



Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 12th September 2024

Respite and Short Breaks Provision

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an overview of the approach taken within Child and Family Services in respect of short breaks provisions.
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report includes a summary of short breaks provisions and the review processes currently being undertaken by child and family services in this area. The report concludes that the provision of short breaks is essential in providing much needed support and respite for children with disabilities and additional learning needs and their parents/carers. There are challenges in relation to the level of demand on commissioned short break services and our review process is ongoing in order to ensure that we have the right services on offer for those accessing our services.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the report as part of their routine review of performance in Child and Family Services.
Lead Councillor(s)	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services
Lead Officer(s)	David Howes, Director of Social Services Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services
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Legal Officer	N/A
Finance Officer	N/A
Access to Services Officer	N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 This report outlines the commitment, vision, and ambitions we have for our support services for children, young people, and families in respect of short break arrangements for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs and their parents/carers. It also outlines how we intend to ensure that the needs of our service users inform our practice, and how we will develop and adapt our service if or when these needs change.
- 1.2 The Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 places a focus on the use of preventative services to support children with disabilities and their families and for local authorities to consider this support in relation to their assessment of needs. The offer of short breaks, where required, is considered as part of care and support planning. The focus on preventative services requires identification of support at the earliest opportunity and this report will therefore consider early intervention short break offers, in addition to services accessed through our Child Disability Team.
- 1.3 Short Breaks can come in a variety of different forms, described in the main body of this report, and accessing these in a timely way for all families can present challenges due to the level of demand for relatively limited resources. We are committed to understanding these challenges and the impact of this on the children, young people and families we support and as a result we are currently in the process of reviewing and working with children, young people and their families to enhance our understanding of what works and what is needed to ensure access to a short break provision that meets the need.

2. Briefing/Main Body of Report

- 2.1 The Child Disability Team works directly with children/young people who have diagnosed disabilities and their parents/carers. In Swansea Child and Family Services, we have adopted the social model of disability to understand the challenges that children and families face. This means that we aim to understand the barriers in society which may make it harder for children and young people to reach their full potential.
- 2.2 The Child Disability Team works closely with specialist partner agencies/charities to provide the support required by children/young people and their families. These provisions are identified and commissioned to form part of care and support plans following assessment. Some examples of the short breaks support the Child Disability Team access are briefly outlined below:

- Through Action for Children the local authority commissions Ty Laura, a residential short breaks provision in Newton. Ty Laura supports children and young people with complex health and additional needs and is commissioned to offer overnight respite in addition to daytime respite which can be invaluable support for families. Ty Laura supports children and young people aged between four years up to their 18th birthday.
- Also, through Action for Children, there is the offer of Family Link which provides short breaks with panel approved Foster Carers. Family Link provides overnight placements for children with disabilities from birth to 18 years old. The service is for children and young people with learning disabilities who may also have physical or sensory difficulties. There is also the opportunity for families to use accessible Caravans at Llanrhidian Holiday Park.
- Action for Children and Local Aid (another local charity) also offer weekly groups which can be accessed through the Child Disability Team as well as outside of the service should families require the support:
 - Buddies (Local Aid) provides one to one support for young people with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour (aged 11-19) to enable them to develop social skills. Support is also available to the siblings, parents and carers of the young people accessing Buddies.
 - POPS (Positive Outcome Play Service) (Action for Children) offer support to children and young people with disabilities from birth to 18-years-old. This can be in the form of groups or one to one sessions, held after school or on weekends.

2.3 Interplay provide some groups sessions and also integrated play schemes during school holidays which children and young people are encouraged to access.

2.4 Child and Family Services also offers support to children, young people and their families through the flexi home support service who provide short term support for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs and their families.

2.5 Direct payments are a key service utilised by many families as it provides flexibility to identify their own staff (Personal Assistants) and also for the support to take place at a time that suits them. Currently there are 164 active direct payments in place for families open to Child and Family Services.

