

BUSINESS CASE



HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND SPECIALIST SHORT BREAK SERVICE

Confidential

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I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Evidence shows that short breaks make a positive impact on disabled children and their families' lives and provide support for families to be resilient and able to continue to care for their disabled child. Short breaks services are part of an early intervention strategy rather than a response to crisis and are an integral part of a commissioning approach which ensures there is a good level of provision to meet the needs of the families.
- 1.2 Children and young people who have significant additional needs or a disability may miss out on positive interaction with peers and the wider community as their social skills are often underdeveloped. This may lead to isolation from family members and the community, with the child or young person becoming disengaged with learning, which can in turn significantly reduce their life opportunities and prevent them from achieving their full potential. The spectrum of needs within the cohort makes it important that the opportunities offered are varied with options for different interests, ages, ability and communication and independence skills.
- 1.3 The Short Breaks Statement highlights the differing type of services defined under the Short Break Local Offer in Plymouth. As a part of this offer Plymouth City Council currently commission a specialist weekend and holiday short break service which is targeted to meet the needs of children and young people who have complex or severe physical, learning disabilities or other complex additional needs. The current contract has been in place since 1st April 2016 and expires in March 2022.
- 1.4 The specialist service:-
- Is accessed as part of a package of care that supports parents to continue to manage the needs of the children and young people at home
 - Enables these children and young people to develop the personal and social skills that come from day to day interaction with their peers within community settings.
 - Contributes towards the development of the confidence of the children and young people through providing opportunities for them to participate in inclusive play, leisure and social activities.
- 1.5 This paper explores the options for the future of this service, and recommends Plymouth City Council tender for a replacement service for 3 years. The annual cost of the Block contract element is approximately £90,000 (total contract value £270,000) with a framework contract for the spot purchasing arrangements with typical annual spend of £60,000.

2. NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY DRIVERS.

- 2.1 In April 2011 the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 came into force. Under this Duty, local authorities are legally bound to provide a range of short breaks services including:
- day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
 - overnight 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 the school holidays.
- 2.2 Plymouth has consulted with parents about the type of short breaks they would want for their child and how these can be accessed. Parents have told us that they value the

activities and support which enable their child to be included in mainstream activities but that they also want to be able to access specialist activities that they felt were essential for those children and young people with more complex needs.

- 2.3 Evidence gathered nationally shows that within mainstream facilities and venues, poor disability awareness and related skills on the part of staff was frequently cited as a barrier to participation for disabled young people in positive activities (EDCM 2008; Keil *et al* 2001; Kelly 2005; Ludvigsen *et al* 2005; Petrie and Poland 1998; Petrie *et al* 2007; Turner 2003). In addition, there is evidence nationally of disabled children and young people being excluded from mainstream positive activities, or their level of participation constrained, due to misinformed staff (Keil *et al* 2001; Petrie *et al* 2007).
- 2.4 Many disabled children can access their short break either through inclusion support into mainstream activities or from targeted groups that offer additional support and limited numbers of children attending. However, for a small number of children and young people a specialist service is the only way that they are able to safely access a group activity.

3. NEEDS AND MARKET ANALYSIS

- 3.1 In addition to the social and emotional benefits of positive activities for disabled children and young people, short break services enable parents to continue caring for their disabled child at home and reduce family stress. Short breaks are an integral part of an early intervention strategy. Having a good level and range of provision that consistently meets the needs of the families requiring support prevents crises arising later on.
- 3.2 Research demonstrates that timeliness, reliability and regularity of short breaks are a key factor to families feeling able to continue caring for their disabled child. Families often need less support if they have easier and speedier access to more and varied opportunities than if they have to wait for more specialist services. However, some children's needs are complex and they require a specialist service in order to provide them with opportunities and to keep them safe.
- 3.3 The market position statement for short breaks provides the detail of the short break market place of which this business case is addressing the specialist day provision section of the market.
- 3.3 The specialist short break market for holiday day activities and weekend support in Plymouth has been developed in recent years to provide families with choice and control over the way that they and their children access short break services. The proposal outlined below will continue to provide families with choice and control over their break from caring.
- 3.9 Some families choose to access their short breaks through direct payments and make their own arrangements for the care of their child using a trusted adult while they have a break from caring. It is likely that families who access their short breaks through Direct Payments will continue to access their short breaks in this way. The number of families making this choice has remained relatively stable and is likely to remain at or around 100 families.

4. CURRENT OFFER

The current provision is delivered via a block contract and framework contract.

There are around 60 children in total attending one or more of the Holiday and Weekend day activity provision:

- 19 children aged between 8 to 17 currently attend Adventure Breaks
- 32 children aged between 8 to 17 currently attend the Beckly Centre
- 11 children aged between 5 and 7 currently attend Radford Rascals

Adventure Breaks - Outdoor Based Activity Days (8 Places block purchased)

The current offer is a block contract for 8 places on a Saturday weekly throughout the year with children accessing a place once a fortnight. The children are taken out and about to participate in activities in the environment in and around Plymouth e.g. Beachcombing, canoeing, Gorge walking, Moors Walking etc.

The offer also includes two days a week in the holidays with children accessing one day a week as part of their package.

Beckley Centre - Centre Based Activity Days(All places spot purchased)

The current offer is a block contract for 8 places on a Saturday weekly throughout the year with children accessing a place once a fortnight. The children access a centre where they participate in activities that are quieter and meet their needs in a more nurturing environment. These include sensory activities, soft play, arts and crafts, cooking etc. The offer also includes two days a week in the holidays with children accessing one day a week as part of their package.

Radford Rascals - After School Activity (8 places block purchased)

The offer here is for young children who might struggle to manage a whole day away from their family in an activity centre. The children are taken to the centre by school transport and then taken home by the provider. This allows the families to have an evening break. The children are then offered a day a fortnight in the holidays.

The services are meeting the needs of the children. There have been some issues in the last 18 months due to additional restrictions on numbers attending the service due to the Covid pandemic.

Brokerage

The current offer provides brokerage for Direct Access activities and the Inclusion Service Funding provided by Plymouth City Council to support children with additional needs to access holiday activities. This forms part of the Local Authorities Early Help Offer. The broker acts as first point of contact for parents, carers and professionals seeking short break advice for services to meet the needs of their child. The broker will follow the criteria set out by Plymouth City Council to determine whether Inclusion Funding can be provided to support the setting/provider with appropriate staffing levels to support the child and advise Plymouth City Council accordingly. The broker will assess whether the needs of the child are such that universal and targeted services cannot meet those needs and refer to the SEND Short Breaks team for a specialist assessment of needs where needed.

This service greatly reduces the impact on Plymouth City Council staffing levels as this was previously provided in-house from the SEND Service.

5. PROJECT SCOPE

- 5.1 The need for the specialist weekend and holiday support service is likely to continue at its current level as this has been relatively stable over the last 5 -10 years with between 50 – 60 children and young people accessing the service. These are young people with the most complex needs who are not able to access the direct access activities or to be included in mainstream activities. The main outcome of the package of care is to enable children to remain in the family home and to prevent children coming into care and potentially being placed out of area in a high cost residential school setting.

- 5.2 The service was completely redesigned 10 years ago within the redesign of Short Break services as a result of the Aiming High grant and continues to meet the needs of the children and young people that access it as well as providing a much needed short break for families.
- 5.3 The holiday and weekend specialist support service delivers activities that are valued by parents and their disabled children as they offer opportunities for their children to participate in activities that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. These include hill walking, climbing, canoeing ice skating going and other activities that the young people enjoy. The young people plan many of the activities themselves which helps them to engage with choice and consequences which are an integral part of growing up.
- 5.4 In order to maximise the Short Breaks Budget some of the places are block purchased to enable the provider to manage the numbers and ensure that the activities offered are cost effective. The remainder are spot purchased against the framework contract so that only those places used are funded by the budget.
- 5.5 There is an agreed cancellation policy for funding of places to minimise the loss to the Council if a family choose not to take a place that is offered without providing adequate notice to the provider. This allows them to offer the available place to another family.

6. OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR FUTURE OF THE SERVICE

6.1 Option 1 Do nothing

The contract will expire on 31 March 2022. This would leave families without a service that is highly valued and depended upon for the ongoing care needs of complex children. It could also leave Plymouth City Council open to challenge in respect to the delivery of its statutory duty.

This option is not recommended.

6.2 Option 2 Extend the contract for the service

This service was tendered five years ago, so is now due for tender under procurement legislation, with no clear case for extension.

There is potentially an opportunity to extend the contract to provide the time to review the need for this offer, or redesign the service.

This option is not recommended as families continue to tell us that they value the service and that it meets their needs. This is demonstrated by the feedback received by the current provider and by our own SEND teams.

6.3 Option 3 Tender the service for a 3 year contract

Benefits

This will provide continuity of offer for children and young people with complex needs, supporting their families to continue to manage their needs.

