



Report of: The Corporate Director for Childrens Services

Executive Committee	Date: 10 March 2016	Ward(s): ALL
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SUBJECT: Review of Services for Disabled Children at Lough Road Centre

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report details the work undertaken to review the services at Lough Road. It proposes some changes in order to ensure that these services continue to offer value for money and to redirect the achieved savings into an improved preventative offer for children whose parents struggle to manage severe challenging behaviour as a result of a child's disability.
- 1.2 In this context value for money means the quality of the service itself, the extent to which it is able to meet the intended outcomes for children and their families and the overall cost of the service when benchmarked against similar services elsewhere.
- 1.3 The proposals presented in this report have been produced in partnership with parents who currently use these services and key managers from across Children's Social Care, Pupil Services, health commissioners and Whittington Health as well as Islington's Special Needs Schools. Children and Young People were also consulted during this process.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Islington Council retains the use of Lough Road as a central hub for children with disabilities and their families from where a number of key services will continue to be delivered.
- 2.2 That Islington Council agrees to end the use of Lough Road as an overnight short break service and instead offer parents who need this type of service access to the provider market for specialist placements so that they will have choice over which kind of residential respite service might best meet the needs of their child in future.

3. Background

History of Lough Road and the evidenced need for change

- 3.1 Lough Road Centre has been operating as an overnight residential short breaks (respite care) provision for children with disabilities and continues to operate as a registered children's home for that purpose.
- 3.2 Due to a number of both legislative changes as well as operational changes to the way services are delivered for children with disabilities in Islington the need for children to use overnight respite care in a residential setting has reduced over time. The 3 main reasons for this are:
- a. The Implementation of the Governments Initiative and associated funding streams; Aiming High for Disabled Children (2007)ⁱ. This has resulted in a much more comprehensive offer of community based short breaks provision and the ability for families to create tailored support packages through the use of personal budgets.
 - b. The success of Islington's family based short breaks fostering scheme. Islington Council now has approximately 10 foster families available locally to offer overnight stays for parents who need a break in caring for their child or young person. Historically many of the children who now use this scheme would have been referred to Lough Road. It has been Islington's strategy to reduce the use of residential care for children where they can be offered a family based environment and this has been successful but therefore has reduced the number of children requiring a service from Lough Road.
 - c. The implementation of personalised budgets, which has seen many parents choose to opt out of directly commissioned council services and commission their own services, often recruiting their own support workers and utilising their own family networks to ensure they are able to have a break in caring.
- 3.3 A review of the current service offer at Lough Road was undertaken between December 2013 and May 2015. The review report was then consulted on between July and September 2015. The report can be read at **Appendix A**. The scope of the review was wider than just Lough Road but helps to provide a wider context of the current social care provision for children with disabilities and where gaps were identified or improvements were required in other areas.
- 3.4 In summary, the review evidenced that to keep the centre operating in the current model was not financially sustainable with the unit costs having risen significantly above that of similar services provided elsewhere by other agencies, including some similar services already commissioned by the Council.
- 3.5 The review also highlighted a significant gap in the Council's ability to support parents of children with diagnosed learning difficulties and/or autism, who are struggling to manage very severe and challenging behaviour at home in order to promote family resilience and thus prevent family breakdown. To be able to identify and support parents who are struggling early and put the right support programmes in place can significantly reduce the risk of family breakdown and children coming into care.
- 3.6 The specialist needs of the children and the required specialist residential care and/or education provision in the UK to meet those needs, means that where this cohort of children do end up coming into care they are most often placed at long distances away from home in either residential schools or children's homes.
- 3.7 Many of the children are non-verbal or have severe communication difficulties, some have complex physical care needs and all these factors make them particularly vulnerable when they

are taken out of their family environment, their school and their local community and moved far away into institutional settings.

- 3.8 The cost of an intensive parenting support intervention is far less than the cost of a child with this level of need coming into care. This is evidenced through our experience of delivering a previous invest to save initiative using an intensive intervention with young people with conduct disorders (Adolescent Multi-Agency Support Service), where the weekly cost of an intensive parenting support intervention is £500 per week compared to a weekly residential placement cost of £3000 to £4500 per week.
- 3.9 Therefore any money that could be saved by remodelling the provision of services at Lough Road should be redirected into providing more preventative services to avoid more high cost residential services in the longer term, particularly in light of the rising numbers of children diagnosed with autism.