2.6 Child and Family Services have recently developed a new home support service to provide additional support to families who may not be eligible to access direct payments or are in the process of waiting for their direct

payment application to be processed. This team will offer one to one or group sessions to provide opportunities for children and young people as part of a short break offer whilst also providing a break for the parents/carers.

- 2.7 Young people can access the above services as part of their assessed care and support needs and those who are eligible will have a yearly allocation of overnight stays at Ty Laura. Allocations take into account the family's needs and wishes, availability within the provision and the appropriate mix of children and young people to ensure that the experience is enjoyable for all.
- 2.8 All the care packages are reviewed within six monthly child in need of care and support (CINCS) reviews and also through the child and family resource panel which is attended by all services. The panel considers the needs of the child/young person based on assessment and services identify where support can be offered.

3. Our Short Breaks Ambition

- 3.1 We believe that every child and young person has the right to a stable, loving family to care for them and to promote and support their physical, intellectual, and emotional development so that they can achieve their full potential. This ethos informs all our work within Child and Family Services and we recognise the importance of short breaks in supporting families to be able to remain together and as a means of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, to have valued time away from their families and opportunities to socialise and participate in activities.
- 3.2 We are committed to providing high quality support for each child and their family, considering a wide range of options to reach positive outcomes for them. In respect of short breaks, this means that we seek to fully understand the needs of the child or young person and seek to commission the most appropriate short break services to assist in meeting that need. We also seek to continually develop our own services and ensure we have a good understanding of accessible community-based services that families can access independently.
- 3.3 Our focus is to support children, young people and their parents and carers to access the relevant services at the earliest opportunity to prevent an escalation of need to more intensive service provision, including statutory interventions.

4. Developing our Short Breaks Offer

4.1 Child and Family Services undertook a review of additional learning needs (ALN) provisions, including short breaks towards the end of 2023. The review was instigated based on the increased demand for preventative support and the limited resources, resulting in waiting lists. Below is a breakdown of data over the past 12 months relating to the numbers of individuals supported by our commissioned short breaks providers, the numbers of referrals made and accepted and the waiting lists.

Individuals supported	2022-23				TOTAL	2023-24				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Action for Children - POPS	23	23	23	23	92	23	23	24	24	94
Individuals - minus duplicates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Action for Children - Ty Laura			35		35	34				34
Individuals - minus duplicates		33	2		35	34				34
Action for Children - Family Link	19	17	17	17	70	15	15	14	10	54
Individuals - minus duplicates	19	17	17	17	70	15	15	14	10	54
Local Aid	175	176	168	175	694	123	134	143	171	571
Individuals - minus duplicates	175	16	20	21	232	123	11	24	28	186
TOTAL - All organisations	217	216	243	215	891	195	172	181	205	753
TOTAL - Minus duplicates	194	66	39	38	337	172	26	38	38	274

Referrals received	2022-23				TOTAL	2023-24				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Action for Children - POPS	2	6	2	4	14	1	2	4	1	8
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0					0
Action for Children - Family Link	2	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Local Aid	7	4	6	9	26	8	4	24	15	51
TOTAL - All organisations	11	11	8	14	44	9	6	28	16	59

Referrals accepted	2022-23				TOTAL	2023-24				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Action for Children - POPS	2	6	2	4	14	1	2	4	1	8
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0					0
Action for Children - Family Link	2	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Local Aid	7	4	6	8	25	6	4	12	15	37
TOTAL - All organisations	11	11	8	13	43	7	6	16	16	45

Waiting List	2022-23				TOTAL	2023-24				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Action for Children - POPS	16	23	24	27	90	21	23	23	23	90
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0			8		8
Action for Children - Family Link	11	7	7	2		0	0	1	1	2
Local Aid	14	14	16	15	59	15	10	19	22	66
TOTAL - All organisations	41	44	47	44	149	36	33	51	46	166

4.2 It is important to acknowledge that the increase in demand, resulting in waiting lists, is a reflection of the growing understanding of additional learning needs and disability and evidence increased awareness in respect of the importance of short break offers to enable families to remain together.

4.3 In addition, we are at a natural review point in relation to commissioned services and therefore recognise the opportunity to understand better

what is working well and whether there are any improvements we could make for our families.

