

# SHORT BREAKS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

## COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

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## **1. Introduction**

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### **1.1. Background**

Short breaks and respite form part of the continuum of services giving disabled children and young people positive experiences, whilst, at the same time, giving a break to their primary carers. The breaks are designed to contribute to the children's personal and social development, reducing social isolation and preventing family breakdown.

Short breaks and respite can be delivered in a variety of ways whether in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in an approved community setting and can last from a few hours to a few days, depending on the need. Day services cover a range of activities including enabling, sitting services, individual support and group based activities.

In Barnet to date, 'respite care' has been used to describe more intensive interventions agreed with the Disabled Children's Team that aim to prevent family breakdown and escalations of costs in care. However, short breaks and respite services are essentially the same – they allow parents and carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities and give children and young people the opportunity to try something new. As such, short breaks and respite services will now be described as part of the same continuum of service delivery and the term 'short breaks' will be used throughout this strategy in order to describe all service provision, including respite care.

In Barnet, short breaks services are offered to disabled children with additional and complex needs between the ages of 0 and 19 years old and their families who live within the boundaries of the London Borough of Barnet.

Children and young people are eligible for Short Breaks if they:

- Have a diagnosis of severe Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) - they are likely to have other impairments such as Severe Learning Disabilities or behaviours which challenge. Children in this group will display behaviour which challenges services or behaviour which causes injury to themselves or others. These are described as Group A.
- Have complex health needs, life limiting conditions and / or associated difficulties such as severe cognitive or sensory impairments. These are described as Group B.

### **1.2. Objectives**

We aim to commission services that provide children and young people with enjoyable experiences that help them with their personal, social and educational development. Short breaks will give parents and carers a valuable break, allowing them to rest, pursue other interests or spend time with other family members.

We recognise that each family's needs are different and for this reason will commission a range of provision suitable to meet the varied needs of different families and children of all ages. Many families will want to personalise their support still further and through the provision of a direct payment and support planning advice

we will enable them to do this. For families that prefer the Council to purchase short breaks on their behalf, we will directly commission the following categories of services:

- Help to enable eligible disabled children to access universal services.
- Targeted services available to eligible disabled children and young people.
- Specialist services for children and young people with more complex needs.

The key objectives of the commissioning strategy are to:

- Ensure services are allocated fairly and targeted at those who most need them.
- Provide children and families with more choice and control.
- Improve outcomes and satisfaction with short breaks.
- Commission services that provide improved value for money
- Enable eligible disabled children to undertake education, training or regular leisure activity,
- Help families to carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household

### **1.3. Outcomes**

We will commission services that contribute to outcomes, including the following:

For disabled children and young people:

- Improved physical health through physical activities.
- Improved emotional health and well-being.
- Enjoyment of short breaks.
- Safe and stable home lives.
- Learn and develop skills and abilities that help growth into adulthood.

For the parents / carers and families of disabled children:

- Improved quality of life for parents / carers and family.
- Improved emotional well-being.
- Family environment is sustainable and rewarding.
- Parents / carers have more time to do other things (e.g. leisure, work, study, spending time with other children).

The services will also contribute to achieving the following long term outcomes:

- Families have increased choice and greater control over the services they receive.
- Disabled children are able to stay with their families without the need for higher level interventions Reduction in need for unplanned placements in residential units.

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## **2. Policy Context**

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### **2.1. Local context**

Barnet is the second most populous borough in London, with 364,481 residents, of which 85,548 are children and young people aged under-18. Barnet will continue to be a place of growth over the next five years, with the greatest growth concentrated in the west of the borough. Alongside this future growth is the pressure of increasing financial constraints, which makes imperative the need to analyse, plan and deliver cost effective services, both now and in the future.

#### **2.1.1. Corporate priorities**

Barnet believes all children and young people should have the opportunity to achieve their potential, to enable them to become successful adults.

The Council's strategic objectives include *supporting families and individuals that need it; promoting independence, learning and well-being*. In seeking to achieve this objective, we aim to create better life chances for children and young people across the borough.

The Corporate Plan 2013-2016 includes the strategic priority 'support families and individuals that need it – promoting independence, learning and wellbeing'. This includes a commitment to help ensure that services are integrated to support young people as they transition to adulthood.

Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2013-16 includes the priorities 'enable those with Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, and complex needs to achieve their potential' and 'take a whole family approach to improving outcomes for children and young people'.

Short breaks services contribute to these priorities by enabling disabled children and young people to develop their skills, including skills that develop their independence, and to have positive experiences, while enabling their parents/carers to take a break from their caring responsibilities as part of a whole family approach.

#### **2.1.2. Recent changes to short breaks commissioning**

The re-commissioning process for short breaks for disabled children started in the autumn of 2013 with a public consultation on the current and future provision of short breaks services. Changes to the eligibility criteria were consulted on at this point and then implemented in autumn 2013. This consultation informed a large part of the needs assessment for the re-commissioning.

At the end of 2013 there was a budget consultation process whereby savings were proposed from commissioned services within Children's Services. After an in-depth analysis of service utilisation, a number of efficiencies and some reductions were identified in order to address duplications in service provision and ensure that families with the highest needs received appropriate support. Following the consultation the budget was approved at Council on 4 March 2014.

