct payments	£184,077

The ambition moving forward:

25. Having established the early help Short Breaks service and Panel the next ambition is to review the Short Breaks Offer to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of families. Whilst the feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive, there is room for improvement in systems and processes. The service is working closely with the Parent Carer Forum to look at how the current offer might be improved, including how the service is described and the transparency of processes. This work is being supported by the Department's Innovation Partner, Barnardo's.

Resource Implications

26. Whilst the service currently operates within budget, there are increasing demands year on year. Children in receipt of commissioned services through the service are likely to require ongoing input until they leave children's services, i.e. at the point of transition to adulthood. The long-term sustainability of the scheme must be under continuous review but balanced with the preventative impact it has in terms of helping families to stay together and care for their children.

Conclusions

27. Leicestershire has developed an early help SEND Service to support families where a child has special needs or a disability as early as possible. Access to the service is through the First Response 'front door' and all offers of support are based upon a suitable assessment. Where a child requires services as a Child in Need support is available through the Disabled Children's Service or Locality Social Work Teams.

Background papers

Report to Overview and Scrutiny 13 November 2017 "EARLY SUPPORT AND INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED AND/OR A DISABILITY

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s133060/Early%20Support%20and%20Inclusion%20for%20Children%20with%20Special%20Educational%20Needs%20and%20Disabilities.pdf>

Report to Overview and Scrutiny 04 June 2018 "EARLY SUPPORT AND INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED AND/OR A DISABILITY

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s146094/OS%20Report%20on%20SEND%20and%20Inclusion%20v7%20tracked%202.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

28. None

Equality and Human Rights Implications

29. 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. This is due to be reviewed by December 2020.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

30. None

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