- 4.4 The overall ALN, preventative services review and the review into commissioned services have involved engagement with Swansea Parent Carer Forum (SPCF), key stakeholders such as providers, professionals and representative groups as well as families accessing services and those on waiting lists. Day Time Respite was a significant element of the preventative services review, while overnight respite is currently being reviewed.
- 4.5 In addition to the stakeholder events, a consultation session was held with the parents and carers of children and young people known to the Child Disability Team. This has supported us to have a clearer understanding about what matters to them and what they consider is important to their children when requiring the option of short breaks.
- 4.6 Daytime services contracts with Buddies and POPS are both due to end on 31st March 2025 however, due to the valuable service they offer, highlighted within the review process, we will be extending this for a further 12 month period.
- 4.7 Overnight respite contracts, for services provided through Ty Laura and the Family Link Service, are currently under review. To date this has incorporated user surveys, distributed to families accessing services or on waiting lists, two stakeholder engagement sessions as well as mapping exercises in relation to the provisions available. The stakeholder engagement has identified that the provisions benefit the children attending, provide opportunities for parents/carers to recharge, and significantly reduce the impact on other siblings who benefit from increased attention and opportunities. This review will continue until mid-Autumn 2024.
- 4.8 In respect of next steps in the review process the focus will be on the following:
 - Further work to understand what matters to children and young people accessing short breaks.
 - Produce a clear and agreed vision statement.
 - Develop a clear understanding on how existing provision is meeting needs and where there may be any gaps.
 - Communication - Ensure that all families have clarity on what options are available to them in respect of short breaks at every age and stage of development.
 - Innovation - Joining up of funding/services to strengthen the offer for families. Including exploration of utilising direct payments more creatively.
 - Develop a network between providers to increase partnership and collaborative working.

- 4.9 In addition to the above reviews, the service has also been undertaking a system review into Direct Payments. The system review has incorporated child and family and adult services to ensure that there is a clear understanding of our end-to-end processes and where improvements can be made, particularly where the system may be causing delay. The intensive study has now concluded and we are moving into a period of testing some new ways of working to determine if these will make a difference to individuals accessing direct payments. It is hoped that the learning from this review will support the wider thinking around short breaks and how direct payments could be used more creatively to support those who are waiting to access short break provisions.
- 4.10 Many children, young people and their families affected by ALN (Additional Learning Needs) struggle to access holiday provision. COAST (Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together) is Swansea Council's holiday activity programme for children, young people and their families and individuals aged 50+. A number of activities were funded specifically for children, young people and their families affected by ALN and this ensured that there were more accessible opportunities across the summer to be available. Please refer to Appendix A.

5. Conclusions/Key Points Summary

- 5.1 Child and Family Services recognise the importance of short breaks provision for children with disabilities and additional learning needs and their families. The provisions currently available in Swansea are providing valuable support and respite and it is essential that this is supported to continue
- 5.2 It is important to note that the demand for short breaks provision is currently higher than the services available and consequently there are waiting lists which impact on those in need of the provision.
- 5.3 The current reviews are enabling us to understand the demand and determine the best ways of ensuring that there is a fair distribution of these services across those who would benefit from the support. In addition, consideration is being given to how other offers, such as direct payments could be utilised differently to provide relevant support during times that families are not able to access the short break services.
- 5.4 The outcomes of the reviews into preventative services and direct payments will provide the basis for the future commissioning of services.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications other than those mentioned in the body of the report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific financial implications in considering this report at this time. The issues within the report may result in future decisions being taken that do result in additional costs for the Council. Any such decisions will need to have due regard to the Directorate's financial position at that time and the Council's medium term financial plan.

8. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 8.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 8.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 8.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 8.4 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required. The IIA screening process outlined there is no reputational risk to the council or any negative impact on any protected characteristics. The impacts are positive. (Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening).

Glossary of terms: Please add glossary of terms if you are using acronyms

Background papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix A – COAST Funding Overview 2024