Reductions in funding have led to some representations from organisations whose budgets have been affected, most notably Mapledown School. This resulted in a

Council call-in to the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 23 April 2014. The reason for the call-in was 'To ask about the variation to funding of these organisations, including Mapledown School' and the objective was 'To refer the decision to the appropriate commissioning committee to re-consider the variation in funding'. During that meeting a decision was made to restore funding to Mapledown School for one year, due to the high and complex needs of the families of children attending this particular school.

At the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee on 29 July 2014 it was agreed to receive this commissioning strategy on 29 July 2014 and to underwrite the Council's funding to OOPS for the provision of a summer play scheme to the value of the Council's funding in 13/14 of £21k.

## **2.2. National context and legislation**

### ***Carers agenda***

The government's policy on carers is set out in Recognised, valued and supported: Next steps for the Carer's Strategy (DH 2010). This identifies four priority areas:

- Supporting those with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as carers at an early stage, recognising the value of their contribution and involving them from the outset both in designing local care provision and in planning individual care packages.
- Enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential.
- Personalised support both for carers and those they support, enabling them to have a family and community life.
- Supporting carers to remain mentally and physically well.

### ***Children and Families Act 2014***

This new legislation will begin to come in to force in September 2014 and will reform services for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. The aim is to provide children, young people and their parents with greater control and choice in decisions and make sure their needs are properly met.

A revised SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 was laid before Parliament on 11 June 2014. It must be approved by Parliament before it comes into force on 1 September 2014. The code provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations. The current code of practice remains in force until 1 September 2014.

The Act and draft code of practice introduce a number of changes that impact on short breaks services including the following:

- Local authorities will have to promote the integration of special educational needs services with health and social care services such as short breaks.
- The council will have to publish a "Local Offer" setting out what services will be available to children and young people with SEN, this offer will include short breaks.
- Introducing arrangements for carrying out integrated education, health and care needs assessments and preparing Education, Health and Care Plans for those who need them.
- Young people and parents will have the right to request a personal budget if they are going to have an EHC plan.

## **Children Act 1989**

Short breaks can be provided by local authorities through the use of their powers under:

- Section 17(6) of the 1989 Act which gives local authorities the power to provide a range of services, including accommodation, in order to discharge their general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need;
- Section 20(4) of the 1989 Act which gives local authorities the power to provide accommodation “for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child’s welfare.”

Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act (amended by s.25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) provides that local authorities must provide services designed:

- To minimise the effect on disabled children within their area of their disabilities; and
- To give such children the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible.

## **The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011**

These Regulations describe how local authorities must perform the Schedule 2 duty above. Regulation 3 says local authorities must:

- Have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks from caring were given to them; and
- Have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from caring were given to them to allow them to –
  - Undertake education, training or regular leisure activity,
  - Meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or
  - Carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

Regulation 4 provides that local authorities must provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a range of services which is sufficient to help carers to continue to provide care or to do so more effectively. In particular the local authority must provide, as appropriate, a range of:

- 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, and
- Services available to help carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

Regulation 5 requires that local authorities prepare a short breaks statement for carers in their area setting out:

- Details of the range of services provided;
- Eligibility criteria for those services, and;
- How the services are designed to meet the needs of carers.

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### **3. Needs analysis**

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#### **3.1. Data and trends**

There is no single source of data for children and young people in Barnet with disabilities and additional needs, therefore a range of national and local data sources have been used including:

- Barnet Census, 2011
- Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2011-15
- Barnet School Census, January 2013
- Office for National Statistics (ONS), February 2013
- Greater London Authority (GLA) population projection data, 2012
- Barnet Council's Special Educational Needs (SEN) database, August 2013
- Barnet Council's Common Assessment Framework (CAF) database, August 2013
- Barnet Council's Disabled Children's Register, August 2013
- Barnet Council's Short Breaks database, September 2013
- Family Resources Survey 2011/12 carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

##### **3.1.1. National prevalence data**

The national Family Resources Survey 2011/12 carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates the number of people with a long-standing illness, disability or impairment which causes substantial difficulty with day-to-day activities. It is estimated that 3% of 0-4 year olds, 7% of 5-9 year olds, 8% of 10-14 year olds and 7% of 15-19 year olds have a disability.

##### **3.1.2. Local data**

In the School Census carried out in January 2014, a total of 54,277 pupils were on Barnet's school rolls. Of these, 10,792 children were classed as have Special Educational Needs (SEN). This represents approximately 20% of the total school roll population. Of these, 5,822 are receiving School Action Support, 3,438 are receiving School Action Plus support and 1,532 have statements of SEN. An additional 315 children in Barnet have a statement of SEN and attend schools outside of the borough.

##### Gender

- Of those children with SEN on school rolls, the majority are boys (61%).
- Similar gender divisions are found in all other datasets:
  - 74% of children with statements of SEN attending out of borough schools are boys.
  - 74% of children aged 0-19 on Barnet's disabled children's register are boys.



