



**Joint Report of the Cabinet Members for Health & Wellbeing and
Children, Education & Life Long Learning**

Cabinet – 19 October 2017

**Family Support Services Commissioning Review –
Focusing on Children with Additional Needs and
Disabilities**

Purpose:	The report presents the proposed options for changes to services available to Children with Additional Needs and Disabilities which have been identified through the wider commissioning process of the Family Support Services Commissioning Review.
Policy Framework:	Sustainable Swansea: Fit for the Future, Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1992 (UNCRC)
Consultation:	Corporate Management Team Cabinet Members Legal, Finance and Access to Services. Child and Family Services, Poverty and Prevention and Education. Public.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Following consultation, Cabinet gives approval to the recommendations presented in the report as outlined in Section 2 below.
Report Authors:	Chris Francis / Julie Thomas / Jane Whitmore
Finance Officer:	Chris Davies
Legal Officer:	Pamela Milford
Access to Services Officer:	Ann Williams

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2016, Members and the Corporate Management Team agreed Swansea's vision for the delivery of Family Support Services across the continuum of need and the outcomes we should seek for our families. Agreement was also given to split the Family Support Services Commissioning Review into four (related) strands: support for families with children under the age of 11 years, support for families with children over the age of 11; domestic abuse; and support for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.
- 1.2 This report concerns the last strand: family support services for children with additional needs and disabilities. Initially the services within the scope of the review included overnight short breaks and holistic family support by way of an Early Help Team. However, by February 2017, the scope of the Review was narrowed to concentrate on; (i) parent carer participation and engagement, (ii) play and leisure opportunities, and (iii) home care.
- 1.3 In February 2017, Members and the Corporate Management Teams gave approval to proceed with a public consultation exercise on the options presented for each of these three service areas. With the consultation period now closed, this paper seeks permission to implement the recommendations set out in summary below.
- 1.4 This report also seeks approval to proceed with plans for overnight short breaks and the creation of a designated Early Help Team supporting children with additional needs and disabilities. The former was previously taken out of scope as it was recognised that reaching any conclusions required further collaborative work with Education. Similarly, proposals for an Early Help Team were delayed pending the outcome of the other strands of the commissioning review, in particular, how they proposed to develop such services more generally in Swansea. Since February the outstanding work has been completed and it is now possible to put forward clear proposals.
- 1.4 Finally, this report seeks approval to move forward with plans to improve the arrangements for young carers.
- 1.5 The services provided and commissioned by the Council have not been systematically and thoroughly reviewed for many years. It is not therefore surprising to learn that they are no longer ideally placed to meet the needs of the Council or the families it serves.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Recommendation for Parent / Carer Participation and Engagement -** The Council commissions an independent service provider to develop and run a parent carer forum. The forum to be jointly commissioned by Child and Family Services, Education and Poverty and Prevention. The proposal would be for this to be in place from April 2018.
- 2.2 Recommendation for Play and Leisure Opportunities -** Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention pool financial resources to jointly commission targeted and specialist child disability play and leisure services. The plan would be for these new service arrangements to be in place from 2018/19.
- 2.3** (Please note: During the course of 2018/19 further work will be undertaken, in partnership with the newly established parent carer forum (see 2.1), to explore the possibility of introducing a grant (voucher) scheme. This will allow families the opportunity to exercise greater choice and control over the services they access but poses additional risks and challenges in implementation. If it is evidenced as being a beneficial step then the plan would be to return to Cabinet for consideration and approval. Any grant (voucher) scheme would not commence prior to April 2019, at the earliest.)
- 2.4 Recommendation for Home Care -** Child and Family Services slightly expand the capacity of the in-house Flexible Home Support Team to meet the needs of the relatively small number of children with very complex needs who require this form of support.
- 2.5 Recommendation for Overnight Breaks –**Child and Family Services undertake a procurement exercise for a third sector or private organisation to provide overnight residential breaks.
- 2.6 Recommendation for an Early Help Team –**Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention lead the development of a dedicated Early Help Team that supports families with children with additional needs and disabilities. It is thought that a specialist resource will offer families a better response to their needs and reduce the pressure on statutory services.
- 2.7 Recommendation for Young Carers –** Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention jointly commission specialist support for young carers. It is recognised that significant additional resources are required to meet the needs of this particular cohort. The plan would be for these new service arrangements to be in place from 2018/19.
- 2.8** There have been no budget savings attached to this Review and the recommendations above are intended to be cost neutral. Nevertheless, as the general direction is towards greater use of effective early intervention services, it is anticipated that, in the medium- to long-term,

they will enable the Council to avoid the greater costs associated with late interventions.

