Review and Redesign of Lancashire's Short Break Offer for Children and Young People with Disabilities – Summary of Findings

The feedback from the engagement with parents and carers, children and young people and Lancashire Break Time providers provided as part of the review has provided the following key points:

Lancashire Break Time

- Lancashire Break Time meets the needs of many families and is valued.
- Families and providers want short break services that enable them to plan ahead.
- Families want choice and flexibility, with activities near their home
- Families want their children to be involved in meaningful activities, aimed at their interests and which help them to gain skills and independence whilst promoting inclusion.
- Families value skilled, experienced staff who know their children, can communicate with them and manage their needs and behaviours.
- A number of families indicated they were willing to pay more for holiday clubs and after school clubs if these met their needs
- Suggestions for specific activities were made by children and young people and parents and carers.
- · Providers identified challenges in meeting complex needs

There were a range of views and conflicting perspectives shared in relation to a number of aspects of Lancashire Break Time:

- how to ensure a fair and equitable offer
- the priorities e.g. short breaks in holidays or after school clubs
- · provision of transport to short breaks
- age range
- school based activities

There was consistency in the view that Lancashire Break Time activities should be accessible to children who have had a statutory social care assessment of need.

Day-time and night-time short breaks

- The current criteria for Lancashire Break Time prevented access by children and young people who received short breaks following an assessment
- Challenges for families in managing direct payments and finding a carer
- Lack of flexibility allowed in the use of direct payments
- Families wanted increased access to night-time short breaks.

• Lack of clarity about the criteria to access night-time short breaks

Lancashire break time, day-time and night-time (overnight) short breaks

- Families want services and opportunities for their children that are equitable and similar to those that can be accessed by children and young people who do not have disabilities.
- The information offer could be improved as:
 - Information about short breaks is not reaching all families that would benefit.
 - Methods of communicating information other than digitally should be considered.
 - Schools and other professionals should have a better knowledge about what is available.
 - There are activities on a local basis which are not widely known.
- There isn't sufficiency of appropriate child care to enable families to work.

The feedback demonstrates the diverse range of views and the challenge of providing short break services which meet everyone's needs. There was no consensus in the feedback about the priorities or the operating model. The aim is to ensure that the short break offer meets the needs of as many families as possible.

Activity	Activity & Findings
Desktop Activity	Short Break Offer Review A review of the Short Break Offers of 21other Local Authorities was undertaken. These local authorities were selected on the basis of:
	 Being statistical neighbours - Calderdale, Nottinghamshire, Kent, Bury, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Stockport, Sefton, Stockton-on-Tees; accessibility of online information about short-breaks (the Local Offer); identified as examples of a short break offer in statutory guidance on Short Breaks - Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Kent, Rochdale, Calderdale, Derbyshire; Short Breaks positively referred to in Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability Inspection outcome letters – Wiltshire, Calderdale, Nottinghamshire, Barking and Dagenham, Bath and North East
	Somerset, Liverpool, Ealing, Devon; • Positive inspection judgements following an Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services - Hertfordshire, Rotherham, Stockport, Nottinghamshire The Local Offers and online information directories of the 21 local authorities were considered in relation to the eligibility criteria applied to access short breaks, parental contribution to the cost of a short break,

application/registration/assessment processes, the type and amount of short breaks on offer and how short breaks were delivered.

Findings

The local authorities reviewed offered a range of similar activities such as sports clubs, youth clubs and arts and crafts. Examples of good practice from other local authorities included an online 'what's on' calendar, flexible short break timings, grants given directly to families for clubs and activities, flexibility of short break offer and choice, discount cards for days out and activities. Families were able to choose activities from a range of options. Some Local Authorities offer residential holidays and adapted accommodation such as caravans as part of their offer. The parental contribution to short breaks ranged between £1 and £25 per short break session and up to £40 for a two-day residential trip. Prices are dependent on the activity and the length of the session.

Eligibility criteria varied across local authorities. In relation to age range, in 4 local authorities the upper age range was up to 19 (Hertfordshire, Wiltshire, Rochdale, Sefton). Most offered short breaks to those under the age of 18 years old. Access methods also varied, as did delivery methods. Several local authorities operated an annual application process (Hertfordshire, Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Stockton on Tees). Different operating models were in place across the local authorities reviewed.

