

Extension of the targeted short breaks grant arrangements

Date: 23rd November 2021

Report of: Commissioning Manager, Children & Families Directorate

Report to: Director, Children & Families Directorate

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The report seeks approval to vary the end date of the current grant arrangements in order to continue the delivery of targeted short breaks activities from 1st April 2022 for two years at a value of up to £317,500 per annum. There will be no options to extend once the agreements end on 31st March 2024.
- Targeted short breaks provide children and young people (CY&P) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access to fun activities either after school, at the weekend or over the school holidays.
- There are currently 9 providers delivering 19 different activities across the city as detailed in Appendix 1. The providers were awarded grant agreements on 1st April 2020 following a competitive award process with an original end date of 31st March 2022. The purpose of these grants is to maintain high quality and varied targeted short breaks for C&YP with SEND in compliance with the principles of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- These services will help deliver the local ambition of becoming an inclusive Child Friendly City as detailed in the Best Council Plan 2020 to 2025 – to make Leeds the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in.

Recommendations

- a) Approve the variation of the end date of the current grant arrangements in order to continue offering a range of targeted short break activities to cyp with SEND. The extended grant arrangements will end on 31st March 2024.
- b) Approve the annual expenditure of up to £317,500 per annum for a two-year period with no option to extend after 31st March 2024.
- c) Approve payment in advance to the grant recipients. Payment in advance is crucial to small, third sector organisations so that they can effectively manage budgets and cash flow to deliver the service. This has been the payment method used over the last seven or so years for services commissioned via the competitive grants process. Payments will be made on a

half yearly basis in April and October. Providers will be subject to a financial checking process using the CreditSafe facility.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 Short Breaks are activities for children and young people with SEND that enable them to have fun, spend time with friends and build their confidence and skills in a safe environment. As well as promoting best outcomes for the child, the Children Act 1989 Schedule 2 requires Local Authorities to provide services designed to assist family carers of disabled children 'to continue to [provide care], or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring'. Providing a range of targeted fun activities, reduces the likelihood of crisis and family breakdown and thereby reducing the need for more expensive specialist provision or Social Work intervention.
- 2 The numbers of CY&P in Leeds (and nationally) with additional needs are increasing. As well as an increase in numbers of CY&P with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), there is projected to be a sustained increase in pupils who are SEND without EHCP by 2024. In January 2020, 15,868 pupils were classified as SEN Support (Reception to Key Stage 5). Based on the data at January, projections show that the total number of pupils with SEND is likely to increase by between 1,719 and 2,366 (around 3%) by 2024. Without targeted activities across the city, more pressure will be put on specialist activities and services such as direct payments.
- 3 The 9 commissioned short breaks providers maintained contact with families over the lockdown period delivering some form of fun activities. They worked collaboratively with schools and social care colleagues to ensure concerns were highlighted and addressed and delivered food, medication or fun activity packs where needed. Activities are now taking place face to face and in order for these activities to continue seamlessly for cyp, it is believed extending the current agreements is preferable to undertaking a competitive grants process at a time when it is unlikely there are new providers who would want to deliver these types of activities.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: all

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 4 This decision was put on the list of forthcoming decisions on 25/10/21.
- 5 Unlike other cities, in Leeds, targeted short breaks can be accessed by families directly without recourse to Social Workers or Lead Professionals. The current offer of activities is geographically spread across the city enabling cyp to access them in their local community. Pre-pandemic we would expect around 800 cyp to access targeted services over a twelve-month period however this dropped to around 640 over the period of social distancing (and therefore reduced numbers at activities). Hopefully this figure will rise again over the next months to pre-pandemic levels. Without activities specifically targeted for cyp with SEND, there will be increased pressure on more expensive specialist provision or Social Work intervention.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 6 Councillor Venner, Executive Board Member for Children and Families has been briefed on the recommendations.
- 7 The current grant recipients have been consulted and they are all prepared to continue delivering the current activities.
- 8 Play and leisure activities were the 2nd highest priority identified by 229 parents/carers completing a survey about their priorities for change to SEND provision in Leeds, was around accessible places to go, things to do, and spaces to play for 0-25 year olds with SEND.
- 9 CY&P with SEND were on the tender panel scoring a question in November 2019 and EPIC Leeds (Empowering Parents Informing Choices) were on the working group developing the specification as well as being on the scoring panel.