- 2.9 This paper has been jointly developed by Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention. As there are so many interdependencies, there has been considerable dialogue to ensure the recommendations are consistent with the needs and developments by Education. To ensure these proposals are implemented (if agreed) in a collaborative manner, it is intended that the work will be overseen by the People Directorate Commissioning Group and Family Support Steering Group.
- 2.10 Should Cabinet agree the above Recommendations then the timescale for implementation is the 1 May 2018. This is on the basis that the Contracts will not return to Cabinet for the purposes of contract award. Further detail is available via the timeline at Appendix 1.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 As a group, disabled children, and their families, can be among the most vulnerable people in our community. Their needs can be particularly complex, and they, along with their parents and siblings, can be at a higher risk of poor outcomes (social isolation, economic disadvantage etc.). Secure, loving family units are often key to achieving positive outcomes, but caring for a disabled child can be a stressful experience that could place considerable pressure on a family. It is for this reason that we need to ensure we have an effective range of family support services in place.
- 3.2 **Parent Carer Participation** - At the heart of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 is the requirement for every Council to truly participate with the individuals it supports. Effective parent carer participation requires; (a) good information, (b) honest consultation, and (c) a genuine willingness to have them involved in service planning and decision making.
- 3.3 In addition to improving outcomes for families, it is thought that enabling parent carers to be a true part of service planning will mean financial resources are less likely to be wasted on services which families do not take up or value.
- 3.4 There are many professionals within the Council who are very skilled at working with parent carers on an individual level. Where we trail behind the best performing areas is in terms of ensuring the concepts of participation and engagement are properly embedded at a strategic level. Some of the other authorities visited during the Review have established a formal parent carer forum that they use to facilitate effective consultation. The forum is also used to provide parent carers with information and to provide steering groups or parent representatives for strategic decision making within the Council.

- 3.5 **Play and Leisure Opportunities** - In this context, play and leisure opportunities cover a range of activities, e.g. a sports activity, a summer play scheme, a cinema trip, a trip to the museum, a fun day for the whole family, or something else entirely.
- 3.6 Article 31 of the UNCRC makes it clear that children and young people have the right to play and have fun in the way they want to. Play is defined in the Welsh Government Play Policy as freely chosen and personally directed. While the vast majority of children play in this way, some children with additional needs require specialist support to be able to make choices and access play opportunities. As a Council we have a responsibility to promote the right to play for children with a disability.
- 3.7 As well as fulfilling an important role in enabling children and young people to have fun, play and leisure opportunities allow children and young people the scope to try new experiences, both with and away from their parent carers. This gives them the opportunity to learn new skills and develop their confidence.
- 3.8 Some play opportunities also directly support parent carers by providing them with a short break (or respite) from their normal caring responsibilities. There is growing evidence that such breaks support the well-being of the carers (including young carers, e.g. siblings) by offering them a chance to rest, catch up on day-to-day activities and spend time with other family members. Play and leisure opportunities must therefore be recognised as an important preventative service that helps promote family resilience and reduce dependency on more intensive services.
- 3.9 **Home Care** - Home care involves a paid carer coming into the home of the service user to provide support because of their special needs. The tasks performed by the paid carer may include personal care – e.g. help with bathing, getting dressed etc.
- 3.10 By comparison to Adult Services, the numbers of children receiving home care are very limited. Nevertheless, where it is identified, typically for those with complex medical needs, it is often a critical support service for families and key to preventing family breakdown.
- 3.11 **Overnight Short Breaks** – Overnight short breaks involve the child going to a specialist children’s home or foster placement overnight. Families in receipt of the service are provided a certain number of nights based on a social work assessment of need, which are then spread across the year, e.g. one night every fortnight.
- 3.12 For some of our families, an overnight break is a key component of their care and support package. They give carers an extended break and give children the opportunity to meet friends, develop independence and have fun. While overnight breaks are an expensive option, they can prevent families moving into crisis where they may need to access even more

expensive support and interventions. These benefits should not be underestimated.