Short Break Offer of Lancashire County Council

Lancashire Break Time

Please refer to the Cabinet Report for details

Day-time and Night-time Short Breaks

- These are specifically for families with children who require higher levels of support.
- They are only available to children and young people who have had a social care assessment and where short breaks are identified as part of a plan of support. The assessment will identify the needs of the individual child/young person and also consider the needs of parents and carers, siblings and the family as a whole. Short breaks for one or more members of a family may be considered appropriate, and the best approach to providing these will be determined.
- Night-time short breaks may be provided following an assessment where it has been identified that overnight short breaks are necessary to meet needs.

- Night-time short breaks may be provided in the child/young person's home through a commissioned provider or direct payments carer; in the home of a carer; in a foster placement or in a specialist short break unit/children's home
- Direct payment carers are often people familiar to the child/young person and parents and carers. Often they may work at the school attended by the child/young person. Direct payments are not suitable for families who cannot identify anyone to be their direct payments carers or who do not want to arrange their own carers.

Please refer to the Cabinet Report for details.

Findings

Lancashire Break Time

Relevant data is reported in the Cabinet Report. However in analysing the information on Lancashire Break Time, a number of key points were evident:

- Providers submit the basic details of children and young people who attend Lancashire Break Time to Lancashire in order to receive funding on a monthly basis. This data is collated by Lancashire County Council using a spreadsheet process.
- The data provided does not easily support collation and analysis and there are errors or discrepancies which require 'cleansing'. There is no unique identifier for each child or young person to support data accuracy.
- Providers have their own registration system for children and young people to access Lancashire Break Time activities there is no consistently used application/registration form.
- The information returned by providers does not enable the Local Authority to have information about the type of need providers are meeting which does not support the targeting of services to ensure the most effective use of resources.
- In the 2018-19 Lancashire Break Time data, the level of error/inaccuracy and extent to which the criteria for Lancashire Break Time has not been adhered to, was not analysed in detail due to the disproportionate amount of time this would take.
- The following table provides a breakdown of the age range of Lancashire Break Time attendees in 2018-19:

Age range	Number of children/young people	No. of hours
24/25	2	137
22/23	3	174
20/21	24	998

19	34	2776
18	47	2565
16/17	144	9096
14/15	201	12,930
12/13	217	12,866
10/11	200	14,101
8/9	187	10,714
6/7	118	5967
5	21	838
4	3	49
2/3	2	32
1	0	0
4 months	1	15
TOTAL	1204	73,258

- The 2018-19 data of Lancashire Break Time attendees identifies that a number of children/young people attended who do not fit the criteria:
 - they were receiving short breaks following an assessment
 - they were children looked after
 - they were over the age range.
- Whilst the criteria is clear on the Local Offer and to providers at point of providing Lancashire Break Time
 activities, compliance with this criteria is not. There is also confusion by parents and carers in relation to which
 activities are Lancashire Break Time activities feedback from parents and carers indicates that some parents
 and carers were not aware the activity attended by their child or young person was a Lancashire Break Time
 activity and funded by Lancashire County Council as part of the short break offer. Some providers proactively
 advertise this, some don't.
- These findings highlight the need for a more effective and efficient way to enable providers to submit accurate data to Lancashire County Council which supports effective, efficient analysis and monitoring to ensure

Lancashire Break Time meets the needs of children and young people and families and is an efficient use of resources.

• The following table shows the number of hours accessed by children and young people attending Lancashire Break Time in 2018-19:

Hours accessed	Number of children and young people
600+	1
500+	4
400+	8
300+	11
200+	39
100+	171
90+	22
80+	42
70+	48
60+	43
50+	73
40+	96
30+	111
20+	105
10+	205
0-9	225
Total	1204

• The following table shows the number of children and young people attending Lancashire Break Time, the number of hours of activity delivered and the average number of hours accessed per child or young person by District and across Lancashire:

District	Total number of children/young people	Access under 50 hours	Access over 50 hours	Hours delivered	Average Hours per child/young person (rounded down)
Burnley	230	155	75	11,363	49
Chorley	76	47	29	3881	51
Fylde	70	36	34	4377	62