Consultation and Involvement with services users and key partner agencies

- 3.10 The consultation process with stakeholders, parents and children and young people between July and October 2015 gave lead officers greater insight into the possible impact of the closure of Lough Road. As a result of this the initial proposal to close the centre was halted. A series of stakeholder workshops were held which included parents, which agreed the proposal now brought before the Executive Committee for approval.
- 3.11 A further 2 consultations were held for all parents using Lough Road and for parents not using Lough Road but who are also likely to benefit from the wider offer elements of the new proposal. There is broad consensus on the proposal now put before the Executive. **Appendix B** shows the list of who has been consulted with and engaged with to date.

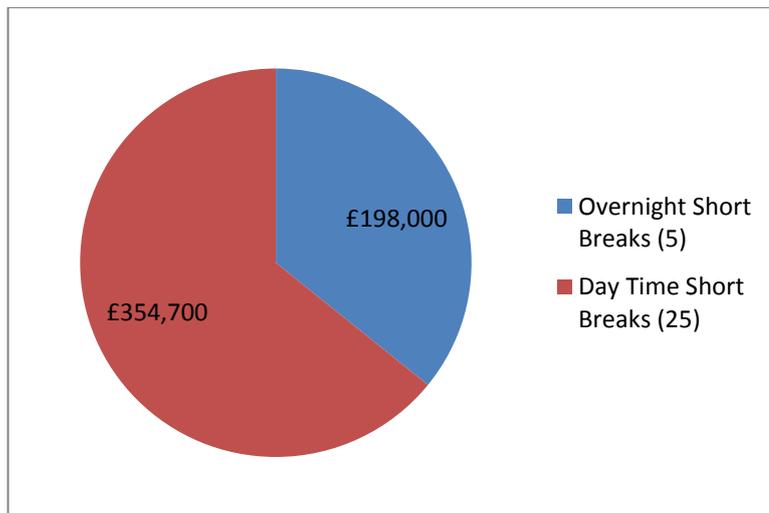
The proposal for Change and the Benefits

- 3.12 The proposal is to retain the building at Lough Road specifically for services to children with disabilities and their families for the following services:
- a) An improved statutory case management offer. This is to address the review finding that social care were not ensuring that families in receipt of social care support have their plans regularly reviewed to make sure that services continue to meet the intended outcomes for children and continue to offer value for money.
 - b) A base for a new intensive outreach support service. This will be aimed at parents who are struggling to manage the behaviour of their child at home and where there is an identified risk of family breakdown or it can be predicted that this is likely to happen in the future if an intensive service offer is not made available now.
 - c) Provision of specialist short break day time services. This will be for children and young people who genuinely are not able to access other council commissioned provision. For this small cohort of children and young people that service will work towards moving children and young people being able to access the wider range of community based services on offer or where they are assessed as not able to do so, support them in the longer term.
- 3.13 In order to release the funding to deliver a) and b) above, it is proposed to end the overnight short break service and redeliver overnight short break services for children who need a residential service in future via the providers that are already set up to do this for many other London boroughs in the private and voluntary sector.
- 3.14 The needs analysis undertaken indicates that there are likely to be approximately 5 young people at any one time requiring this type of service. This figure is unlikely to rise in the next 5 years, in part because in 2017 Islington will see the implementation of the residential arm of the Independent Learning Space (Residential School) federated with The Bridge Special School. A few of the young people who might historically have required residential overnight stays in a children's home and have used Lough Road, would quite likely become pupils using the residential school in future. A significant number of the young people who have used Lough

Road for overnight respite have been and continue to be pupils from The Bridge School and some are already in the Independent Learning Space as day pupils.

