



<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet member children and families</b>
<b>Decision date:</b>	<b>Thursday 10 October 2019</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Short Breaks Capital Grant Scheme</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Childrens Commissioning and Contracts Lead</b>

## Classification

Open

## Decision type

Non Key

## Wards affected

(All Wards);

## Purpose and summary

To approve the creation of a short breaks capital grant scheme.

Short breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to have enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thus contributing to their social inclusion and personal and social development. They also provide the parents and carers of disabled children with a necessary and valuable break from their caring responsibilities.

Feedback from families highlighted that children wanted to access more activities alongside other children, to increase socialisation, and that support currently provided, whilst meeting a number of key outcomes, may limit opportunity for increasing levels of independence for some children.

The grant scheme will ensure maximum benefit for children with disabilities and special educational needs across Herefordshire, approved at the council's budget meeting on 15 February 2019 as part of the council's capital strategy. The aim of the scheme is to improve access to universal and targeted activities across Herefordshire for children with special educational needs and disabilities by delivering capital improvements, thus creating greater opportunity for spending time with friends, and developing independence.

The maximum capital funding available for this scheme is £118,000, which is non-recurrent. It is intended that all funding will be committed by the end of March 2020. If required, further bidding rounds will be scheduled during 2020 until the budget has been fully allocated.

The funding will be used for capital projects that support the provision of regular, inclusive universal and targeted activities to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Herefordshire.

Wide publicity and awareness through existing networks will be undertaken to ensure that eligible organisations are given the opportunity to apply and demonstrate that their project will improve short breaks provision locally, achieve defined outcomes for children and young people, and will be sustainable beyond the grant intervention. Applications received by the deadline will be assessed by an appraisal panel against the scheme criteria. Post implementation evaluation and reporting requirements will ensure that successful schemes are able to demonstrate that they maximise the benefit for children and young people with disabilities across Herefordshire. Case studies and other monitoring information will be collated to ensure that the learning and impact from the grant scheme can be captured.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) A capital Short Breaks Grant Scheme with a non-recurring budget of £118,000 is made available for projects that will increase access to regular, inclusive universal and targeted activities to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Herefordshire;**
- (b) the Director for Children and Families be authorised to determine grant awards in accordance with the scheme criteria and having regard to the recommendations of the appraisal panel established as set out in appendix 1.**

## **Alternative options**

1. Dedicate the funding to support alternative capital projects unrelated to short breaks provision. If the funding is not utilised, capital improvements to further enable disabled children and young people to access appropriate activities will not be delivered.
2. Support delivery of the short breaks sleepover scheme for disabled children (occasional overnight fostering support) through provision of equipment and adaptations. This would require both long-term commitment to the scheme from carers and a willingness to accept equipment/ adaptations in their homes. This option would significantly limit the number of children who may benefit from the capital funding.

## **Key considerations**

3. Paragraph 6 (1) (c) of Schedule 2 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, requires Local Authorities to provide services designed to give breaks for carers of disabled children.

4. Short breaks is the term used for a range of services for families to give carers of disabled children a break from caring and for children to take part in fun activities and have new experiences away from home. Short breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to have enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thus contributing to their social inclusion and personal and social development. They also provide the parents and carers of disabled children with a necessary and valuable break from their caring responsibilities.
5. Short breaks can include a wide variety of services from universal opportunities (open to all without the need for any assessment or specialist support) through to funded specialist services (where an assessment is required). Short breaks can include day, evening, overnight, weekend or holiday activities. They can take place in the child's own home, in the home of an approved carer or in a residential or community setting.
6. An Early Intervention Grant for Short Breaks was received by the council from the Department for Education totalling £172,850 between 2011 and 2013. A total of £62,850 has been spent to date on relevant equipment and adaptations including equipment to support disabled children access horse riding opportunities. Each payment was considered on a case-by-case basis.
7. Since a strategic review of Short breaks provision was undertaken in 2016, new approaches to supporting children with disabilities to access short breaks provision have been developing.
8. As part of the new short breaks model a targeted allowance scheme was developed, enabling families of children with disabilities to apply for funding of £350 per annum to support access to universal activities. This scheme has proven successful, with over 143 accessing the fund in 2018/19. In addition, a commissioned service (All Interactive) has been working with providers of universal services to support the development and delivery of inclusive activities across the county. Activities accessed through the scheme are wide ranging, including swimming, canoeing and other physical activities, day trips, cinema and visits to various entertainment venues.
9. These developments provide the council with an opportunity to maximise the benefits of the capital grant, by developing a grant scheme to enable local providers of activities for children and young people to improve capital facilities for disabled children. This will enable broader use of the targeted allowance scheme.
10. Herefordshire Council will invite applications for grant funding to help organisations improve access to short break activities in Herefordshire by providing new equipment, adaptations and facilities. Each project must be within the county of Herefordshire to ensure Herefordshire families benefit from the grant.
11. Applications will be accepted from formally constituted community and voluntary groups/organisations, groups of people with the same community focus or charity objectives and Town & Parish Councils (for service or activity excluding facilities or items provided for in the Parish Precept)
12. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how projects will meet the short breaks outcomes for disabled children:
  - Have fun
  - Take part in interesting activities and new experiences
  - Be safe