Hyndburn	131	86	45	6258	47
Lancaster	126	65	61	12,220	96
Pendle	29	20	9	1295	44
Preston	187	120	67	11,009	58
Ribble Valley	12	5	7	857	71
Rossendale	83	59	24	3060	36
South Ribble	79	55	24	5346	67
West Lancashire	103	66	37	6735	65
Wyre	78	32	46	6859	87
Total	1204	746	458	73,260	61

Community and Overnight Short Breaks

- Children and young people may receive personal care support as well as short breaks.
- The range of short break hours provided as part of support following a social care assessment is significant and affected by a number of factors. These can include:
 - Child or young person's needs, behaviours and impact
 - Impact on parents or carers and siblings
 - Parents and carers own needs
 - Family circumstances
 - Child's age
- The children and young people with the highest levels of short break (and personal) care support will have the most complex levels of need. This may include significant health needs and/or life limiting conditions; presenting with behaviours that are significantly challenging for parents and carers; have high levels of supervision need; and may be at risk if their care and support needs are not met. The needs of these children and young people have a significant impact on families. The high levels of support provided to some families enables these children and young people to remain living with their families with the impact mitigated to enable families to continue caring.
- The number of short break hours identified as needed as part of a social care assessment is informed by a
 resource allocation tool which is completed as part of the assessment. This supports decision making and
 consistency.
- Direct Payments are beneficial for a family where they can identify a person to be a carer for the child or young person (often these are extended family, friends or adults known to their child or young person through school)

- and where the family are happy to take responsibility for managing a Direct Payments account which involves being an employer. Some families do not want the additional demands and stress this places on them.
- Under the current commissioning framework for day-time and night-time short breaks, the hourly cost of support can vary significantly between providers. The numbers of providers on the framework cannot meet demand. Due to the level of demand, particularly in some geographical areas and for some types of need, the cost of support for some families is significantly higher than it would be if provided by a provider on the framework or through a Direct Payments carer.

Short Break Service Parent/Carer Survey

An online survey for parents and carers who had used a short break service from April 2018 until October 2019 was undertaken. The survey was designed in collaboration with the Parent Carer Forum. The survey was live between 24 September 2019 and 21 October 2019. 325 responses were received.

Findings

Responses were received from parents and carers in all twelve districts of Lancashire. **Appendix B** contains the responses to the survey and comments from parents and carers.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to select the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with thirteen statements. **Appendix C** shows the responses to these statements in further detail.

Key points are as follows:

- The majority of respondents thought there should be more holiday, evening and weekend clubs, with the strongest response being in relation to holiday clubs (91.53%). 74.23% of respondents agreed that there should be more short break activities and clubs provided by schools
- 38.25% of respondents agreed that Short break services should only be accessible after a needs assessment. 42.8% disagreed with this statement. 28.07% neither agreed/disagreed or didn't know
- 92.06% of respondents felt that families should be able to access different types of short break activities to meet their needs
- 31.72% of respondents agreed with the statement that the parent/carer financial contribution to short break activities like Lancashire Break Time should be increased. 30% of respondents disagreed with this. 38.27% of respondents neither agreed/disagreed or didn't know
- 79.39% of respondents agreed there should be an increase in the different type of short break activities to choose from

Face to Face Meetings with Parents and carers

In addition to the Short Break Survey, 14 Face to Face Meetings were arranged to take place at a range of venues across Lancashire, at a range of times and for a duration of 90 minutes. These meetings were attended by 50 parents in total. The meetings focussed on:

- gaining a greater understanding of what parents and carers and families need from a short break service offer
- how these needs can be met
- how the current short break offer met these needs and gaps
- how needs could be met going forwards what should be done the same / differently?

The opportunity to meet with parents and carers and discuss the short break offer and the information gained from these discussions was invaluable and has shaped the proposed options explored and recommendations.