3.13 However, it is important to realise that for some families the overnight break is simply putting a 'sticking plaster' on the real issue. The most common reasons for requesting an overnight break are challenging behaviour, incontinence and poor sleep. While the break offers the parents a break from these issues, it does not necessarily help to address them. If we are to work on the underlying issues then we must seemingly:

- change how we commission overnight short break services so they become more outcome focused; and
- develop a range of alternative support services that are better placed to meet the real need.

3.14 **Early Help Team** - Early Help Teams are typically multi-disciplinary teams that work with families requiring intensive support. Members of the team perform a keyworker role in partnership with other practitioners and the family to build resilience and develop solutions to problems the family may be experiencing. Early Help Teams receive referrals directly from universal services - schools, G.P.s and health visitors etc.

3.15 Early Help Teams are an established service in many parts of the Country and an emerging service model in Swansea, e.g. the Family Wellbeing Team. The Domestic Abuse Hub is a specialist form of Early Help Team which responds to a particular need. At present there is a clear gap in terms of there being no such resource with the expertise to support children with additional needs and disabilities.

3.16 **Young Carers** - Young carers help look after a member of the family (usually a parent or sibling) who is sick, disabled, has mental health problems, or is misusing substances. With so many caring tasks, some young carers miss out on opportunities that other children enjoy, struggle in school and become socially isolated.

3.17 Identifying young carers is notoriously challenging. Many are worried that they will be perceived to have let their family down if they ask for help, while others fear being taken into care. However, new duties upon the Council to proactively identify young carers means it is reasonable to anticipate much greater demand for specialist young carer services in the future.

4.0 Options identified by the Commissioning Review

4.1 On 10th October 2016, a stakeholder workshop was convened to critique the options and assess the best models of delivery for each of the three service areas subject to the Review. The Options considered are outlined in the table below, along with the overall scores:-

Parent Carer Participation	
Option 1	Option 2
Continue As Is – The Council includes participation as one element of various different service and job descriptions.	Commission an independent organisation to provide a discrete service promoting Parent Carer Participation.
Score: 10.2 out of 25	Score: 20 out of 25

Play And Leisure Opportunities (including Community Short Breaks)		
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Continue As Is – C&FS and Poverty and Prevention separately commission a range of services from external organisations.	C&FS and Poverty and Prevention pool financial resources to jointly commission a range of targeted services which ensure we are (i) consistently receiving value for money, (ii) that there is greater capacity; and (iii) services are more sustainable.	Develop a voucher scheme whereby eligible families receive a set amount of vouchers which they can spend with participating service providers.
Score: 10.9 out of 25	Score: 16.5 out of 25	Score: 16 .9 out of 25

Home Care / Domiciliary Care		
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Continue As Is – The in-house Flexible Home Support provides short-term interventions (up to 12 weeks) to support families at risk of breakdown. Those requiring medium- and long-term support are supported via an externally commissioned service.	Change the statement of purpose of the Flexible Home Support Service so it can support families for up to 12 months. External providers would then only be required for those with a long-term need for Home Care.	Continue to run the Flexible Home Support Team as it is currently but facilitate the independent Home Care market to increase their capacity to work with children.
Score: 17 out of 25	Score: 22.4 out of 25	Score: 11.5 out of 25

4.2 Thus, to clarify, the preferred Options identified in the Options Appraisal Workshop were:-

Parent and Carer Participation - To commission an independent parent carer forum (Option 2).

Play and Leisure Opportunities - To develop a grant (voucher) scheme similar to that run by a number of English authorities, e.g. Wiltshire Council (Option 3).

Home Care - To increase the capacity of the in-house Flexible Home Support Team (Option 2).

4.3 Feedback from this workshop was presented to Cabinet in February 2017 with approval granted to go out to formal consultation.

5.0 Consultation Process

5.1 **Methodology** - Prior to the commencement of the consultation period, stakeholders (including parent carers) were involved in formal and informal conversations regarding the services areas subject to this Review. This gave them the opportunity to comment on the existing arrangements and the required direction of travel. At the Options Appraisal Workshop stakeholders they were then involved in finalising and scoring the various Options.

5.2 The formal consultation period commenced on 27th February 2017. Initially due to conclude on 21st May 2017, the window of consultation was subsequently extended to 9th June 2017 to allow for greater feedback.

5.3 An online survey was designed for adult stakeholders (parent carers, staff working with children with a disability etc.). A copy of the survey and information sheet is available at Appendix A. Details of the survey were distributed amongst the various service users and provider networks known to the Council.