### Age

- The children classed as SEN on Barnet's school rolls are mostly in the 5-9 and 10-14 age cohorts – 79% of all children with SEN are aged 5 to 14.
- Similar distributions are found in other datasets:
  - The largest age cohort on Barnet's Disabled Children's Register is the 5-9 cohort (32%), followed by the 10-14 cohort (29%), 15-19 cohort (27%) and the 0-4 cohort (12%).
  - The 5-10 and 11-15 cohorts have a greater number of Disability Living Allowance claimants in comparison to the 0-5 and 16-17 cohorts.
- Older children with SEN are more likely to attend out of borough schools - 45% are aged 15-19 and 37% are aged 10-14.
- The findings suggests that there are higher numbers of children aged 5-9 and 10-14 eligible to use Short Breaks services in comparison to those aged 0-4 and 15-19. The 5-9 and 10-14 cohorts are also expected to have the largest population growths between 2012 and 2021, meaning that there is likely to be an increased demand for Short Breaks services for these age ranges.

### Location

- The highest numbers of children on the school rolls with SEN are concentrated within the Burnt Oak, Colindale and Underhill wards.
- Colindale, West Hendon, Childs Hill, Golders Green, Hendon and Mill Hill are expected to have the largest population growth of children and young people aged 0-19 between 2012 and 2018 and therefore there may be an increase in demand for Short Breaks services in these localities.

### Disability type

- Of the 3,439 children on Barnet's maintained school rolls who have a statement of SEN or are in receipt of School Action Plus support, the main presenting needs are:
  - speech, language and communication needs (898 children),
  - behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (634 children), and
  - autistic spectrum disorders (500 children).
- There are similar findings in other datasets:
  - The main presenting needs of children with statements of SEN attending schools outside of Barnet are autistic spectrum disorders (27% of children) and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (20% of children).
  - The most frequently occurring needs of children recorded on the Barnet Disabled Children's Register are speech language and communication needs (200 children) and autistic spectrum disorders (143 children).

- For claimants of the Disability Living Allowance, the most frequently stated disability was learning difficulties (890 children aged 0-17 and 290 young people aged 18-24).
- Overall, the findings suggest that more children have learning, behavioural, emotional and social needs as opposed to physical disabilities.
- The school rolls shows that boys are more likely than girls to have autistic spectrum disorders or speech, language and communication needs. Whereas girls are more likely than boys to have moderate learning difficulties, physical disabilities or other difficulties / disabilities.
- Based on data from the school census, the 0-4 age cohort tends to have speech, language and communication needs. Behaviour, emotional and social difficulties become more common in the 5-9 and 10-14 cohorts. The 15-19 age cohort is more likely than younger cohorts to have other difficulties / disabilities and moderate learning difficulties.

### Ethnicity

According to GLA population data, 37% of Barnet's 0 to 18 population are from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, whilst 63% are white. The breakdown is as follows:

White 51,474 – 56.9%

Black Caribbean 995 -1.1%

Black African 8142- 9.0%

Black other 3,799 – 4.2%

Indian 7,148 – 8.2%

Pakistani 2,171 – 2.4%

Bangladeshi 814 – 0.9%

Chinese 1,990 – 2.2%

Other Asian 4,342 – 4.8%

Other 9,227 – 10.2%

This breakdown is reflected in those currently accessing short breaks services. There is some under-representation from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicities but this may be just a case of description as when the percentages for the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Other Asian statistics are added together for short breaks users they are more comparable to the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Asian figures for the borough as a whole.

Ethnicity breakdown for short break service users:

White – 390 – 61%

Black Caribbean – 26 – 4.0%

Black African – 68 – 10.5%

Black Other – 18 – 2.8%  
Indian -1 – 0.1%  
Pakistani 5- 0.7%  
Bangladeshi 6 – 0.9%  
Chinese -15 – 2.3%  
Other Asian - 76 – 11.8%  
Other - 37- 5.7%  
Total 642