Findings

Key themes from these meetings were as follows:

What parents and carers need:

- Flexibility and choice start/end times, duration, choice around type of activity
- Families valued their children being cared for by experienced, skilled and consistent staff who knew their children
- More availability
- Fair access
- Children and young people's needs to be met and behaviours managed

Strengths of the current short break offer:

- Lancashire Break Time activities were valued by a large number of families and met their needs well.
- School based provision
- Experienced staff
- Activities/clubs set up by parents (e.g. Slime for Fun, Rossendale Rays)

Gaps:

- Not enough places to meet local demand, particularly holiday clubs
- Disabled children and young people don't have the same opportunities/range of activities as children without disabilities
- Activities which can meet the needs of children with behaviours that challenge, complex health needs, children that need specialist equipment, children that need 2:1 support

- Swimming, outdoor pursuits-type activities including residential activities
- Activities for 0-6 year olds and older young people
- Information about short break activities accuracy, accessibility, information about specific activities
- Activities available for families together
- Child care provision to enable parents to work
- Transport to activities
- Geographical gaps in provision some families have to travel an unreasonable distance to access an activity

Going forwards – views shared:

- Lancashire Break Time should continue. Families should be able to access this without an assessment
- Linking providers with schools to use facilities
- Support through volunteers
- More forward planning by providers to support parents to plan
- Access for providers to equipment to increase accessibility (e.g. hoists to support moving and handling)
- Various suggestions made to support fair access
- Links with employers and community facilities to promote activities and short break opportunities (e.g. leisure centres, cinemas)
- Various suggestions made to support information sharing and awareness
- A number of parents and carers indicated they would be willing to pay for holiday club if there was availability and flexibility to support them with childcare to work

Provider Engagement Workshops

Two provider workshops were held on 18 November 2019 attended by 33 providers of Lancashire Break Time and the Chair of Lancashire's Parent Carer Forum. The workshops focussed on discussing information gathered as part of the short break review up to that point; sharing with providers what parents and carers had shared as part of the Parent and Carer Survey and Face to Face Meetings and what POWAR members had shared. This included what parents and carers had identified that working well, important factors of a short break for families, the support parents and carers identified children and young people as needing at a short break, and what sorts of short breaks parents and carers had said they would like going forwards. The workshop attendees were tasked with considering the following questions:

- Tell us what it is that you are already doing well and what is working
- What are your creative ideas/solutions?
- What would you like to see happen to improve the services?
- How can we support you to deliver what families are asking for?
- What might this provision reasonably cost?

Findings

The key themes were:

- Local authority commissioning arrangements and the impact on the ability of providers to deliver services do not support forward planning well in advance
- Funding levels do not allow for staffing to meet complex needs or meet the needs of children who need high levels of support
- Providers value the opportunity to continue to meet with each other, the local authority and parents and carers
 to improve the short break offer and develop relationships and improve communication a regular provider
 forum meeting was proposed
- Challenges of how to manage demand fairly

Short Break Service Offer Redesign Workshops

Two workshops were held on 26.11.19 and 11.12.19 in Preston for parents and carers, providers and partners. Each workshop had a different focus. The aim of the first workshop was to discuss the information gathered so far as part of the review and to start to consider options and priorities for the offer. The aim of the second workshop was to consider the preferred options and priorities from the first workshop and bring these together into a model for a redesigned short break offer.

The Workshops were co-hosted and facilitated by Local Authority officers and the Parent Carer Forum. There were 65 attendees in total involving representatives from schools, providers, parents and carers, health services, Children's Services, wider Lancashire County Council partners and Lancashire Parent/carer Forum.

Workshop 1

The task set was for the workshop attendees to discuss in mixed groups, five points:

- Fair access & criteria
- Increase in choice and provision opportunities and barriers
- Budgets & Cost
- Options what other Local Authorities do
- Information

The current Lancashire Break Time criteria and the short break offers of Hertfordshire, Wiltshire, Rotherham, Calderdale, Nottinghamshire and Somerset were considered.

Workshop 2

The focus of discussions at Workshop 1 had been around Lancashire Break Time. Discussions at Workshop 2 focussed on 3 potential options/scenarios for an unassessed short break offer going forwards. Several variations of each option were presented for consideration. Attendees were asked to consider the benefits/strengths of each options and the negative aspects.