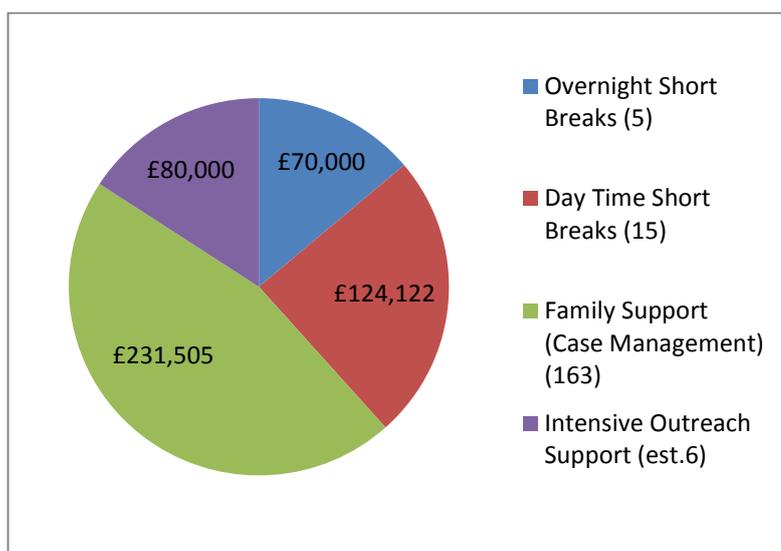
- 3.15 From a financial perspective the benefits are illustrated in the charts below. This shows the current breakdown of spend and how this would change if the proposal is agreed.
- 3.16 The aim is to remodel the services so that the money invested in these services will offer improved value for money.
- 3.17 What is most significant is the extent to which the new service elements will contribute towards the Council's ability to offer a more robust and earlier intervention to prevent problems escalating so that high cost services are avoided and so the Council should see a reduction in the need for high cost residential respite and/or permanent residential care services in the longer term.

Analysis of Lough Road spend in 2015-16



The numbers in brackets in the charts denote the numbers of children who would benefit at any one time.

Projected analysis of spend for Lough Road in 2016-17



Timescales and Transitional Arrangements

- 3.18 In order to deliver the proposed remodelled service, the overnight short break service will need to cease as soon as the remaining 1 or 2 young people can be moved into alternative provision. Staff have been working on identifying contingency placements already with their parents and so they would aim to achieve this by the end of April 2016.
- 3.19 As part of the consultation workshops staff have agreed a transitional arrangements process for families with the parent representatives currently using Lough Road Centre. This was presented to the wider parent user base who also agreed to this. The transitional arrangements document can be read at **Appendix C**.

Alternative Options Considered

- 3.20 It is evidenced through the detailed review that to continue to operate services as they are currently is not financially sustainable with such a low number of young people requiring a residential overnight short break service. A maximum of 5 young people at any time requiring overnight short breaks is anticipated, there are currently 2 young people using the service for this purpose. As the review evidenced, attempts made to look at ways to increase demand by way of opening the resource up to other boroughs were unsuccessful. Therefore the unit cost of a child staying at Lough Road for an overnight stay (approx. £1200) is likely to remain almost 3x that of the average sector cost (£450 per night) if 5 young people use it at any one time per annum.
- 3.21 None of the local authorities in Central/North London operate a single borough provision like this with the exception of Haringey who have a much larger population and therefore a much higher demand level. They are looking at remodelling their service but will be retaining an overnight service and may in time offer us the opportunity to purchase into that provision which the Council would certainly want to explore given that it is very local for our families. The other authorities have a history of using the independent sector to provide these kinds of specialist respite placements and Islington would be offering our families the same range of provision to choose from.
- 3.22 By taking the overnight short break service out of Lough Road, Children's Social Care can redirect funding to invest in meeting the service gaps that were identified in the review. This will create more robust offer of intensive support around managing challenging behaviour at home and improve compliance with statutory social work support to children and families in terms of monitoring and reviewing outcomes. It would also enable us to offer more lead professionals for those families who need more help either due to the complexity of the services supporting their family or because they themselves might be quite vulnerable and/or isolated. It will also allow for a small amount of funding to commission confidential counselling support for parents (with or without other family members) at times of crisis where access is acute and universal services are not able to respond quickly enough.
- 3.23 There will be staffing implications as a result of these changes for those currently employed at Lough Road and in the Disabled Children's Team. This is because they will need to end the provision of overnight short breaks, continue with a programme for day time short breaks and increase capacity for family support work (case management).
- 3.24 The existing team at Lough Road has already reduced significantly in number and the service has avoided replacing vacant posts with permanent staff in order to avoid redundancies as much as possible. We will be aiming to design a staffing model which would seek to minimise the need for any staff redundancies given that there will be knowledge and expertise in existing posts that will be transferable to any new posts.
- 3.25 The intensive outreach service will be subject to an initial pilot phase where in partnership with Whittington Health (CAMHS) and other key partners, staff will be designing and then trialling an intervention model and this service will be led by CAMHS.