5.4 During the consultation process a series of (formal and informal) engagement activities and events with stakeholders were run to promote the completion of the survey by adult stakeholders:-

- Facilitate workshops with parent carer representatives and wider adult stakeholders around the County.
- A family fun day at the National Waterfront Museum where attending parent carers were asked to participate in the survey.
- Attendance at a short breaks parent carer group.
- Discussions with service providers in the County.
- Discussion during liaison meetings with colleagues in Education, Adult Services, Health and other stakeholders.

- 5.5 Although children and young people were free to participate by completing the online survey, it was recognised at the outset of the consultation that obtaining their views would require additional engagement expertise, e.g. to support those with communication difficulties. As the Council lacked sufficient capacity to properly undertake this activity, we commissioned a local third sector organisation, Interplay, to provide support.
- 5.6 With the input of Interplay, we have undertaken the following engagement activities with children and young people.
- Run the aforementioned family fun day at the Waterfront Museum.
 - Held feedback events at seven different children's services commissioned by the Council.
 - Run two half-day sessions at Gorseinon Evolve Youth Hub specifically for children with additional needs or a disability.

Staff at Ysgol Pen-Y-Bryn Special School sought the views of a number of children with learning disabilities, autism and communication disabilities.

A thorough breakdown on the types of questions asked, activities undertaken and level of response can be found in Appendix B

- 5.7 In summary the preferred Options identified in through consultation were similar to those identified in the Options Appraisal workshop. A full report can be found under Appendix C.

6. Proposals Developed

- 6.1 Drawing together the result of the consultation process, the options appraisal workshop with stakeholders and findings of other strands of the Family Support Commissioning review, the following proposals have been developed:
- 6.2 **Parent Carer Participation** - There is a definite need to improve the two way communication between the Council and parent carers. The scale of the problem is highlighted by the level and quality of feedback during the formal consultation period. Furthermore, Officers responsible for the separate Commissioning Review of Additional Learning Needs have confirmed that pressures to improve parent carer participation apply equally for Education.
- 6.3 The option of committing extra resources to commission an independent parent carer forum was popular amongst those responding to the Review. It is consistent with best practice and it is recommended that this Option should proceed with the aim of the new service being in place from 1 April 2018. This would be a service jointly commissioned by Child and Family Services, Poverty and Prevention and Education.

6.4 **Play and leisure opportunities** - The Options Appraisal Workshop narrowly found in favour of developing a grant scheme for the provision of vouchers. The other Option that scored positively and finished a close runner-up was for Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention to rationalise arrangements by pooling resources and jointly commissioning a range of targeted and specialist services. For the reasons summarised below, it is proposed that we proceed with this Option for 2018/19 (but further work should be undertaken to scope the possibility of moving to a grant scheme at a future date):-

- Currently, 51% of adult respondents were either against or unsure about the grant scheme.
- Re-commissioning services will provide additional opportunity to further understand the risks and benefits associated with a grant scheme, including how we best mitigate any adverse impacts.
- It affords further time to consult with a larger number of stakeholders before making a final decision; consultation which could be potentially facilitated by the introduction of a Parent Carer Forum.

6.5 **Home Care** - At the time of the Cabinet report in February 2017 there were only 2 small registered providers in Swansea. While the level of demand is admittedly low, it was noted that the available providers lacked the capacity to deliver some of the care packages we require. For this reason it was suggested that the Council commits additional resources to expand the capacity of the in-house registered service, the Flexible Home Support Team.

6.5 The urgency of the situation over the intervening months has to some extent abated as a further 2 Adult Service providers have amended their registration to support children as well. While this development addresses our immediate needs, there remains a risk that these new services will not prove economic or sustainable. It is therefore proposed that we proceed with a modest expansion to the Flexible Home Support Team.

6.6 **Overnight Breaks** – Child and Family Services to lead a re-procurement exercise for a third sector or private organisation to provide overnight residential breaks. The new contract will need to be in place by April 2018. This course of action is required to ensure compliance with the Contract Procedural Rules and procurement legislation but, even more importantly, to prevent any gap in service for families. Some of the families accessing the service are amongst the most vulnerable in Swansea and are heavily dependent on the service.

6.7 **Early Help Team** – Poverty and Prevention leads a commissioning exercise to secure a partner organisation for the development of a designated Team to support families with children with additional needs and disabilities. It is thought that a specialist resource, practicing

evidence-based interventions, will offer families a better response to their needs and reduce the pressure on statutory services.