- Scenario A: Continuation of Lancashire Break Time The features of 2 potential options for this outlined, including continuation as it is and a maximum offer.
- Scenario B: 3 options were proposed a 'Grant' of a certain amount for parent carers to use as they want to meet short break needs for the year; 'offer' of a set number of sessions/hours at a chosen Lancashire Break Time provider; combination of both a set number of hours/sessions
- Scenario C: Means-tested offer 2 means tested options were proposed including an option for secondary age children to get a higher level of offer than primary.
- The criteria for accessing an unassessed offer was also a discussion point

Findings

Workshop 1

Workshop 1 provided the first opportunity for parents and carers, providers, local authority officers and partners to discuss the short break offer together. The issues and themes identified from the discussions were:

Funding

- Greater transparency was requested about the allocation of funding.
- There were mixed views about whether funding should be used to provide transport
- Suggestion that funding should be weighted according to level of need of a child or young person or whether different types of need should attract different funding.
- There was general consensus that families shouldn't be provided with funding directly and that a contribution towards the cost of an activity should continue, although again there was no consensus in whether this should continue at its current level, be subject to a slight increase or reflect the cost of the activity.
- Providers raised a number of issues in relation to funding and the difficulties associated with maintaining high quality provision without longer-term assurance about the funding that would be available.

Quality of information

This was raised as a key issue - included concerns about the clarity of the eligibility criteria and general
accessibility of the information to all families. It was believed that more could be done to provide information
and for information to be provided in different forms.

Eligibility criteria, access and fairness

- There were differing views on whether services should be accessed with or without an assessment, or whether existing assessment information could be used in determining eligibility.
- Concerns were raised by some participants about whether paid carers should have access to short breaks; whether the age range should be extended and whether the criteria for overnight short breaks was too stringent.
- There should be access to school facilities as a short break venue at weekends and holidays
- Training to meet children's needs was identified as a big issue for providers
- It was considered by some participants that greater parity would be achieved through a 'central booking system'.

Choice and flexibility

- Concerns were raised about whether the offer was sufficient to meet the needs of children and young people with particular types of needs.
- Greater choice was seen as desirable.
- Specific issues raised relating to short breaks offered by schools as they were often seen to be limited to children and young people attending the particular school that offered the short break.
- There should be more choice how personal budgets are used.
- Concern was raised about options for families in a crisis

Workshop 2

Scenario A: Continuation of Lancashire Break Time

Key points raised were:

- Strengths of Lancashire Break Time were discussed.
- Equity of provision and funding for providers consistent quality standards for Lancashire Break time, smaller number of providers with a wide range of provision identified as a potential approach going forwards.
- There needs to be some criteria discussions around how access criteria should be managed.
- Needs improved booking / administrative processes
- Needs to be affordable suggestion that parental contribution should be to the activity and not the support, it shouldn't be means tested and should be the same for everyone
- Activities should be measured in hours not sessions consistency of language to support clarity an understanding
- Providers identified current funding levels does not support them to staff groups safely and provide 1:1 support.

- Implications of the minimum wage and inflation. Funding requested to be provided on an annual basis to support planning.
- Suggestion to combine Lancashire Break Time and direct payments to enable more access
- Some holiday clubs at schools are restricted to pupils only. Access should not be restricted by type of school attended.
- Access to Lancashire Break Time shouldn't be limited by where you live or go to school more choice and flexibility
- Parental contribution is a reasonable expectation
- Concerns about limited child care for disabled children

Scenario B: 'Grant', 'Offer' of a set number of sessions/hours, combination of both

- Several positive aspects of a grant offer were identified, including that this would provide a high level of flexibility. However there was a consensus that this was not a favoured option
- Concern that it may not be used appropriately and that it would not as effectively meet needs. However also acknowledged that people who really needed the offer would use it properly.
- Uncertainty for providers does not provide certainty of funding and therefore stability of provision and forward planning. Therefore creates uncertainty for families
- Suggestion of open access to activities during holiday times so families weren't tied to set start/finish times, promoting flexibility.
- A set number of hours/sessions would provide a guaranteed offer for the year ahead