#### Location

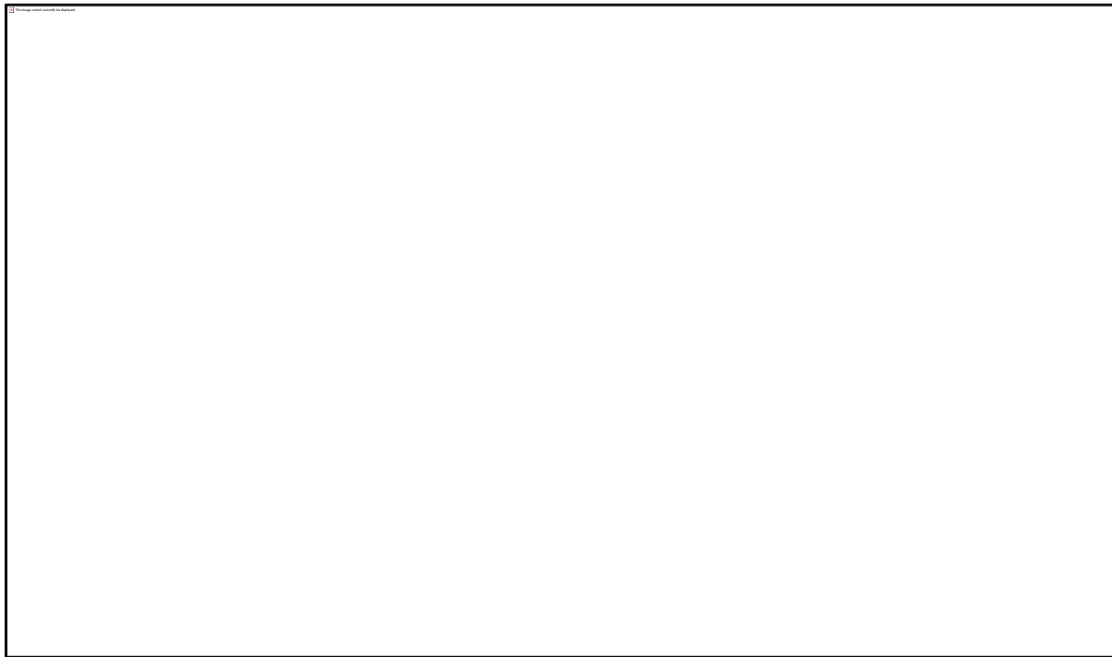
- The highest numbers of children on the school rolls with SEN are concentrated within the Burnt Oak, Colindale and Underhill wards.
- Colindale, West Hendon, Childs Hill, Golders Green, Hendon and Mill Hill are expected to have the largest population growth of children and young people aged 0-19 between 2012 and 2018 and therefore there may be an increase in demand for Short Breaks services in these localities.

#### **3.1.3. Current users of Short Breaks services**

There are a total of 870 current users of Short Breaks services aged 0-19.

- The profile of current users of Short Breaks services largely reflect the findings above:
  - 71% of current Short Breaks service users are boys.
  - The largest age cohort using Short Breaks services is 5-9 (34%) followed by the 10-14 cohort (31%).
  - All wards access Short Breaks – with the highest number of service users living in the Burnt Oak, Golders Green, Hale and Colindale wards.
  - The most frequently occurring needs are Autistic Spectrum Conditions (affecting 53% of service users) and Speech and Language Difficulties (affecting 49% of service users), whilst 21% have physical difficulties.
- An additional 17 families accessed over-night respite in 2013/14.

The chart below shows the disabilities recorded for all Short Breaks service users. Many service users may have more than one disability and therefore the number of disabilities recorded (1,940) is larger than the number of service users (870).



### **3.2. Consultation feedback**

Barnet Council consulted with residents between 23 September and 21 October 2013 to find out their views about the current and future delivery of short breaks services. The purpose was to help us understand to what extent current services are meeting the needs of families and how we can improve short breaks service delivery in the future. In particular, the consultation sought the views of families in relation to three key areas:

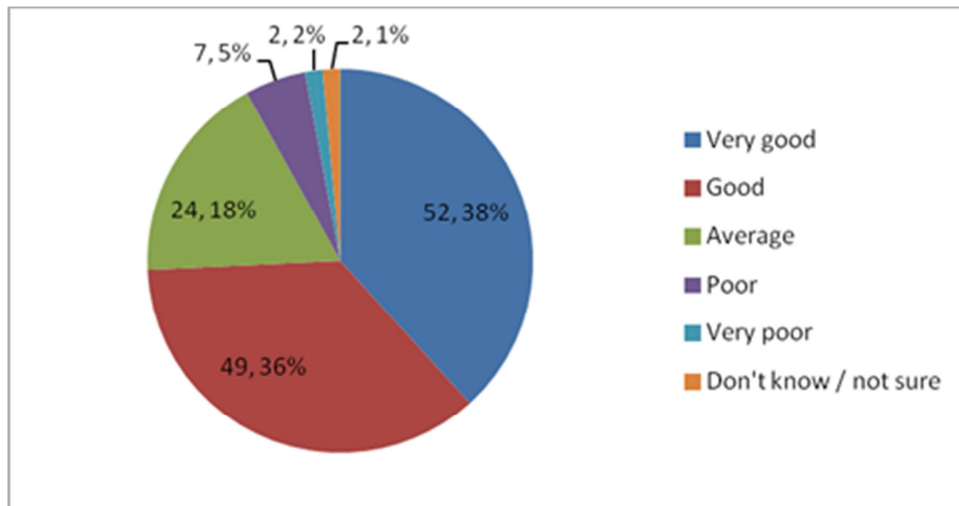
1. Activities and service delivery
2. Communication
3. Eligibility criteria

The consultation achieved a good response rate:

- 213 people completed a survey
  - 200 parents / carers
  - 9 children / young people
  - 4 professionals / other / not stated
- 23 parents / carers / professionals attended focus groups
- 4 disabled children were individually consulted

#### *Activities and service delivery*

The majority of respondents (74%) rated the short breaks service as “good” or “very good” and many parents / carers expressed how much they value the support they receive for themselves and their children.



