

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Meeting to be held on 16 April 2013

Electoral Division affected: All

Lancashire Break Time

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on progress of the *Lancashire Break Time*, the provision of short breaks for children and young people with disabilities and their families.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement is asked to note the report and comment as appropriate.

Background and Advice

In 2008, the Government launched a transformation programme for disabled children's services in England called *Aiming High for Disabled Children*. The vision behind *Aiming High for Disabled Children* was for all families with disabled children to have the support they need to live ordinary family lives, as a matter of course. There were several strands to the programme, one of which was the provision of a short breaks programme. This short breaks programme was targeted at specific groups of children with disabilities through what was known as the Full Service Offer.

The rationale behind this programme was that families with disabled children had told the Government that their number one priority was "for a regular and reliable break from caring". Children and young people with disabilities had also told them that they wanted "more things to do and more places to go".

The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme in Lancashire was very successful with approximately 1,600 families receiving short breaks commissioned from over 100 third sector providers in all parts of the county. However, at the end of March 2011, the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme came to an end as central Government funding ceased. Recognising the value of *Aiming High for Disabled Children*, Lancashire County Council committed to invest £3.5 million for each of two years to put in place a programme of short breaks to enable families of children and young people with disabilities in the

area to continue to benefit from a break from their caring role. In making the announcement the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools was clear that the decision on how this money should be spent should primarily be driven through parental consultation.

A group of parents/carers, supported by Lancashire County Council officers, established a sub-group of the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum to identify and deliver a range of short breaks across the twelve districts under the name of *Lancashire Break Time*.

The parents/carers involved in the development of the *Lancashire Break Time* programme have shown passion and commitment and genuine and unwavering desire to secure a programme of short breaks to benefit all families and children with disabilities in Lancashire.

One of the early decisions of the sub-group was to define who would benefit from the programme as it was universally agreed both here in Lancashire and in other local authorities that the criteria to access the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme was too restrictive and led to inequity in access to short break provision for children with different disabilities. It was felt particularly by parents that there was a need to ensure that no child with an additional need or disability would be disadvantaged. Thus, it was agreed that *Lancashire Break Time* would provide a non-assessed break via self-referral through the following criteria:

“A child or young person who lives in Lancashire with disabilities or additional needs, aged 0 – 18 and who has difficulty accessing universal services.”

During 2012/13 (data to 28 February 2013), *Lancashire Break Time* has delivered a short break for 1,980 children with disabilities and their families across Lancashire. This short break provision has been delivered across the twelve districts of Lancashire through commissioned agreements with 52 providers who have delivered in total 20,222 short breaks which have provided 100,425 hours of care.

The provision is broken down by districts as follows:

District	No. of Short Breaks	No. of Hours Delivered
Burnley	2,608	12,422
Chorley	1,842	8,154
Fylde	1,268	4,314
Hyndburn	864	3,977
Lancaster	1,931	12,769
Pendle	923	2,577
Preston	2,564	10,606
Ribble Valley	413	4,139
Rossendale	1,378	5,541

South Ribble	1,869	8,079
West Lancs	2,489	14,995
Wyre	2,073	12,852
TOTAL	20,222	100,425

These short breaks have been provided in a variety of ways and at various times throughout the year. The types of short break activities that have been delivered are highlighted by the following examples:

- Horse riding
- Swimming
- Youth club
- Bowling
- Gardening
- Construction club
- Arts and crafts
- Trampolining
- Climbing wall
- Dancing/Drama clubs
- Wheels for all
- Football sessions
- Sports Sessions
- Cookery sessions
- Cycling
- Life skills
- Rock climbing/ Zip wire
- Canoeing
- Orienteering
- Abseiling
- Fitness gym
- Multi-sports
- Badminton

These short break activities have been provided at a variety of times throughout the year at weekends, weekdays, and during school holidays. As well as providing short breaks during the daytime, *Lancashire Break Time* has also provided overnight short breaks provision. Information about *Lancashire Break Time* can be found via the Lancashire County Council website at <http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?IDSS/38107>

In delivering some overnight short break provision *Lancashire Break Time* has been working in partnership with Lancashire County Council's Outdoor Education Centres over the course of the last year to develop their provision to ensure that children and young people with disabilities are able to fully access the facilities that these centres have to offer. As a result of this ongoing work *Lancashire Break Time* has commissioned, in partnership with third sector providers, a mixture of overnight short

breaks ranging from one overnight to a five night short break delivered via all four of the Outdoor Education Centres (Tower Wood, Hothersall Lodge, Borwick Hall and Whitehough). Proposals will be put forward later this year for further capital works to be undertaken at the Centres to make them even more accessible in delivering short breaks for children and young people with disabilities.