The service is working well and is valued by families.

This is in line with procurement legislation requirements which require us to competitively procure this service, which was last tendered 5 years ago.

This option is recommended.

7. COSTS

The current cost of the service is described in the table below and is approximately £90,000 and it is anticipated that the costs will remain reasonably stable as the service is purchased on a block booking basis and families receive a standard package.

Service	Current Value 2021/22 Budget	Proposed Value Per annum
Outdoor Activity Days	£46,168.80	£50,000
After School Sessions	£26,481.60	£30,000
Brokerage	£10,000	£10,000
Spot Purchasing arrangements	£131,000	£131,000
Total costs	£213,650.4	£221,000

The framework contract spot purchasing costs are purchased on an individual basis for each child as required.

The total cost for the services for the period of the contract is anticipated to be £270,000 for the block contracts with an additional spot purchased spend of up to £393,000 across the life of the contract.

8. ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The service provides vital support for families of disabled children with complex needs. The specialist short break service will benefit families and enable them to have a family life supporting their own mental health and physical health needs as well as continuing to care for their disabled child.

There is evidence nationally that participating in positive activities impacts positively on disabled children's outcomes in terms of physical and psychological wellbeing.

Using inclusive services and mainstream community facilities can be a negative experience for disabled children and young people because of the negative attitudes and behaviours of peer group users, staff and members of the public.

Taking part in positive activities can be an important source of enjoyment for disabled children and young people. It would appear that the social aspects of doing a positive activity can be as, or even more, important as the activity itself.

The opportunity to experience success has been identified as a further potential outcome of participating in positive activities. More specifically, positive activities can allow disabled children and young people to learn and develop skills, both those specific to an activity (for example, a particular sport) but also more generic life skills.

Positive activities can also provide a means by which disabled children can make a positive contribution to their local communities. There is evidence that inclusive positive activities help to promote disabled children and young people's sense of belonging to their local community.

The retender of the service will provide an opportunity to ensure that value for money is achieved through the competitive process and will provide an opportunity to develop the service and bring in innovation and new ideas.

In addition the service will develop a staff skill set that can work with the children in the cohort to provide a high quality service that can offer a choice of opportunities for children and young people that will respond to their likes and dislikes as well as meet their needs appropriately.

9. RISKS

This service has been delivered for a number of years and families depend on the short breaks provided by the service for their disabled children. If it was decided not to commission a specialist short break service this would have a significant impact on families' ability to continue to care for their disabled child and may result in a number of children with complex needs no longer being cared for in their family home but having to go into residential care.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
There is a risk that the market is not able to deliver the high quality service that is needed to support the children with the most complex needs	Medium	Low	Investment in training over the last few years along with market development has mitigated this risk. The framework contract will encourage new providers into the market place which will mitigate the risk further
More families may choose to find short break support in other ways.	Medium	Low	This is not something that is anticipated but should be identified as a potential risk. The learning from pathfinder authorities and from parent consultation is that families within this cohort are already stretched in maintaining their caring role and do not want to add the management of the short break service on top of that.
TUPE of staff may take longer than anticipated and may prove problematic	High	Medium	Learning from previous tender exercises will inform the way that the TUPE is dealt with. The main impact will be to the targeted part of the service as there is one member of staff who may be eligible for TUPE transfer although it is not known whether the % of her role will tip it into TUPE arrangements.
Timing slips into the new year before tender is up and running	High	Medium	It is vital that the timescale is maintained so that the new service will be up and running allowing sufficient time for any TUPE transfers before the end of the current contract.

10 HIGH LEVEL MILESTONE PLAN

Action	Date
Sign off on business case and Tender documentation	30 th September 2021
Single stage ITT issued	4 th Oct 2021
Deadline for submission	18 th November 2021
ITT Evaluation	18 th November – 30 th November 2021
Standstill	1 st – 15 th Dec2021
Contract Award	4 th January 2022
New service implementation	1 st April 2022

7.. RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is recommended that Option 3 is taken where the service is tendered in a competitive procurement process to be undertaken between October 2021 and January 2022. The process will be a single stage tender exercise which will be in line with the procurement legislation and contract standing orders. The tender will be divided into 4 lots which are described above and will be

Lot 1 Block Contract Group Based Weekend and Holiday support activities

Lot 2 Block Contract Group based after school activities

Lot 3 Brokerage Contract

Lot 4 Framework Contracts to deliver group based Weekend and Holiday Support