

Aiming High Derbyshire Offer Consultation

6th October – 15th December 2014

What is the consultation for?

The reduced funding available to Local Authorities means that Derbyshire County Council must look at how we support disabled children and their families who need access to Short Breaks through the Aiming High Derbyshire Offer. The organisations that deliver support under the current scheme are contracted until 31st March 2015. This means that we must now consider how we arrange this support in the future and make proposals that result in reduced costs.

We want to deliver services that are based on children's and families' needs, and that are delivered in a way that offers choice about how those needs are met.

We want individuals and families to have a say in how we propose to shape future services. The proposed changes could see some services currently offered to disabled children and their families reduced or stopped altogether.

This consultation is an opportunity for everyone to tell us what they think.

What are Short Breaks?

Short breaks are intended to give:

- Disabled children and young people enjoyable experiences away from their homes , helping their personal and social development and giving them the opportunity to mix with others;
- Parents and families a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities.

Proposal for the future Aiming High Derbyshire Offer:

Group Activities

Group activities are available for disabled children without the need for any criteria or assessment to be applied. These can include regular weekly or fortnightly clubs, day trips, trips to the cinema or bowling and activities during the summer holidays. Currently two organisations in each area provide specialist groups for disabled children who otherwise would experience difficulties accessing a short break activity.

It is proposed that the budget for group activities is reduced from £300,000 to £150,000, with one provider per area funded by the Council to offer activities. This would mean that group activities would continue to be available in each area and that any child or young person aged five to 17 with a disability would be able to attend without the need for an assessment. There would be a reduced choice of providers, and some children and young people may not be able to attend as many group activities as they do now.

Targeted Funding

Currently, children and young people who meet the criteria can have up to 80 hours per year of flexible one-to-one support to access activities of their choice, or a short break grant of up to £800 (or a combination of the two). The current scheme is not based on an assessment of a child's or family's need. The current criteria are:

- children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition who are likely to have other impairments, such as severe learning disabilities or challenging behaviour;
- children and young people with complex health needs;
- children and young people with moving and handling needs that require equipment and adaptations;
- children and young people where challenging behaviour is linked with other impairments e.g. severe learning disability.

The proposal is to reduce the current budget for one-to one flexible support and short break grants from £666,000 to £366,000. The budget for one-to-one support and short break grants would be combined to provide funding to meet support needs that had been identified following an Early Help Assessment (EHA). Families could choose a provider from a list of organisations that meet the Council's quality standards.

The proposed eligibility criteria for accessing support are set out below. Evidence from the Early Help Assessment would identify the need for additional provision or service and why this need could not be reasonably met through other opportunities. The assessment would identify the level of support required; up to a maximum of 80 hours. If a child or family need support that is over and above this, a child in need assessment conducted by Social Care would be required. 80 hours would be the maximum level of support that could be made available through the proposed new scheme.

Early Help Assessments

An Early Help Assessment is a standard assessment used by all practitioners working with children, young people and their families or carers. The aim is to provide the right support at an early stage before the need increases, this involves listening and working closely with a child, family or young person to find out what help is needed.

Proposed Eligibility Criteria

Through the proposed scheme, flexible one-to-one support would be available to enable disabled children and young people to have short breaks, based on an assessment of their families' needs. Families and young people who need this support would be able to self-refer to their local Multi Agency Team and request an Early Help Assessment.

The following eligibility criteria would always need to be met:

- The child or young person is aged between 5 and 17 years. (In exceptional circumstances support could be provided for younger children)
- The child or young person has a disability or a long-term health need which means that they cannot access universal groups and activities (e.g. Scouts or Guides) without additional support. Children do not need to have any particular diagnosis or even a confirmed diagnosis; however there must be evidence that they have an additional need.
- The child or young person is not accessing short breaks currently and there is no reasonable opportunity for them to do so with support from family, relatives, friends; or community networks of support; consideration should always be given first to a child or young person's needs being met through the Aiming High group activities'

Plus at least one of the following criteria would need to be met:

- Short breaks are required as part of a planned programme of support to ensure that positive outcomes for the child and family are achieved – for example to improve behaviour or to help a child to develop independence skills.
- The family is under significant stress due to the demands of caring for their child. Short breaks are required to support families and carers to have a significant break from their caring responsibilities, in order to enable them to continue caring for their child effectively
- The child or young person is socially isolated, has no or little opportunity to engage in positive activities of their choice, and is unable to access either universal or specialist groups or activities without additional support.

Proposed Interim Arrangements

The organisations that deliver the support under the current scheme are contracted until 31st March 2015. The changes described above could not be implemented before 1st October 2015. Since families would continue to need support during the six months from 1st April 2015 to 30 September 2015, we need to consider what interim arrangements may be required.

Cuts to the Council's budget mean that we must consider how we might make savings on the budget from the outset of the financial year 2015-16. We are therefore proposing that we make some changes to the current Offer. We also want your views on these proposed interim arrangements. It is proposed that these interim arrangements would:

- Reduce the maximum number of hours of one-to-one support from 80 per year to 70 per year (pro rata across the year)
- Reduce the maximum number of hours of group activities to 70 per year (pro rata). The previous maximum was 80, however in practice providers have had capacity to offer many families additional hours;
- Remove the entitlement to an £800 short break grant from 1 April 2015

Grants are not means tested and are currently paid without a robust assessment of need. It is anticipated that families who are in need of support would undergo an Early Help Assessment and access support based on the outcome of the assessment.

Aiming High Activity Weekends

Aiming High activity weekends are offered as part of our core services that provide essential support to families with the highest levels of assessed need. This consultation does not propose any changes to this. However we want your views on whether you agree with our plan to continue with Aiming High activity weekends.

Ceasing Grants for Disabled Children Summer Playschemes

In previous years funding has been provided to voluntary organisations and groups for the delivery of Summer Playschemes. This funding was in the form of a one-off payment. The amount spent on this provision has reduced over the years from £50,000 to £27,000 in 2012-13. The outcomes have been varied and some schemes were under-subscribed and because of this may not have delivered value for money.

In addition to these playschemes, the Aiming High providers have delivered group activities through the summer.

We are proposing that the small grants for playschemes are no longer offered.

Additional information on budgets

The annual budget for group activities, one to one support and grants is £966,000. However, not all of the services have been fully taken up. The actual spend in the financial year 2013-14 totalled £756,761. The budget for the proposed new approach would be £516,000.

It is estimated that the proposed budget of £366,000 for flexible one-to-one support would provide some 295 children and young people with support that costs in the region of £1,240. Currently, 254 are getting flexible one-to-one support and 345 are choosing a short break grant, approximately 11 % of the families receiving this support are getting a combination of the both.

Your views:

The need to consider new ways of working gives us the opportunity to do things differently, to deliver support in a way that best suits a young person and their family. Your views are very important to us and we want you to have a say in deciding what services and support you would like to be available to disabled children, young people and their families in the future.

We want to know what you think about the proposals that will reduce spending on services for disabled young people and their families, the proposed targeted approach, the proposed eligibility criteria and the proposed interim arrangements. We would also be interested in hearing any suggestions you may have for alternative ways of providing support or how things could be done differently to ensure that families affected by the proposals continue to be supported.