What are the resource implications?

- 10 The total cost of the existing grant arrangements is £317,500 per annum (see Appendix 1 for a breakdown by provider), with a total potential overall value of £635,000 to 31st March 2024.
- 11 This option represents best value for money because it secures vital services to enable disabled children and their families to access targeted short breaks with the aim of preventing family breakdown. The availability of targeted activities should reduce the need for more expensive specialist support such as Independent Support Workers or direct payments.
- 12 Payment will be made in two instalments to protect the interests of the Council, allowing the Council to withhold the second payment in case of unsatisfactory performance. This gives the Council the power of offset, whereby in the event of default on the grant, money owed to the Council can be offset against money owed by the council to the provider.
- 13 There is a total budget of £317,500 per annum in place to cover the value of this decision.

What are the legal implications?

- 14 This is a key decision and open to call-in given the overall value of the grant agreements - £635,000 over two years.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 15 If the decision is not approved and we cease the delivery of targeted short breaks there is a significant risk that more expensive specialist services will receive an increased demand from families.
- 16 Short breaks are a statutory service and the Local Authority could be in breach of legislation should these services cease.
- 17 Some personal data will be processed as part of this contract delivery and a privacy impact assessment will highlight how any risks will be mitigated.
- 18 There is a risk identified with payment in advance is should services not subsequently delivered. This risk is mitigated by paying in two instalments rather than all at once. Quarterly performance management will identify whether this funding is being spent correctly or not. Quarterly monitoring returns will include outcomes for disabled children and how many short breaks hours were delivered as a result.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

19 Short breaks are viewed as a preventative early help strategy and untimely can prevent family breakdown or escalation to specialist services. Ensuring cyp with SEND have access to fun activities in their local community has a positive impact of health and wellbeing.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

20 One option considered was to undertake a competitive grants allocation panel as has happened in previous years. The impact of Covid renders the prospect of potential new providers in this specialised area fairly unlikely. Lots of work was undertaken at the 2019 panel to ensure services were spread as evenly as possible across the city and available to under 8s and those with more significant needs. Commissioned providers seek feedback from families and cyp at regular intervals to ensure their services are still meeting need and it is felt the current mix of services is maximises the impact of the budget envelope.

21 Ceasing delivery of targeted short breaks is not felt to be a viable option.

How will success be measured?

22 All grant recipients have quarterly monitoring meetings with a Commissioning Officer and have to deliver a specific numbers of sessions to a specific number of cyp as well as monitoring user satisfaction and supporting RADAR or other reviews where relevant.

What is the timetable for implementation?

23 The current grant arrangements end on 31st March 2022 and the end date will be varied to the 31st March 2024 and a continuum of provision will be ensured.

Appendices

24 Appendix 1 – breakdown of targeted short breaks grants by provider

Background papers

25 DPIA

Appendix 1 – breakdown of Targeted short breaks grants 2022 to 2024 by provider

Aireborough Supported Activity Schemes	£51,262.00	holiday activities
BID	£14,940.80	Youth Club (sensory impairment)
Broomfield SILC	£13,411.12	holiday scheme
Leeds Mencap	£92,426.44	Youth club & holiday activities
Leeds Weekend Care Association	£17,581.37	Youth club
South Leeds Hub	£12,990.25	Youth club
Endorphins	£85,815.00	Weekend & holiday activities over 3 wedges of the city
Sunshine & Smiles	£7668.50	Youth club
West Leeds Activity Centre	£21,404.52	After school club School holiday activities
TOTAL	£317,500.00	