

NORTH YORKSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST

18th January 2010

AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN – SHORT BREAK

PATHFINDER – PROGRESS REPORT

1.0 Key Points

- 1.1 The report updates the Board on key activities in respect of the Short Break Pathfinder.
- 1.2 It details progress on the Pathfinder in line with the Project Plan submitted to DCSF in April 2008 and sets out areas for further development in the next year.
- 1.3 The Short Break Pathfinder provides us with capacity to develop our LDD Strategy with Disabled Children in key areas:
 - Prevention; developing a range and diversity of provision
 - Integration; collaboration around the needs of Disabled Children
 - Local Provision; services to meet assessed need in Localities

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is asked to support the work already carried out and to endorse the proposed future developments in line with the Project Plan.

3.0 Implementation Guidance and Support to Pathfinder

- 3.1 Although Pathfinders have been developing their Short Break programmes since the beginning of 2008 the final version of the Guidance was not published until 25th July 2008. The Guidance clarified which children the Pathfinder is intended to prioritise as it focuses on and describes severely disabled children and especially children with ASD/ASC and challenging behaviour and children with complex health needs including moving and handling requirements.
- 3.2 The Full Service Offer (p15 and 16) sets out Government expectations of Local Authorities in respect of Short Breaks and Pathfinder authorities are expected to meet the Full Service Offer by 31 March 2010.
- 3.3 The Guidance in full can be found at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc
- 3.4 Together for Disabled Children were appointed by the Department for Children, Families and Schools to monitor the progress of local authorities and provide support where needed. A number of meetings have been held with their local programme advisor and a series of regional meetings have been organised as an opportunity for local authorities to meet together and share experience.
- 3.5 Although North Yorkshire are on track to meet the requirements of the Full Service Offer, North Yorkshire's Pathfinder has been assessed recently by TDC as needing a high level of support specifically around revising the spending plan.
- 3.6 There are two online tools to monitor progress. The first is a Project Monitoring tool which details the provision of short break activities with progress against milestones and records spending against projections. Since April 2009, reports are made on a quarterly basis which are analysed by TFDC and reported to the DCSF and the local authority's short break lead. It is not publicly available. The second is a 'Tracker' tool which also measures progress but is anonymised and publicly available. This is updated by the short break lead as each stage is met.

4.0 **The Project Plan**

4.1 The project plan has recently been reviewed by a task group of the Pathfinder Board. Progress has been made with all the developments that were proposed in the original project plan and no major revisions are recommended. It was acknowledged however, that in some aspects of the plan, progress has been slower than anticipated and that projections should be revised. In particular, Contract Care has not produced the number of approved carers expected and extending the reach of short break services to eligible children who are not already known to children's social care has been limited. It has also been identified that short break provision is not consistent across the county; some areas simply do not have service providers able to provide what is needed. However, work is ongoing to improve this and there is evidence to show that many children and parents are receiving higher levels of short break support. Local commissioning by disabled children's teams has helped to develop local provision to meet the needs of disabled children and has improved the range and quality of provision. Disabled children and young people have access to more activity opportunities, both specialist and inclusive.

4.2 **Management Capacity and Leadership**

Membership of the Pathfinder Project Board was reviewed in June 2009 and new terms of reference were agreed. The Board meets every 2 months and reports progress to the LDD strategy group through the chair of the board.

4.3 Additional management capacity in Children's Social Care has been achieved by the appointment of .2 FTE Service Manager in Disabled Children's Service (West) and .5 FTE Deputy Service Manager in DCS (East). All three DCS teams now have the same level of management and this enables the Service Managers to take a lead on County and local commissioning and to work closely with PCT colleagues on Continuing Care packages. Administrative support to the Project Lead and the Board is available and averages 10 hours per week additional resource to underpin the Pathfinder and begin to meet data collection requirements.

4.4 It was identified that additional staffing capacity was needed to co-ordinate the programme and a programme manager was appointed in May 2009. More recently the PCT has also appointed a manager to lead on short breaks and regular meetings are held between the local authority and the PCT to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

4.5 **Development of Contract Care**

Contract Care Fostering Schemes are well researched and appear a good way to provide severely disabled children a regular family based short break with skilled and trained carers where professionalism is rewarded with a commensurate fee. In North Yorkshire tenders were invited from the Third Sector and this has led to the appointment of 6 providers. The scheme became operational in Jan 2009 but it has proved more difficult than anticipated for matches to be made which meet the needs of those children who it was felt would benefit from family based overnight short break provision. Meetings are held with the providers to explore what the obstacles are and how they can be overcome.

Increase availability of residential short breaks.

4.6 The Project Plan included the development of in house residential provision. As a consequence four new Children's Resource Centre Worker posts have been created. These posts have enabled an increase in the number of nights available in CRCs and improved matching for children whose needs are complex. Additional staffing capacity has also helped develop outreach and day care services by Resource Centres. Additional nights have also been purchased from Action for Children which provides residential short breaks in the east of the county. Further development of the residential facility is detailed in the Capital Plan.

4.7 **Family based or individual day care.**

Traditional Short Breaks have continued through the Umbrellas Scheme though the contract with Barnardos and Action for Children has been renegotiated. An approved provider list has been developed for organisations able to provide care in the child's own home, including overnight, and personal assistants/supporters able to help children and young people take part in community based activities. Existing sessional workers who provide both individual and group activities will be managed in the future through the CRC's as part of their outreach developments.

