

Short Breaks and Holiday activities meeting – Wednesday 13th November Brighthelm Auditorium

BHCC; PaCC and Parent Carers - notes

The meeting was attended by Council officers from the Short Breaks Team, Specialist Children's Disability, Direct Payments/Personal Budgets and the Wrap Around Childcare Team, together with PaCC Representatives and Parent Carers both in the room and online.

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- **Short Breaks Strategy**

Jacqui Parfit (Head of Families, Children and Learning Services Commissioning) provided a brief update on the draft Short Breaks Strategy. It was recognised that families want this to be accelerated so that focus can move to the operational delivery plan. It's a long document, and trying to work through it all together didn't feel like good use of everyone's time, so instead:

- PaCC will facilitate a representative parent carer working group to look at the draft strategy, provide feedback and provide a framework of areas of what an operational delivery plan should like from a parent carers perspective.
- Jacqui Parfitt said that the draft strategy should be ready to go to a BHCC committee in January 2025.
- Jacqui Parfitt said the work on the strategy is behind due to the Brighton & Hove City council (BHCC) restructure of Directors and Assistant Directors, interviews are taking place this month. The new structure should be ready by January 2025; however, the commissioning of services hasn't stopped.

Fiona England (PaCC Learning Disability and Social Care lead) informed the meeting that:

- PaCC has released a PaCC Social Care Interim Statement (interim because there will be another statement coming out before BHCC budget papers). You can read it here <https://paccbrighton.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PaCC-Social-Care-Interim-Statement-pre-BHCC-budget-papers-2025-2026.pdf>
- PaCC have asked BHCC for additional payment to do facilitate a working group of parent carers to comment on the strategy and to collate the key areas of what an operational action plan from a parent carers perspective should look like. PaCC has asked for budget from BHCC to be confirmed to deliver this important piece of co-production, as PaCC is running beyond budgetary capacity.
- PaCC's aim is to use the PaCC Social Care Interim statement as a working plan for BHCC to use when planning Short Breaks and joint working with the Wraparound Care and Childcare team, and as a benchmark tool for moving forward, to ensure that the key questions/areas recorded in the statement,

are answered/met. PaCC are clear that data sets that evidence the numbers of CYP eligible for Short Breaks and or asking for Wraparound Care are used to inform commissioning.

- **Short Breaks planning**

Katie Rowe (SEN & Alternative Provision Commissioning Officer) reported on the planning for 2025 Short Breaks, which will be in place from Easter 2025.

- Grant agreements are being reviewed in the coming weeks, and a request for expressions of interest are being sent out to the current short breaks' providers with a deadline of 29th November 2024 to apply; the reviewed list of providers is planned to be available for the community at the next Short Breaks meeting, which is planned for Wednesday 15th January 2025 (11:30 – 1:30pm), at Hove Town Hall.
- The review takes into consideration all the feedback received from parents around provision, including longer day, more activities for children with complex needs, more 1:1 provision, appropriate venues, best resources, more provision for under 5's and over 16's.
- BHCC expects the same providers to renew their contracts, and for the offer at Tudor House and Drive Road to be developed to increase capacity.
- The review is also looking at how the existing budget has been used and to reconsider how this budget can be used more efficiently going forward; BHCC say they must be more creative with the budget whilst recognising the need to expand the specialist offer.
- Katie Rowe is looking to confirm the venues across the city for specialist provisions.
- Katie Rowe acknowledged that the offer needs to develop for the under 8s and over 16s, and for longer days to be available.
- Jacqui Parfitt hopes that the 24/25 budget will remain for 25/26.

Parents commented that:

- The offer needs be promoted ahead of time so that parents can plan their working patterns and family arrangements, and how the information is shared is key to make sure that all families hear at the same time and that there is 'fairness' in knowing when bookings are open.
- BHCC needs to be confident that the information on Short Breaks has been shared widely throughout the community
- Social workers and social work resource officers should work with their families to ensure planning takes place well ahead of all holidays, and for the Short Breaks team and providers to get a clearer understanding in advance of the demand, to ensure better planning and provision.