The figures that are provided are the hard statistics about the amount of provision that has been commissioned through *Lancashire Break Time*. What they don't reflect is the positive and powerful statements that have been made by parents, families and indeed the children themselves, about the benefit to them from receiving and having access to these short breaks.

At the Short Breaks Seminars which were held across the county in September 2012, there was a display of many of the comments received about *Lancashire Break Time* which exemplifies the positive difference that the programme makes to families. Some of the examples of many positive statements made by about *Lancashire Break Time* are:

"After a break I am able to see her lovely personality, not how difficult her needs are"

"My child has visited places and experienced activities that we would never have considered"

"Before Lancashire Break Time we had no free time for ourselves"

"It's been great for our child with additional needs, our marriage and our other children too"

"Without the group my son would not have had the opportunity to make a friend who is "just like me"

Whilst acknowledging that short breaks have been delivered to 1,980 individual children, and hence that number of parents/families have benefitted, the *Lancashire Break Time* sub group understand that there are other families that are not accessing a short break but may be eligible. There may be different reasons for this; they may not feel they need a break or the programme may not meet the families' needs or indeed they may be unaware that *Lancashire Break Time* is in place.

To reach out to as many families as possible and to put in place a programme of regular breaks the *Lancashire Break Time* sub group is looking to develop a pattern of breaks that would give confidence to families that they have a regular break from caring and that the children and young people themselves have regular and reliable access to a range of activities that enables them to develop friendships, undertake activities that they may not have the opportunity to do so otherwise and provides an element of normalisation of childhood.

Children and young people, who do not have additional needs and/or disabilities, enjoy and benefit from being able to undertake activities independent of their parents. Similarly, parents of children without disabilities or additional needs, have

the opportunity for their children to partake in activities with their peers (outside of the family unit) thus increasing their confidence and independence as individuals in the natural progression of development. The *Lancashire Break Time* sub-group holds the strong belief that we should strive for the same opportunity for children with additional needs and disabilities also - this is an added benefit to that of providing the parent/carer with a much needed break.

The *Lancashire Break Time* sub-group has worked extremely hard over the last two years to put in place a robust, effective system to identify and commission a programme of short breaks. There is strong support from parents and carers for it to continue and this was evident at all three of the Short Breaks Seminars held in the September 2012 and in the recent consultation on the Short Breaks Strategy where nine in ten parent/carers representing 91% of all respondents agreed that Lancashire Break Time should continue and be placed on a permanent footing with a dedicated budget. Members of the group are passionate about this agenda and wish to see it continue and evolve to continue and to better meet the needs of families and children and young people with disabilities and additional needs in Lancashire.

Consultations

Lancashire Break Time has been delivered in consultation Lancashire Parent Carers Forum to ensure that the views of parents and cares are adequately reflected in the delivery of the provision. It has also featured in a recent consultation with interested parties on the Short Breaks Strategy for children with disabilities which put forward a number of recommendations for the future shape of provision and service delivery.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Financial implications

The 2012/13 budget for Lancashire Break Time short breaks is £3.5m. The current projected spend for the financial year is £3.0m, a forecast underspend of £0.5m.

Legal implications

The Short Break Services Statement, a requirement of The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, sets out the range of services designed to meet parents' capacity to care for, or continue to care for, their disabled child. The County Council is required to commission these services, but is not required to provide those services directly.

Further, short breaks for children with disabilities will need to be compliant with the SEN and Disability reforms signalled in the draft legislation within the Children and Families Bill which is due to receive Royal Assent with implementation scheduled from April 2014.

Equality and diversity

S.149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the equality duty that public authorities must comply with. This duty requires the decision maker to have due regard to:

- the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other unlawful conduct under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Short Breaks Strategy for Children with Disabilities – Outcomes of a Consultation and Recommendations for Future Shape of Provision and Service delivery	18 March 2013	Sally J. Riley, Head of Inclusion and Disability Support Service, Directorate for Children and Young People 01772 532713

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate