



Report of the Head of Child and Family Services

Social Care and Tackling Poverty Service Transformation Committee –
26 February 2024

Short Breaks

Purpose:	This report presents the development of our services in relation to short breaks provisions for children and families.
Policy Framework:	Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act
Consultation:	Legal, Finance and Access to Service
Recommendation:	It is recommended that: 1) The Social Care and Tackling Poverty Services Transformation is invited to consider the report and the review process currently being undertaken and provide their views on the work undertaken to date.
Report Author:	Helen Williams
Finance Officer:	Chris Davies
Legal Officer:	Lucy Moore
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 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. Background

- 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 provides one to one support for young people with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour 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) 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 138 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 are currently carrying out a review of additional learning needs (ALN) provisions, including short breaks. 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	21	90	23	21	24		68
Individuals - minus duplicates	23	0	0	0	23	23	0	3		26
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		44
Individuals - minus duplicates	19	0	0	0	19	15	0	0		15
Local Aid	175	176	168	175	694	123	134	143		400
Individuals - minus duplicates	175	16	20	21	232	123	11	24		158
TOTAL - All organisations	217	216	243	213	889	195	170	181	0	546
TOTAL - Minus duplicates	217	49	22	21	309	195	11	27	0	233

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		7
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0					0
Action for Children - Family Link	2	1	0	1	4	0	0	0		0
Local Aid	7	4	6	9	26	8	4	24		36
TOTAL - All organisations	11	11	8	14	44	9	6	28	0	43

Referrals accepted	2022-23				TOTAL	2023-24				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Action for Children - POPS	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	3		7
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0					0
Action for Children - Family Link	2	1	0	1	4	0	0	0		0
Local Aid	7	4	6	8	25	6	4	12		22
TOTAL - All organisations	9	5	6	10	30	10	4	15	0	29

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	21		65
Action for Children - Ty Laura					0			8		8
Action for Children - Family Link	11	7	7	2		0	0	0		0
Local Aid	14	14	16	15	59	15	10	19		44
TOTAL - All organisations	41	44	47	44	149	36	33	48	0	117

- 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 evidences 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 To date, the review has involved two stakeholder events where providers, representative groups and parents/carers were brought together, along with staff from Child and Family Services, to consider how needs could best be met moving forward. The sessions were developed in partnership between Swansea Council and Swansea Parent Carer Forum.
- 4.5 In addition to the stakeholder events, a consultation session has also been 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 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.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

5.1 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.

5.2 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'.

5.3 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.

5.4 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).

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.

Background papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A – IIA Screening Form.