Scenario C: Means-tested offer

- There was a consensus that a means tested offer was not a favoured offer concerns raised about this being intrusive for families, would be a form of assessment and would require resources. Acknowledgement however that this would target funding to those most in need.
- Discussion that different ages don't necessarily equate to differing needs and less of a break needed for parents and carers
- Consensus that support and activities available should be based on needs not age
- Concern raised about suitability of activities for over 18 year olds provided by adult services

Criteria

Discussions around the criteria that could be applied to access Lancashire Break Time-type activities did not result in an agreement that could inform proposals for the new short break offer. The challenge in formulating an agreed criteria was evident. However the following key points were made:

- Fairness is not 'first come/first served'. Acknowledgement that funding is finite and limited should everyone be able to access some support to meet needs?
- Parents and carers should pay for an activity as they would a non-disabled child
- Cost of the support is the issue
- Differing views in relation to having a limiting age range criteria and whether looked after children, children with assessed packages of support and paid foster carers should be able to access Lancashire Break Time activities.
- If the age range stops at age 18, it should be the end of the school year
- Criteria needs to be clear
- Suggestion of the education, health and care plan as a criteria for access
- Children and young people in 52 week / 38 week residential placements should not be able to access unassessed short breaks
- Criteria should not be based on benefits and shouldn't be invasive
- Transport should be considered on an individual basis/rural areas. Parents and carers could contribute to transport costs
- Parental contribution should be £1 or £2 per hour

Young People's Questionnaire

An online questionnaire for children and young people went live on 29 November 2019 until 31 December 2019 asking young people the following questions:

- Which short break activities, clubs or trips do you like?
- Why do you like them?
- Is there anything that could make them better?
- Which activities, clubs or trips would you like in the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the activities, clubs or trips?

44 responses from young people were received.

Findings

The main themes from this questionnaire were:

- Young people reported to enjoy a range of indoor and outdoor activities including sports, dance, arts and crafts
 and trips to a variety of venues. Trips were reported to be fun enabling children and young people to do things
 they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to. A mix of provision is enjoyed including after school clubs,
 holiday clubs, day trips and overnight stays:
 - 'Going to the seaside, parks, the cinema, the space centre. Doing activities that I wouldn't normally get to do (canoeing, den building, camp fires).'

• The majority of responses noted that they liked being able to socialise with their friends. Lots of references to trips being fun and entertaining. Several comments on the respite the activities provide and assistance with childcare:

'I get to do things with my friends, without my parents in a suitable and safe environment.'

- Several comments did not want change as they are happy with current provision. Majority of respondents would like more availability, offered in more locations. Improved advertisement was also suggested:
 'More accessible-sometimes they are full so we can't always book on'. Several respondents recommended Increase the variety of trips out, several suggestions to go camping and on bus trips.
- Young people suggested lots of activities they would enjoy. The majority involved trips out, for example, bowling, cafes, cinema, swimming, horse-riding, trampolining and trips to the seaside. Also more sensory activities, music clubs and opportunities for quiet activities.
- There was further praise for the current provision. Concerns that if the activities stop they won't be able to see their friends and will become isolated:

'I love seeing my friends and feeling included'.

One response noted the respondent would be happy to pay for provision.

Face to Face Meetings with children and young people

Face to face engagement sessions took place in January and February 2020 which involved two hour workshops led by Barnardos, the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Partnership Team. They were hosted in 5 different settings to cover primary, secondary, mainstream and special schools.

90 children and young people participated in these engagement sessions. It gave them an opportunity to present their views in a format that wasn't an online survey. Children and young people were asked what they liked about short breaks and they worked together to come up with ideas of what they would like to see in the future, or what could make the current short break activity offer better.

Findings

The key themes from these sessions were that children and young people wanted:

- to take part in outdoor activities, such as sports, gardening and fishing.
- to go to clubs where they would feel active, explore and have fresh air, meet new people and have a break away from their families.
- computer based and gaming clubs were a popular suggestion
- clubs where they could talk to people and express their worries or concerns

Many young people felt that having a safe place to go to, amongst others their age, would be something that
they would like in the future. Clubs or activities like this, in the past, have helped them to feel "confident,"
"included" and "appreciated."

The feedback from children and young people will be used to inform the recommissioning of short break services going forwards.