- PaCC have suggested that information about the Short Breaks programme can be shared at Annual Reviews and Parents evenings, and flyers in home to school bags.
- Communication about Short Breaks from special schools must improve by sending via email to a dedicated data base to all families. All families must hear about the offer at the same time. It was suggested that the Short Breaks team should work with the Special Schools to invite families to sign up to the database to receive direct information.
- The 2025 offer needs to cover the whole of the summer holidays. Families want clear information around what is available and how the process works. An accessible video explaining this was suggested.
- Parents want more transparency about places been offered throughout the year.

Parental concerns:

- It was pointed out that the more successful the Short Breaks become the more families will apply to it. How will this work in the face of no additional budget?
- Families highlighted their concerns around the patchy/minimal wraparound offer available for children with SEND. The after-school club offer at the special schools is very small and needs to be expanded. There is no breakfast club provision available.
- How will BHCC fill the existing gaps in the Short Breaks provision in the holidays when more people apply?
- What's being done to make sure that families go to the right provision? Could HAF be meeting need for some of the children with SEND and FSM eligibility? Is the Short Break offer using its budget where childcare for working family's payments could be used to buy provision instead (and take pressure of what the council is providing?)
- A parent pointed out that providers could offer more/longer (full day) holiday placements, and perhaps families could be asked for a contribution if the budget cannot be stretched. (This might be by using childcare payment for working families or using Direct Payments to pay a contribution/whole cost of daytime provision).
- EEQU remains difficult to navigate. There was a suggestion to have a targeted search for activities on Eequ.
- Parent carers continue to ask that provision is commissioned based on accurate data, how many families are statutorily entitled to this in their care packages, and for others needing short breaks provision and potentially not assessed yet, what percentage of this figure is being offered currently.
- Plans for wraparound care should include the special schools utilising their minibuses. PaCC have had very early conversations with the special school heads re this.

Jacqui Parfitt said these questions and suggestions would be discussed and brought back to a future meeting.

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- **Direct Payments and Personal Budget**

A power points presentation was used during this session – see *attachment no.1*
[*Direct Payments and Personal Budget presentation*](#)

Yvonne Ely, BHCC SEND Independent Consultant talked about inconsistencies and confusion around what a 'Personal Budget' is, and how/when a child/young person might be able to request and be assessed for one. Health, Education, Social Care and Transport are all areas where a Personal Budget might be requested/offered, depending on circumstances, so these are all addressed in the 'Draft Personal Budgets & Direct Payments Policy'. The Draft Policy has been shared with Amaze and PaCC for early comments.

- The Policy is for 0 to 25 years old; at 16 years of age the young person can decide if they want to receive them directly or have someone to manage the budgets for them.
- The policy contains a Personal Budgets Pathways (0 to 25 years) flow-chart which clarifies for everyone how the different budgets work and how/where to apply.
- BHCC is aware that the different areas need to be more joined up; parents need to be properly informed about their choices and BHCC staff must be trained properly to deliver the policy consistently.
- BHCC is also happy to work with parents and hear suggestions. A parent suggested a Parent's Guide with clear information around all the processes including what to do if a family's situation changes in the meantime.

Lorraine Hughes (Head of Service. Specialist Community Disability team) updated the attendees on the Social Care Personal Budget Policy.

Lorraine reiterated how the Direct Payments Policy will mean Education, Health and Social Care will work in a more joined up way. This improvement has already started, with the addition of officers from the SEN team and Home to School Transport attending the Resource Panel.

Parental concerns/comments

- A parent commented that some children with complex needs miss out on services/support, as they are not getting what their EHCP says they should. BHCC were clear that a family should challenge these situations.