- 6.8 **Young Carers** - Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention to pool resources and jointly commission a specialist service for young carers. Additional funding would be made available to bolster the capacity of the future service.

7. **HR Implications**

- 7.1 The only internal service in the scope of this report is the Flexible Home Support Service. The intention is to slightly expand the staff resource in the Team, therefore there is no reduction in current staffing arrangements anticipated

8. **Equality and Engagement Implications**

- 8.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) report has been drafted. A copy of the EIA is available at Appendix D. The EIA remains in draft form as it will continue to be developed alongside the implementation plan and future activities. It is also still undergoing internal quality assurance.
- 8.2 The EIA found that this report is particularly pertinent to children, adults, those with a disability and carers. The EIA process also identified the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a key consideration.
- 8.3 Further, it is noted that feedback from stakeholders - including disabled children and carers - has been generally positive. Where there have been greater concerns raised (i.e. play and leisure opportunities) then this has led to changes in the final recommendations put forward.
- 8.4 Furthermore, the recommendations include increased resources to support parent carer participation. This should help ensure the voice of parents and carers is more effectively heard going forward.

9. **Financial Implications**

- 9.1 Welsh Government has provided some additional Grant funding to support modernisation and improvement of services in these areas. This additional money coupled with the existing base core budgets and ring fenced WG Grant budgets are sufficient to deliver the recommendations contained herein, which would enhance provision and meet identified need.
- 9.2 As so much of the funding in this area is Grant money (e.g. Families First), any future tenders will have to be clear that the precise level of funding available will be prone to fluctuate. Notwithstanding this issue, the following tables summarises how expenditure is currently aligned and how it would look under the proposed arrangements:-

Current Arrangements				
Service Area	Department	In-house or external	Number of Contracts / Grants	Funding level
Parent Carer Participation	C&FS	External	1	£10,000
Play and Leisure Opportunities	C&FS and P&P	External	10	£397,000
Home Care	C&FS	In-house	-	£176,000
Overnight Short Breaks	C&FS	External	1	£805,000
Early Help	C&FS and P&P	External	3	£146,000
Young Carers	C&FS and P&P	External	2	£52,800
TOTAL:			17	£1,586,800

Additional Money:

Grant money for carers and children on the edge of care : £200,000
 Contribution from Education towards Parent Carer Participation: £25,000

Total budget envelope available : £1,811,800

The table below outlines the funding for the proposed arrangements, demonstrating the recommendations can be met by aligning the resource more effectively and without additional pressure on core budgets.

Proposed Arrangements				
Service Area	Department	In-house or external	Number of Contracts / Grants	Funding level
Parent Carer Participation	C&FS / P&P / Education	External	1	£75,000
Play and Leisure Opportunities	C&FS and P&P	External	1	£350,000
Home Care	C&FS	In-house	-	£215,000
Overnight Short Breaks	C&FS	External	1	£755,000
Early Help	C&FS and P&P	External	1	£305,000
Young Carers	C&FS and P&P	External	1	£100,000
TOTAL:			5	£1,800,000

9.3 Where a budget saving is identified for a particular area (e.g. play and leisure) this will be met via a combination of approaches:-

- De-commissioning services which no longer meet the needs of families or do not represent value for money.
- Pursuing economies of scale.
- Negotiating down costs for providers where possible, e.g. greatly reducing the number of individual contracts and grants that each provider has to manage (which will also save the Council resources).
- Greater focus on new ways of working which achieve the same outcome but more cost effectively, e.g. (where appropriate) small group activities as opposed to 1:1; this is also in line with the feedback from children and young people about the need to have more contact with their friends/peers.

9.4 As the move is towards a more early intervention approach, it is intended that the proposed services will deliver cost avoidance and/or savings in the medium- to long-term. Two obvious budgets which would be influenced by this area of work are (i) the looked after children accommodation budget; and (ii) the education budget for children educated out of area.

9.5 Any externally commissioned providers will be expected to demonstrate clear value for money and contribution to social capital in their tenders.

10. Recommendations – Legal Implications

10.1 The commissioning of the services referred to in Section 2 will need to be undertaken in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, the provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and any relevant grant funding requirements.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Implementation Timeline

Appendix B – Survey and Information Sheet

Appendix C – Report by Interplay

Appendix D – Consultation Finding Summary

Appendix E – EIA Report