

Short Breaks consultation Response

May 2017



Oldham
Council

Oldham Council engaged Action Together to carry out impartial stakeholder consultation on the current short breaks offer, taking into consideration the experiences of children, young people and families (including through representative groups such as Parent Carer Forums), voluntary and community sector providers and local Healthwatch.

Information from this consultation will, together with an audit of needs identified via EHC plans and support plans, contribute to future arrangements and the effectiveness of local joint working. Joint commissioning arrangements will be based on evidence about which services, support and interventions are an effective and efficient use of the local authority's resources.

You Said	We Are Doing
The current short breaks activities are good quality and are valued by families, children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are liaising with current providers to ensure they are aware of the 2017 tender opportunities to enable them to apply to continue providing short breaks where appropriate. • Providers will be able to access the short breaks consultation report on the local offer website.
There is not enough variety in the short breaks offer currently, and not enough capacity for the numbers of young people who would benefit from them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have reviewed the individual needs of children and young people who are currently receiving a package of short breaks, either through a direct payment element of a personal budget or through a centrally commissioned short break provider. • A new specification has been designed for the short breaks local offer which encourages providers to be more diverse in the short breaks offered and specifies numbers expected to engage in these short breaks.
Key gaps in the offer include school holidays, daytime activities, animal based activities (including horse riding) outdoor activities,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the new specification for the short breaks offer, we have specified the need for providers to offer a range of provision at particular times to ensure choice and suitability for children and young people.

You Said	We Are Doing
<p>group work/ social activities, sensory activities, provision for young children and young people with complex needs, weekend activities and activities that are age and stage appropriate for 15-18 year olds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have included need to increase the offer for young people 15-18 years old.
<p>There is an issue around how families access information about what sort of information is available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local offer website is currently being reviewed and we are involving parents and carers in this review. • The aim is to ensure the website is easy to navigate and information is clear and simple. • We are also now exploring other ways that this information can be accessed by families.
<p>The local offer website does not give families enough detail about what is on offer and is difficult to find and navigate through</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a review of the local offer website being undertaken to ensure it is clear, accessible and holds the right information for families and young people.
<p>Schools would be the ideal place for parents to get information about what is available, and whilst some families feel that special schools are good at giving this information, most families felt that they could do more to provide families with information about the local offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will discuss with schools and colleges how information regarding short breaks can be more accessible. • This may include each SENCO having a list of short breaks available and the criteria for access. • More specialist training may also be possible to ensure school support staff can support families and young people in accessing the local offer website.
<p>The families of children and young people in mainstream schools get little if any information from schools about short break activities, and they feel this should be improved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with SENCO's in schools to ensure they have good knowledge around the short break local offer and accessibility criteria. • We will work with the primary and secondary school leaders to raise awareness.

You Said	We Are Doing
<p>There is a lack of clarity about who is eligible for short breaks and if particular short breaks activities are assessed or non-assessed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the revised local offer, each short break available will outline the criteria to access it. For example - open access or through assessment and whether additional places can be bought directly by families. • If a short break provider is charging a parental contribution, this will also be on the local offer website. • This information will also be held by short breaks workers and social workers.
<p>There is a lack of clarity about the process for being assessed for a personal budget, and families who have been through the process feel that there is a lack of understanding from professionals, and so they don't feel clear about the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process is currently being reviewed. • We know that many families who require a short break do not need to have an allocated social worker and we are exploring a simpler assessment and the development of a short breaks team for those who do not need to have an allocated social worker. • This will enable swift and suitable access to the short breaks local offer. • The process will be mapped out and will be available on the local offer website.
<p>Families feel there is inconsistencies across professionals about what a personal budget can be spent on, and that it depends on who your social worker is as to what you are able to use your budget for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All professionals working with personal budgets will receive refresher training. • A clear support plan has now been developed to ensure consistency and that families and young people understand what their personal budget can be spent on. • Social workers and short breaks workers will work with families to complete support plans to ensure consistency and transparency. • A resource panel has also been set up to provide consistency in decision making and support plans are brought to panel to request packages of support.
<p>On the whole families like the flexibility and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a simple assessment for those families who do not

You Said	We Are Doing
control over a personal budget and feel that it better meets the needs of their children, however there are a number of process issues which make it challenging	<p>require social care services will make the process much easier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are also reviewing the personal budget policy with parents and carers to ensure it is clear, accessible and transparent. • The short breaks statement will be updated to reflect the new arrangements
Families who use brokerage services in the main feels that this supports them and is in many cases the only way they could manage the budget. Many families felt that it was unfair that this service was paid for out from their child's budget, and it meant that their child had less support than their needs required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oldham is committed to continuing to use brokerage services as we recognise the benefits of these for families. • Families may also choose not to use a brokerage service but to manage the package themselves. • The budget arising from the RAS is only an indicative budget and therefore we would not reduce the package being received because there is a broker involved.
Families feel that there is not the range of services that they would like to buy with their budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families have a choice of receiving a personal budget or a centrally commissioned service. • We understand families have struggled to find the right support through personal budgets. • The service specification for short breaks from October 2017 asks providers to ensure that the services they provide are also available to children/young people with direct payment element of a personal budget. • If families do want to manage any package through a personal budget, their allocated social worker, short breaks worker or broker can support them in accessing services. • Families can at any time decide they do not want their personal budget any longer if this is not working and change to a centrally commissioned service
There seems to be an issue around recruitment and retention of PA's. Many families reported difficulties in finding and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working with families receiving direct payments to move to a centrally commissioned service to provide PA support if they wish to do so.

You Said	We Are Doing
keeping PA's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are also asking in the tender for organisations to make their PA's available to be purchased directly by families via a personal budget
<p>Families feel like the information and support to parents about personal budgets and short breaks is lacking and inconsistent, and they would like a resource that helps them understand the language around it, the assessment and process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a short breaks team will be able to provide specialist knowledge around personal budgets and short breaks. Social workers and short breaks staff will receive additional training on the short breaks offer. • The eligibility criteria for short breaks has been revised to make it easier to understand for families and young people. • We are reviewing the short breaks policy to ensure it is easier to understand. • The process to access short breaks will be available on the local offer website. • There is now a standard support plan which is simpler for families and young people to understand and complete.