There were a number of different reasons why some parents/ carers reported dissatisfaction with the service. The most frequent reasons for parents being unable to access services were:

**1. Unsuitability of dates and times**

- It was recognised by parents that there will always be instances where dates and times clash with their plans and schedules. However, it was suggested that this could be prevented if short breaks were able to communicate activities earlier, to allow parents to plan their schedules.

**2. Activities being inappropriate for their child's needs**

- Parents and carers of children with very high needs and they felt that there was a limited choice of providers for their children. Parents noted only one or two providers which offered activities that meet the individual needs of their children and which they could trust to provide the necessary care.

**3. Activities being inappropriate for their child's age**

- Parents in the survey commented that they were unable to access any services at all because their children were too young (under five years old)
- Parents felt that there is a limited choice of suitable activities for young people aged over 16:

*"I recognise that there has to be a broad provision for different ages and abilities and in this sense I think it is good. The main problem for us is that as the children get older their interests change and other participants need to be around similar abilities in terms of accessing the activity... It would be nice if it included some progression for those that get older and ideally could be teaching a greater level of skills."*

Parent / carer response

#### **4. Lack of appropriate support workers**

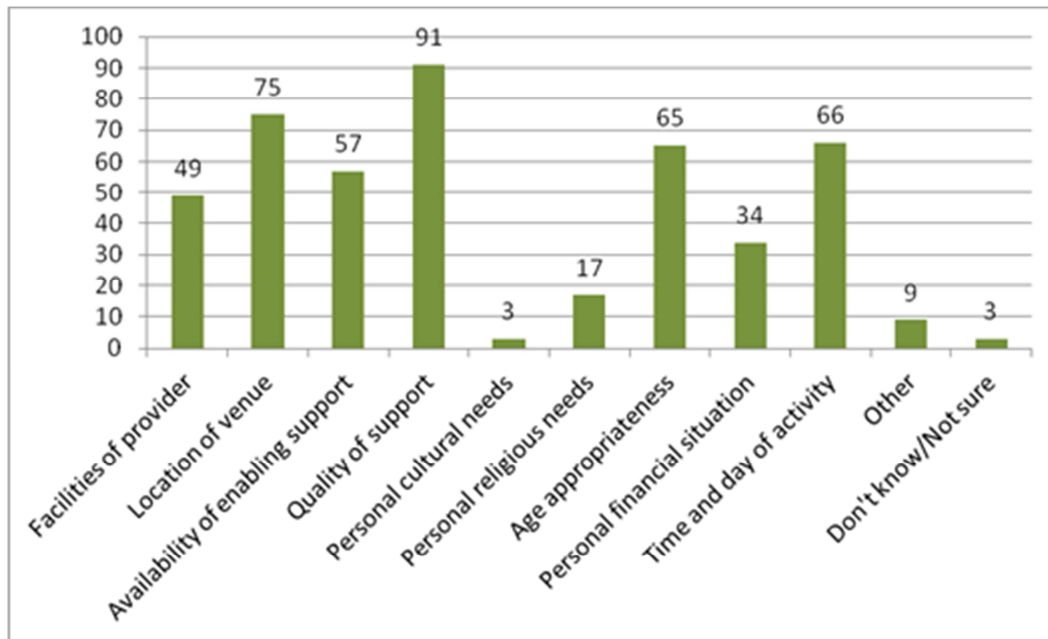
- Parents / carers noted that sometimes they felt dissatisfied with the provision of support workers and would like more consistency. They felt that sometimes the support workers did not sufficiently meet their expectations in terms of working with and understanding their child's needs.

*"The most important factors for me are: (a) understanding what my entitlement is and what my options are, (b) agreeing the provision well in advance so that I can plan around it and get the benefit and (c) consistency of support worker"*

Parent / carer response

Parents / carers like to have a choice of different activities delivered by quality providers, with staff who understand the needs of their child. It is important for activities to be easily accessible and parents indicated that they would like to be able to access activities at various times, including weekday afternoons, weekends and over-nights.

The chart below shows what parents / carers felt were important to them when they chose short breaks activities for their children:



A number of parents commented that all of the factors were important to them when choosing activities; however, the survey revealed that the top priorities were:

- Quality of support
- Location
- Time / day
- Age appropriateness

#### *Access and communication*

Parents would like us to ensure that everyone receives the same information about which activities are available, who can attend and how they can apply. They would like to receive this information early to enable them to plan in advance. The most popular method of communication was email.

A number of parents felt that the allocations system was complicated and would like to be more informed about how hours are allocated. People felt that the service would be fairer if it was made clear to parents / carers what was available and how the places will be allocated. Parents would like to be given up to date information so that everyone has a fair chance of applying for support. Some parents would also like further clarification on what the eligibility criteria is and how allocations are made. For example one parent wrote:

*"I feel that I am excluded from applying to some Short Breaks providers who give the first options to their selected parents and do not advertise in a fair and accessible manner for all parents to access."*

Parent / carer response

### *Eligibility*

The majority of parents agreed with the eligibility criteria, but many were unsure about what they mean in practice and how assessments are made.