- Parents would like to have a better idea of what's available in terms of Occupational therapy, Speech and Language, Physiotherapy etc, and asked if schools should be able to offer and deliver those services. BHCC reiterated that if therapy provision is in section F it must be delivered. Further comment from Parents stated that what a service can provide tends to end up being what is stated as the need (the tail wags the dog) and there is a general feeling that what is offered in terms of therapies falls short of need for many children.
- There's a sense of inequality as some parent carers can 'top up' with private provision. This skews the demand as then they don't show up as 'needing more'.
- Parent Carers who have the 'resource' (knowledge, energy, confidence, money) may take their issues to tribunal, but many don't have the resource.
- BHCC should use the available data on Tribunals, as most Tribunals are won by parent carers. An evaluation would indicate what needs are not being set out fully, and/or which services are not delivering their stated provision.
- A parent asked if Direct Payments can be used for family respite. BHCC said yes, there will be an assessment of needs and Direct Payments can be reallocated to other activities, but the parent needs to make clear what the money is for/why the request for reallocation. BHCC said that Direct Payment requests go to Panel, which includes officers from Education, Health, Social Care and Transport
- A parent pointed out that DBS checks done by the Council take far too long. By contrast, Amaze use a different system that returns the DBS within 24 hours. BHCC say they are looking to improve this; however, some improvements have already been made. If a PA already has an enhanced DBS this can be risk assessed and if agreed by the parent / carer (employer) the PA can start work whilst waiting for their Brighton and Hove DBS to be returned.
- A parent asked whether a family member who is receiving DPs to provide care for a child (if agreed by Panel) must have a DBS. Lorraine stated that anyone providing care to a child must have an enhanced DBS.
- Parents feel overwhelmed by paperwork needed for PAs, an admin job that some families are not able to do. It would be good to have a clear information for parents about process to get a PA. A video on how to do it would be very good and accessible for many parents.
- BHCC are exploring how municipal libraries could be used to help families (and adults) as a place to go for support, especially if people don't have access to their own tech.
- A parent commented that they are unable to recruit a PA as the hourly rate is too low. Some families resort to topping up (if they can afford to) or sacrificing their full number of hours, in order to pay more per hour to the PA. PaCC reminded the room that in BHCCs recently published FAQs, it states that a Direct Payment budget should be sufficient to meet the family's needs as set

out in the Care Plan, PaCC highlighted that if the hourly rate is insufficient to recruit a PA then BHCC are failing their own guidance. Lorraine Hughes replied that families facing this issue must talk to SCDS.

- Parents suggested that it would be good to have more case studies and a more extensive Questions and Answers document.

Feedback from the community following the meeting

- Parent carers want to know who are the commissioned organisations that families can spend Direct Payments on.

PaCC have said that they can facilitate a working group (max of 5/6 people) to look at the Draft Direct Payment Policy and related documents for parent carers. PaCC have asked BHCC for budget to do this.

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- **SEN Educational Personal Budget**

Rhianedd Hughes (Head of Statutory Services) updated the attendees on the Educational personal budget part of the policy which SEN Statutory Service have been piloting – see *attachment n.2 [SEN Education Personal Budgets presentation](#)*

Rhianedd explained that there are some children who receive a Personal Education Budget for some or all their educational needs (set out in their EHCP – but sometimes a child might receive an Educational Budget while they're on the pathway to receiving their EHCP). It's not as 'simple' as equating a Personal Education Budget to just the families who receive Education Other Than at School (EOTAS). In a very small number of cases there may be children on school roll who are receiving a Personal Budget to deliver a specific part of their provision, which can't be met by the Council's existing services. There may be children who are not attending school with an EHCP who receive a Personal Budget.

All current Educational Personal Budgets were looked at as part of the policy development. Most cases are in secondary, and the main areas of special need are pupils with Communication and Interaction and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Sometimes a family receives the Personal Education Budget and are responsible for holding the budget, paying their provider and keeping a financial record. Sometimes a family will be awarded a Personal Budget, but the funds will be 'held' for them by the Council who will make the payments – this is called a 'Notional Budget'. And sometimes families may have a bit of both.

The new document aims to make this much easier to understand for families.

Rhianedd would welcome feedback from PaCC and Parent Carers on the new document. Pippa Hodge agreed to look at the draft application form.

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Wraparound Childcare Programme

Ying Fu, Wraparound Childcare Programme Manager presented this new programme – see *attachment N.3 [Wraparound Childcare Programme 2024](#)*. Also, more information about the programme here [National Wraparound Childcare Programme Handbook - a guide for local authorities](#)

The Programme was launched in March 2024 and will run until March 2026 but the funding for new provision for next financial year is not confirmed. In March 2023, the government announced £289 million in funding to support the expansion of wraparound childcare for **primary school-aged pupils**. The government's ambition is for all parents of primary school-aged children who need it to be **able to access childcare in their local area from 8am to 6pm during term-time**. The programme does not cover school holidays. This is different to out of school activities, or school clubs, which are less frequent and can be a one-off activity.

The purpose of the grant is to support local authorities to increase the supply of wraparound places, to ensure or guarantee provision for all parents who may need it, meeting current demand and building further demand. This will help to ensure that **parents with primary age children have enough childcare to work full time, more hours and with flexible hours**.