4.8 **Specialist holiday schemes and weekend clubs**

There are some children and young people who need specialist provision and this is currently provided on a spot purchase basis or by in house staff. External agencies are being invited to tender for a new contract with the local authority and this should be completed early in the New Year.

4.9 **Development of extended school provision, children's centre provision and youth work provision to include disabled children and young people.**

Each Integrated Services Manager has been allocated a budget to help develop provision within universal services for eligible children, particularly those who are not already known to disabled children's teams. The work has been slow to develop in some parts of the County but awareness and understanding is growing and each area is constructing an action plan.

4.10 **Develop the capacity of NYCC outdoor centres to offer short breaks**

A half-time development worker was appointed and due to the success of the programme he has been made full time. The development worker has provided a range of exciting opportunities for disabled children and young people to take part in outdoor activities such as canoeing, climbing and camping. He purchased some specially adapted bikes which have been used in different settings around the county and other specially adapted equipment is being purchased e.g. climbing wall, sailing boat. A small dormitory at East Barnby Outdoor Education Centre is being specially adapted and equipped so that young people with mobility difficulties can enjoy a residential experience. There are plans to add to the staffing capacity at Bewerley Park Outdoor Education Centre so that more disabled children and young people can enjoy an activity on the west side of the county.

4.11 **Capital Plan.**

(i) A major adaptation has been undertaken on a contract carer's home to enable them to provide short breaks for children with complex health care needs, including moving and transfer,
(ii) An adaptation of a council owned building near Harrogate to create a small residential overnight short break centre for children with ASD/ASC and Challenging Behaviour. This has not progressed as fast as anticipated but should be able to start offering over night stays by August 2010. However, it is planned to begin the staff recruitment process in Jan 2010 so that they can begin getting to know the young people in advance.

The second residential strand is to consider more appropriate use of The Ghyll CRC in Skipton and Nidderdale CRC in Killinghall by adapting these resources to meet assessed need. A Project Manager has been seconded to lead on the residential and building aspects of the Capital Plan.

4.12 **Strengthen families involvement in short breaks service development.**

A key strand in the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme is the involvement of parents and carers and local authorities are expected to achieve various objectives as part of the Full Service Offer. A consultation questionnaire was sent to parents in Oct/Nov 2008 and a report presented in May 2009. Parents who completed the questionnaire were also asked if they would like to get more involved in parent participation and those that replied in the affirmative were invited to an event in March 2009, facilitated by North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations. This has led to the setting up of a Parent Forum structure (a central group and 3 locality groups) and is supported by NYFVO with help from the short breaks programme manager and the parent partnership manager. It is a fledgling structure and is struggling with building participation across such a large, rural county. 3 places were allocated on the Pathfinder Board for parent representation and by January 2010 these places will have been filled. The Board will be considering what further resources are needed to build truly effective and representative participation.

4.13 **Improved participation of disabled children and young people in service development.**

A small group of ex-service users was brought together at the end of 2008 and they formed a young people's participation steering group, calling themselves the Flying High to See the Way Group. They have made a DVD and undertaken a consultation with children who attend special schools about what sorts of activities they already do and what they would like to do in the future. A report has been written and presented in a number of meetings in order to help shape the type of services that are commissioned. The group is being expanded to make it more representative of children across the county and Barnardos have a contract to support the development of young people's participation. Links have been made with the Children's Rights officer and the Voice and Influence manager to establish the voice of disabled children within wider council young people's participation forums.

5.0 Eligibility Criteria

- 5.1 The Guidance suggests that Local Authorities might wish to revise their eligibility criteria in line with the new level of resourcing. North Yorkshire criteria was revised after a very long process including consultation with users and partners and

was published at the end of 2007. The criteria is based on the Framework for Assessment and is a model that is based on need not deficit.

- 5.2 Managers in Children's Social Care have suggested revisions to the criteria that increase services to high level users, that move the levels of service to ensure more users and allow for more flexibility of service response at all levels. We believe that this approach will increase access, quality and matching needs to appropriate levels of delivery. In light of the recent Islington ruling, the eligibility criteria may need to be further reviewed and this needs to be linked to work on integrated assessment and access to short breaks other than through disabled children's teams.

5.3 **Workforce development.**

There is a requirement for all staff involved in delivering a short break to have the training and development opportunities which will enable them to deliver a quality and safe service that meets the needs of disabled children and young people. Work is ongoing to identify the training needs of the existing workforce, what training is already available and what gaps there with a view to developing a training plan that can meet the needs of workers in both universal and specialist settings. Funding has been allocated from the AHDC budget to facilitate this. The PCT are establishing a health support team for the county and part of the role of that team will be to provide training for staff on caring for children with complex health care needs.

5.4 **Information and communication.**

More work is needed to ensure that the Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks Transformation programme is widely communicated to parents, young people and other agencies in a consistent and accessible way. A parent newsletter and a professional's leaflet have been drafted and will be ready early in the New Year. A children's leaflet has been developed but needs some revisions to bring it up to date and TFDC have offered support through a short term consultancy.

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