

# Permission to procure Targeted Short Breaks through a competitive grants process

Date: 19th July 2024

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 procure Targeted Short Breaks through a competitive grant process. Commissioned Providers will continue the delivery of targeted short breaks and ensure this support remains in place for C&YP with SEND and their families/carers. The Grants will cover the period from 1st Oct 2024 for 18 months at a value of up to £317,500 per annum. There will be no options to extend once the agreements end on 31st March 2026.
- Targeted short breaks provide children and young people (CY&P) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access to activities either after school, at the weekend or over the school holidays.
- There are currently 8 providers delivering 15 different activities across the city. Current arrangements are coming to an end on 30th September 2024 with no option to extend.
- The purpose of this competitive grant process is to ensure children, young people, parents and carers' needs are met while maintaining high quality and varied targeted short breaks offer for C&YP with SEND in compliance with the principles of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- These services will help delivering 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

- That the Chief Officer Resources, Transformation and Partnerships gives approval to procure providers that will deliver Targeted Short Breaks through a competitive grant process. Commissioned Providers will continue the delivery of targeted short breaks and ensure this support remains in place for C&YP with SEND and their families/carers. The Grants will cover the period from 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2024 for 18 months at a value of up to £317,500 per annum. There will be no options to extend once the agreements end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

- That the Chief Officer Resources, Transformation and Partnerships gives approval of 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 ten 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 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 2027. In January 2022, 16,769 pupils were classified as SEN Support (Reception to Key Stage 5). Based on those data, projections show that the total number of pupils with SEND is likely to increase to circa 17,622 SEN Support Pupils overall, however the increases to begin to flatten off by 2027 with a projected slow reduction in Primary age but continued projected increase in Secondary ages. Without targeted activities across the city, more pressure will be put on specialist activities and services such as direct payments.
- 3 In collaboration with parents and carers, the Commissioning Team is transforming the Short Breaks offer in Leeds, starting from 1st October 2024. The transformation will be implemented incrementally, with some changes occurring immediately and others within 12 to 18 months. During this period, the commissioning team will work with providers to identify alternative sources of income and become self-funded. It is believed that undertaking a competitive grant process will support achieving Best Value for Money while delivering a better offer to children and families rather than reissuing grants to existing providers. This approach will allow time for the changes to be embedded into services that will be vital to the new model, such as the Early Help and CHAD teams.

### What impact will this proposal have?

**Wards affected: all**

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 4 Unlike other cities, in Leeds, targeted short breaks can be accessed by families directly without recourse to Social Workers or Lead Professionals. 838 C&YP accessed Targeted, Specialist or a mixture of both services over a twelve-month period in 2022-23. Those numbers continued to rise in 2023-24 financial year with 1128 C&YP engaging with short breaks services (period from Apr 2023 – March 2024). 656 C&YP accessed Targeted short breaks services and a total of 30,421 hours have been delivered. Without activities specifically targeted for C&YP with SEND,

there will be increased pressure on more expensive specialist provision or Social Work intervention.

### **What consultation and engagement has taken place?**

- 5 Children and Families Senior Leadership Team has been briefed on the recommendations.
- 6 As part of the Short Breaks review, Commissioning Team engaged with C&YP, parents, carers, providers, and practitioners by using a mixture of options:
  - Focus group with the SEND Youth Forum on 19th October 2023 (via Teams)
  - Consultation at the SEND Summit on 14th November 2023 (Leeds Civic Hall)
  - C&YP and P/C online surveys (December 2023)
  - Consultation with Providers and Practitioners online event on 13th March 2024.

### **What are the resource implications?**

- 7 The total cost of the existing grant arrangements is £317,500 per annum with a total potential overall value of £476,250 to 31st March 2026.
- 8 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.
- 9 This approach will allow time for the changes to be embedded into services that will be vital to the new model, such as the Early Help and CHAD teams. During this period, the commissioning team will work with providers to identify alternative sources of income and become self-funded.
- 10 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.
- 11 There is a total budget of £317,500 per annum in place to cover the value of this decision.

### **What are the legal implications?**

- 12 Without activities specifically targeted for C&YP with SEND, Leeds City Council could be exposed to a compliance breach with the principles of the Children and Families Act 2014.

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

- 13 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.
- 14 Short breaks are a statutory service and the Local Authority could be in breach of legislation should these services cease.

- 15 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.
- 16 There is a risk identified with payment in advance should services not subsequently be 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

- 17 Short breaks are viewed as a preventative strategy and can prevent family breakdown or escalation to specialist services. Ensuring C&YP with SEND have access to activities in their local community has a positive impact of health and wellbeing.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

#### **What other options were considered?**

It is believed that undertaking a competitive grant process will support achieving Best Value for Money while delivering a better offer to children and families rather than reissuing grants to existing providers.

New arrangements will be cost-neutral; although they will not deliver further savings, they will create opportunities to better utilise the resources available as part of the wider system change.

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

#### **How will success be measured?**

- 18 All grant recipients will have quarterly monitoring meetings with a Commissioning Manager/Officer. Performance will be checked against agreed targets, providers will have to deliver a specific numbers of sessions to a specific number of C&YP as well as monitoring user satisfaction and supporting RADAR or other reviews where relevant.

#### **What is the timetable for implementation?**

- 19 The grants will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2024 and end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. There will be no gap in service delivery from when the current grants cease on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

#### **Appendices**

N/a

#### **Background papers**

EDCI screening form