4. Implications

Financial implications:

- 4.1 The above proposals and new way of working deliver a revenue budget saving of £47k (deliverable in 2016/17) Unit costs will be reduced significantly, principally, in the provision of overnights short breaks in the unit and the 're-direction' of this service to providers already in operation.
- It is also recognised that changes to service delivery does offer an 'invest to save' opportunity as investing in preventative services (sect 3.9) could lead to further efficiency savings in the future

Legal Implications:

- 4.2 The council has a specific duty in respect of disabled children under Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 of the Children Act 1989: *"to assist individuals who provide care for such children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring."* This is part of the council's general duty to children in need and their families under section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989. The specific duty is expanded upon in the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011/707.

The short breaks duty requires provision of a range of short breaks which give disabled children the same opportunities to play and socialise that other children experience, while allowing their parents to provide care more effectively through having a break from caring.

The council also has relevant duties under:

- Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which creates an individual right to short break services for some disabled children;
- Section 27 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (to consider the extent to which the social care and educational provision is sufficient to meet the needs of children and young people in its area);
- Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, under which the provision of short breaks for children is a key way of meeting the council's duty to respect the family and private lives of disabled children and their family members.
- Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (which requires the best interests of children, including disabled children, to be 'a primary consideration' in all decisions taken affecting them);
- The Equality Act 2010, both in terms of the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons (s. 20-22) and under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149 – see RIA section below); and
- The general requirements of administrative law (i.e. consultation, fairness, rationality, relevant considerations, analysis of alternatives).

Resident Impact Assessment:

- 4.3 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the

need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A full Resident Impact Assessment was undertaken on 10.12.2015 and parents were consulted on this. This can be read at **Appendix D**.

The RIA identified that the current service at Lough Road is correctly identifying and meeting the needs of a cohort of 23 children and their families, who are evidenced as being particularly vulnerable, primarily associated with the following factors:

- The nature of the disability of the child/ren has a significant impact on their parent/s day to day family functioning and they could not manage without additional social care services being put in place. Approximately 60% of the children live in a single parent household which increases this pressure on those parents even more as they are not able to share the day to day pressure when the child/ren are at home.
- Approximately 50% of the parents do not speak English as a first language and need help in navigating appropriate services for their disabled child.
- Approximately 60% of the families are reliant on welfare benefits as their sole source of income, making them more reliant on services provided via the Local Authority.

The RIA concluded that the proposed change in function for Lough Road would not adversely affect the families as the same services will remain available to them where they continue to need this but delivered differently.

The RIA did identify the need to monitor the impact of changing the service delivery for residential overnight short breaks on a continued basis (to ensure sufficient provision for those young people who need a residential service) and a forum to do this has already been set up which will meet quarterly.

The RIA also identified that through changing the delivery model more funding can be targeted to more families of disabled children, to provide other services which were identified as gaps in service provision. These two new elements would support the Council's aim in identifying and supporting families earlier and preventing needs escalating which could result in family breakdown and children and young people having to be supported in high cost care placements.

1. An improved case management (family support) service offer to an additional 163 children and their families.
2. An intensive behaviour support programme for a small group of children whose parents need significant support to help them manage very challenging behaviour at home which are often associated with a diagnosed learning disability and/or autism. This would support approximately 24 additional children per year.

5. Reasons for the recommendations / decisions:

- 5.1 The way the services are delivered at Lough Road currently, does not offer good value for money. By remodelling the services and ending overnight short breaks, the Council will be able to deliver the same services to children at a lower cost and extend the provision to fill identified gaps, including the delivery a more robust family support approach, which will include a new intensive outreach support service.
- 5.2 This will ensure that families get the help they need in a way that is proportionate to their needs, builds family resilience and reduces the risk of family breakdown and therefore aims to reduce the spend on high cost specialist foster and residential services.

Signed by:



Executive Member for Children's Services

Date 18/02/2016

Appendices

Appendix A – Service Review – Short Breaks and Targeted and Specialist Provider Services for children with severe and complex disabilities (23.07.2015).

Appendix B – List of Stakeholders

Appendix C – Proposed Transitional Arrangements for current children using Lough Road

Appendix D – Resident Impact Assessment

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ⁱ Aiming High for Disabled Children:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingdownload/pu213.pdf>