- For Group A (*definition included in section 1.1*) - 45% of respondents strongly agreed and 24% agreed, whilst 12% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed.
- For Group B (*definition included in section 1.1*) - 48% of respondents strongly agreed and 26% agree, whilst 8% strongly disagreed and 5% disagreed.

Parents also felt that the eligibility criteria should be widened to include more disabilities.



## 4. Current Provision & Market Analysis

### 4.1. Current provision

Short break services are currently delivered by a range of providers under different contract arrangements. Of those:

- 8 service providers supply services under the 2011 contracts under three lots - "play / activities", "overnights & residential" and "enabling hours and mentoring". These contracts expire in March 2015.
- Mapledown and Oakleigh schools provide after-school activities. These contracts expire in March 2015.
- Two Early Intervention Programme contracts - advice/ parenting and play/activities) also form part of the Short Break Service provision. These contracts expire in March 2016 but can be ended sooner under the terms of the contract.
- Around 91 families currently receive direct payments and procure their services outside of the Council's contracts.
- Additional residential respite places are spot purchased from two additional providers. These contracts expire in March 2015.

Provision	Number of providers	Value
Short breaks contracts - "play / activities", "overnights & residential" and "enabling hours and mentoring"	8	£436,757
School contracts	2	£167,198
<b>Early intervention contracts</b>	2	£114,341
Residential respite	2	£160,000
Play and leisure schemes (spot purchased)	<i>Various</i>	£70,000
<b>Total directly purchased short breaks expenditure</b>		<b>£948,296</b>

In addition to these figures there have been an additional 146 Direct Payments provided to service users at a total value of £748,423. These have been used to pay for a range of services for disabled children, including personal assistance, home support, help to access play and leisure, and the provision of respite from caring duties. 30 of the Direct Payments have included a component of play and leisure and 61 have included a component of respite. These payments are currently managed by the Disabled Children's Team, distinct from the Commissioned Short Breaks Service. They will be aligned within a single process for disabled children's service delivery to be in place by April 2015.

### 4.2. Market analysis – Barnet

Short breaks in Barnet commissioned directly by the local authority are predominantly provided by third-sector charitable organisations - Fairplay Barnet,

Barnet Mencap, Kisharon, Community Focus, Action for Kids, Resource for Autism, Barnet Carers Centre, Noah's Ark and Norwood. Around 28% of expenditure is with schools.

The market has been very static with the biggest players all being organisations who have been around for a considerable length of time. Fairplay Barnet was formed in 2012 as a merger of IPOP and Barnet Play Association - these organisations have both been providing services for more than 20 years. Barnet Mencap has been providing services in various forms in Barnet for 38 years, Community Focus for 35 years, and Action for Kids for 23 years.

The provider market has not demonstrated significant levels of change or innovation. However, the smaller providers have been able to be more creative and flexible, sometimes having a better sense of how the changes within the Children's and Families Act would impact on their services.

The contract monitoring process for short break services has not collected family satisfaction data at the service level. However, the public consultation needs assessment reveals that the majority of respondents (74%) rated the short breaks service as "good" or "very good" and many parents / carers expressed how much they value the support they receive for themselves and their children.

The pricing within the current short break contract lots is currently quite varied especially within Lot 3 - the one to one enabling hours service. It is anticipated that the average rate for some of these services will be reduced through the procurement process.

Direct Payments have not previously been offered to the majority of families accessing short break through the commissioned/contracted services. There are a number of Direct Payments being allocated within the Disabled Children's Team (DCT) for a variety of needs, including; support at home, help with play and leisure, and respite from caring but none through the self-assessment process for short breaks. In line with the personalisation agenda, short breaks service users will from April 2015 be given the freedom to manage their own resources via a Direct Payment if they wish to do so.

### **4.3. Market analysis – national**

Bristol City Council, in completing their [commissioning plan](#)<sup>1</sup> in April 2014, completed an excellent review of best practice. This is summarised below:

Authorities across the country have developed a broad range of approaches to providing short breaks. The examples reviewed demonstrate the diversity of the services provided by different authorities. They include:

- Effective use of bridging workers to help families to access mainstream services (Hampshire County Council)
- Increased use of foster carers, including contract carers from independent agencies (Swindon City Council and Plymouth City Council)

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[http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children\\_and\\_young\\_people/about\\_bristol\\_child\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_service/information\\_about\\_cyps/cyps\\_services/Draft%20commissioning%20plan%20080414%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children_and_young_people/about_bristol_child_and_young_people_service/information_about_cyps/cyps_services/Draft%20commissioning%20plan%20080414%20FINAL.pdf)

- Outreach service providing six sessions of support to develop strengths and skills in the family (Nottingham City Council)
- Mentoring scheme for teenagers to support them to access short breaks and mainstream services such as youth groups (Plymouth City Council)
- Using the local Parents Forum to develop a process for families to access and evaluate personal budgets (Bury Council)
- “One stop shop” and electronic market place for accessing short breaks (Suffolk County Council)
- A framework agreement for domiciliary care services to be jointly tendered with adult social care (Plymouth City Council)
- A single contract with a lead provider responsible for coordinating short breaks services, supporting families to access the services and sub-contracting with short breaks providers to deliver a range and choice of short breaks services.