This programme aims to increase the availability of childcare, rather than pay for childcare. Parents will need to pay for childcare places, but support with cost is available to eligible parents through Universal Credit childcare and Tax-Free Childcare. The programme funding aims to remove barriers to set up new provision or expanding current provision without needing to have 100% places filled from the start, and the new/expanded provision are expected to be self-sustaining from the end of the programme, with the subsequent parental demand and payments.

There is no legal obligation for schools to provide Wraparound care, but they are meant to engage with the programme; the Team reaches out to schools and support them to implement the Programme. Parents also have the right to request wrap around care at their child's school.

Some schools have clearly said that they struggle with recruitment and the existing staff are not up for working longer hours. Also, many schools are experiencing internal financial difficulties and will not be able to train staff who are then tasked on delivering the programme. There is also an issue with gap between funding and increase on delivery costs, i.e. minimum wages gone up.

The provision is inclusive of all children, including SEND children and it has an ongoing monitoring system.

Schools are encouraged to apply ASAP/by January 2025 as funding for the 2nd year hasn't been confirmed yet; applications can include 1:1.

The Wraparound Programme is for primary school-aged children. The "right to request" wraparound care applies to children up to the end of year 9, or up to age 18 if the child is disabled. Local authorities also have a duty under the Childcare Act

2006 to ensure sufficient childcare for working parents, as far as reasonably practicable, up to the age of 14, or 18 if the child has SEND.

There is also a separate budget for 'Inclusion Funding' which can be used to fund 1:1 support for Ofsted registered after-school and holiday childcare, however the pot has remained static and the relative employment costs have increased considerably. So, the pot is funding fewer hours of childcare overall.

Parent questions/concerns

- Parents raised concerns that they hadn't heard from the special schools asking if they want to request for wraparound care- this is concerning as the data around need won't be accurate.
- Parents suggested that the Programme could become more appealing to schools if successful case studies were circulated among them so to encourage other schools to develop a wraparound programme and apply for funding ahead of deadlines, parents would like to see more breakdown of costs.
- Parent Carers questioned the stark equalities in wraparound childcare for CYP with SEND and their nondisabled peers.
- Parent carers would like to know have the special schools applied for this funding, and if they haven't this needs to be addressed swiftly. Do the special schools accurately know how many families want wraparound care- this figure must be available and accurate?
- Some of the families who rely on Home to School Transport, and who don't have their own vehicle, or who live further from school may not be able to access wrap around provision if the transport needs aren't met (HTST statutory duty doesn't cover before or after the 'school day'). PaCC mentioned that Special School heads are open to using their minibuses where practicable.
- Parent carers feel very frustrated with the continuing conversations around staffing being the issue stopping wraparound care- parent carers want to see solutions to this. Jacqui Parfitt wants to explore commissioning options to address this.
- There is concern over limitations of hourly pay. Can wraparound staff be paid more than TA pay scale? Does this create Union issues for schools? A parent governor from one of the Special Schools shared the issues the specials schools face around pays rates and staff reluctance to take up this work in addition to the school day.
- When schools apply for wraparound care funding, how do they demonstrate SEND inclusion?
- More info on the separate Inclusion Fund scheme is needed, can this be used to pay for 1.1 staffing in special schools to increase the staffing pool.
- Parent carers want more information on HAF and delivering inclusion in holiday clubs.

Ying Fu from BHCC said:

- BHCC are in discussions with a private provider to hopefully set wraparound care up at a community centre near Downs View School.
- Little Lambs who have an excellent SEND focus are close to delivering a service that will collect 5/6 children from Hill Park Lower School and take them back to Little Lambs for an after-school session.
- Ying can provide the list of schools who have applied for wraparound care funding.

Next Steps and Agreed Actions

- If agreed by BHCC to allocate budget to PaCC, PaCC will work with a smaller focus group of representative parent carers to look through the key documents. If you feel able to support and have an interest in any of the specific documents, please do email us admin@pacc.org.uk
- BHCC to confirm budget for parent carers to be involved.
- BHCC to provide a timeline for next steps, actions and to work with PaCC to determine when working group engagement with parent carers will be planned and take place.
- **BHCC to reply to questions and actions ahead of the January meeting, which is planned for Wednesday 15th January 2025 (11:30 – 1:30pm), at Hove Town Hall.**