A review of national research on short breaks services was also carried out. The central message from the research is that success requires the direct and on-going involvement of the families of disabled children and young people to shape the wider offer of services as well as their own individual packages of care. Meaningful engagement with these families and service providers is key to the development of an effective and responsive set of local services.

Key messages from the research are:

**Involve families throughout**

Parents and carers should be involved at all stages. They need to be involved in their child’s assessment to get a true understanding of their needs and how best to meet those needs. They should also be involved in shaping, developing and evaluating the services they use. Such involvement has resulted in improved outcomes and innovative short breaks.

**Draw on and maintain high quality data**

The services offered should be informed by an understanding of current and accurate data about the local population and prevalence of specific SEN and disabilities.

**Provide comprehensive information and a clear local offer**

Plain language, informative and helpful information accessible by all is a key facet of quality short break provision. Cross boundary information for those Local Authorities whose extent crosses into others catchment area is beneficial to parents. Lastly, consistent definition of complex needs is required across all service provision.

**Ensure simple and transparent review and assessment processes**

It is important to have a clear and well publicised system for accessing services. Professionals across education, health and social care should have a shared understanding and integrated approach to assessment and planning. There is broad agreement that the allocation of short breaks should be based on careful and on-going assessment of carer health and well-being, any challenging behaviour of the child and the family’s circumstances, rather than solely on the health needs and level of disability of the child.

**Offer a diverse and stable range of provision**

Families reported that they prefer support that is flexible and responsive and that choice, clarity and stability are the most important characteristics of services. There should also be on-going assessment of needs to enable families to access services across these levels, responding to fluctuations in the families' needs.

**Develop skills and invest in infrastructure support**

Developing expertise in managing challenging behaviour has proven to be effective, both for staff and families.

**Promote strong partnership working**

Some authorities sought to keep commissioners and providers quite distinct. But the most impressive work occurred where there was close working and a true sense of partnership between commissioners and providers. This enabled commissioners to utilise the breadth of experience of providers to help ensure decisions were rooted in realistic expectations in terms of services, timescales, costs and outcomes.

**Direct payments as an inherent part of the strategy**

There is evidence that where direct payments have been well developed as a means to access short breaks, they can result in improved outcomes for children and families. In order to get the best outcomes from direct payments, it is necessary that there is commitment to direct payments among front line staff as well as senior managers. There also needs to be sufficient support for families to navigate the process and use their payments effectively.

**Personal budgets promote personalisation**

To succeed personal budgets should be an integral part of the short breaks offer and enable creative solutions. A sufficient quantity and range of short break services need to be commissioned, by local authorities working with families, to enable families to have a meaningful choice of short break options.

**4.4. Gaps in current service provision**

The Needs Analysis indicated that there are some minor gaps in the current service provision. There seems to be a predominance of boys accessing services above what would be considered the normal percentage gender split (71% boys and 39% girls). A lot of services reflect this and are weighted towards the interests of boys. Therefore, there may be some scope for services more tailored for girls.

The 'transitions' age group (adolescents in the 14-19 age band) is not well catered for within services, and there is opportunity to address this. Transition into adulthood for disabled children is important - from school to further or higher education and also from education to employment. Short breaks can help in terms of providing direction as well as educational and recreational resources.

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## **5. Improving process and practice**

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### **5.1. Eligibility and allocation of resource**

Children and young people are currently eligible for short breaks if they:

- Have a diagnosis of severe Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) - they are likely to have other impairments such as Severe Learning Disabilities or behaviours which challenge. Children in this group will display behaviour which challenges services or behaviour which causes injury to themselves or others. (Group A)
- Have complex health needs, life limiting conditions and / or associated difficulties such as severe cognitive or sensory impairments. (Group B)

No change to these criteria is proposed. However, the consultation feedback has shown that the Council needs to be more transparent in what these mean, how each family will be assessed and how resource will be fairly attached to need.

#### **5.1.1. Assessment**

At present there is assessment process for what is currently referred to as 'short breaks' provision. Access into the service is through an application form that parents / carers can complete themselves. Access to 'respite' services are through the Disabled Children's Team.

In order to ensure that the process of allocating short break resource to families is fair and equitable as families have told us they want, it is proposed that the assessment process is modified.

The Council will be implementing a new assessment tool for all services in autumn 2014 for children with disabilities living with their families. An initial self-assessment will be verified by a professional to ensure consistency and a fair allocation of resources.

This would not mean a change in eligibility, rather a change in how eligibility is assessed. Prior to implementation, work will be done with families to test and improve this process and ensure that any additional bureaucracy is minimised.

#### **5.1.2 Allocating support, personal budgets and direct payments**

Following an assessment, there needs to be a fair allocation of resource. It is proposed that a new approach is developed that in a simple and transparent way ensures that the level of resource offered is proportionate to need. This will be developed and tested in the autumn and winter of 2014 before being rolled out ahead of April 2015.

The Children and Families Act provides young people and parents with the right to request a personal budget if they are going to have an Education, Care and Health (EHC) plan. A personal budget is an amount available to secure particular provision set out in the EHC plan and provides a way of involving parents or young people in securing that provision.

As short breaks will clearly form an important part of EHC plans an approach will be agreed to enable the Council to provide parents with personal budget allocations. Adult social care have been providing personal budgets for some years now and

local authorities have a range of methodologies from professional discretion to an approach underpinned by a complex algorithm linked to the assessment. Barnet's approach will be developed and tested by the end of 14/15.

Personal budgets can take the form of direct payments which families can spend themselves or managed budgets which they can devise with the local authority and which the local authority can spend on their behalf at their direction by arranging the provision in the EHC plan – or a combination of both.

Around 150 families are currently in receipt of a direct payment – a cash allocation that enables them to arrange and purchase their own services in whatever form they may take. Reviewing best practice has shown there is more we can do to enable families to better benefit from direct payments including:

- Provision of better advice and guidance.
- Encouraging peer support.
- Understanding what families are looking to purchase and helping to develop the market for these services.

Implementation of these changes will link closely to broader work of implementing the changes in the Children and Families Act and improving 0-25 disability services.

## **5.2. Contract monitoring and management**

The commissioning exercise for short breaks that will commence in summer 2014 will ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure services are of a high quality and are achieving our agreed outcomes for children, young people, parents and carers.

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## **6. Commissioning approach**

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### **6.1. Commissioning intentions**

Barnet Council is committed to the following commissioning intentions and these will guide the future approach to the procurement of short break services.

#### **6.1.1. Choice and control**

An appropriate balance will be sought to give families the choice and flexibility they desire whilst giving service providers sufficient certainty of income to plan and remain confident of viability.

Families will be better supported to plan and put in place support via a direct payment.

The volume of directly commissioned services will need to be able to respond to the increasing incidence of families choosing direct payments.

Families will continue to be involved in the commissioning process including in reviewing the specification, supporting the evaluation and contributing to provider monitoring.

#### **6.1.2. Fairness**

The Council will provide comprehensive short breaks information and a clear local offer.

Following consultation, a simple and transparent assessment and review processes will be put in place.

Barnet Council will support potential bidders, including small, local voluntary sector providers, to be able to bid for work. This will include signposting to Community Barnet who are contracted to provide this type of support and running bidder information sessions.

#### **6.1.3. High quality services that offer great value for money**

The specification for short breaks service will emphasise the outcomes to be achieved for children, young people, parents and carers. Contract monitoring and management will also review the impact services are having against these outcomes.

The procurement exercise will need to result in a diverse and stable range of provision

The Council will promote strong partnership working between short break providers and other parts of the education, health and care system.

Contract management mechanisms will improve the quality of data available on short break provision to inform on-going commissioning decisions.

## **6.2. Procurement strategy summary**

There is a delicate balance to be sought between giving service providers – often small third sector organisations – sufficient certainty of income to plan and remain confident of viability and giving families the choice and flexibility they desire. Over recent years there has been an increase in the number of families choosing to purchase their own short break services via a direct payment and it is reasonable to assume that trend will continue. It is anticipated that a brokerage team will be established in Children's Services to provide support to families as they plan and spend their individual budgets.

As such, the Council's intent is to procure services in a number of lots that will give providers the minimum critical mass through a block contract element. Any additional volume that needs to be purchased will be done via agreed unit prices with the successful providers on each lot. The value of the lots will be carefully calculated, and it is anticipated that the size of the lots and the block element of the contracts will be reviewed annually.

To ensure that the services procured most appropriately meet the needs of local families the Council will involve parents and carers in the design and evaluation of the service specification and new assessment process.

## **6.3. Service lots and timescales**

Based on the needs analysis, consultation responses and gap analysis, and the outcomes and objective outlined in section two, it is proposed to commission short break services in the following lots with a focus on the outcomes required.

- Lot 1 – Group based social, sport, and cultural and play activities
- Lot 2 – Overnight / sleepovers, weekends, or longer stay residential breaks with a focus on activities / skill development
- Lot 3 - Enabling service, one-to-one support, assistants, befrienders and buddies
- Lot 4 – Specialist respite care

Providers will be requested to demonstrate how services are able to meet the needs of different age groups, genders and ethnic / religious groups, and to demonstrate how services can provide added social value.

Providers will be invited to register their interest in tendering between summer and early autumn 2014 with final tenders submitted in autumn 2014. Contracts, and so short break services are to commence from 1 April 2015.

Due to the nature of the services we are aiming to procure, London Borough of Barnet will actively consider joint or consortium applications from two or more providers acting in unison to provide a variety of services. One provider will be required to be the lead provider and agreements will be made with that provider who can either sub-contact to other providers or act as an agent on their behalf.

London Borough of Barnet is planning an informative 'Short Breaks Tender Event Day' for potential bidders in the summer. Community Barnet can offer support local voluntary sector groups with the bidding process.

## **6.4 Equality Impact Assessment**

A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the Short Breaks Service during the budget reduction proposal consultation in February 2014. This continues



to be updated and will be reviewed again before the procurement commences and prior to contract award.

## 1. Appendix 1: Time table