- Develop positive life and social skills
  - Spend time with friends and make new ones
  - Be more independent or confident
  - Prepare for life as an adult
13. Further information regarding grant criteria and the appraisal process is included in Appendix 1.
14. The maximum capital funding available for this scheme is £118,000, which is non-recurrent. Each individual grant amount will be a minimum of £5,000. It is intended that all funding will be committed by the end of March 2020 (please see appendix 1 for indicative timelines for round 1). However, dependent on type and volume of bids received, further rounds may be necessary during 2020/ 21 to ensure all funding is allocated to appropriate projects.
15. The funding will be used for capital projects that support the provision of regular, inclusive universal and targeted activities to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Herefordshire.
16. This approach has been undertaken in a number of similar authorities, resulting in a variety of projects including investment in specialist technology, sensory rooms, mobile hoists, powerchair football chairs, adapted bicycles, adapted sailing boats, specialist camping equipment, accessible vehicles and changing places bathrooms.
17. Grant guidance will be co-produced alongside families of disabled children to ensure grant scheme applicants have a clear understanding of local priorities, and solutions are effectively tailored to support local provision and to maximise the number of children benefitting from the grant.
18. The grant will be promoted through the Council's website, provider networks, partner networks and via social media to ensure the opportunity is well-publicised.
19. Organisations will be required to demonstrate commitment to the ongoing provision of inclusive activities for disabled children and young people. This will include commitment to matched funding and commitment to secure any revenue funding required to support initiatives.
20. Organisations will demonstrate how the capital investment will support children and families to achieve outcomes in line with the Children and Young People's Plan 2019 – 2024 and the co-produced short breaks outcomes for Herefordshire children and young people. Those outcomes will be detailed in the guidance and will need to be completed in the application form. Applicants will also need to say how they will measure the success of their respective projects.
21. Applicants will be required to source an element of match funding and demonstrate how their project will deliver sustainable improvements. Applicants will be required to provide evidence regarding how any associated revenue, or ongoing maintenance costs will be met.
22. Successful applicants will be required to submit an evaluation report within 6 months of completion, which will evidence access, usage and delivery against the short breaks

outcomes. This will include feedback from children and young people with disabilities who have accessed the improved/ new activity.

23. The scheme intends to result in an improved range, capacity and availability of short breaks activities across Herefordshire.
24. Should the situation be that there are more applications than there is funding, which is not unusual with limited grant pots, then the panel will use the assessment process to ensure that the projects who best meet the criteria and provide value for money are awarded the grant funding.

## **Community impact**

25. This development supports the principles outlined in the council's corporate plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the new Children and Young People's Plan. It will support delivery of key pledges made in the CYP Plan such as 'Be Healthy' and 'Be part of the Community' by encouraging inclusion, equality of opportunity and supporting health and wellbeing.
26. Herefordshire's overarching vision for looked after children, and those with complex needs, is the same as for all of Herefordshire's children and young people – that we keep them safe and give them a great start in life.
27. Successful applicants will be required to submit evidence of impact. The grant model allows for innovative approaches and outcomes achieved will inform future delivery models. Robust evaluation of bids will be undertaken to provide assurance of delivery.

## **Equality duty**

28. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
29. Supporting access to universal provision will advance equality of opportunity for disabled children and young people.
30. Applicants for the grant scheme will be expected to demonstrate how their project will support equality and diversity as part of the application process and through post implementation evaluation requirements.

## **Resource implications**

31. The proposed grant scheme will ensure that the one off Short Breaks Capital funding (£118,000) is spent in line with the council's Capital Strategy and will deliver the intended outcomes of the early intervention grant.
32. The scheme will be administered through the Corporate Delegated Grants and Programmes Team with joint promotion work and overall management undertaken by the Commissioning and Contracts Team

## **Legal implications**

33. Under powers granted to the Secretary of State for Education under section 14 of the Education Act 2002 the Department for Education has made a number of grants for educational and childcare services to the council (totalling £172,850).
34. A number of individual grants (total value £62,850) have previously been made by the council to local charitable organisations or service providers to provide "Short Breaks" services and £118,000 remains unallocated.
35. The council wishes to make further grants to local charitable organisations and service providers, subject to a robust evaluation that any grant application demonstrates evidence of matched funding, and the impact of the proposed use of the grant funds.
36. Where a grant application has successfully met the evaluation criteria, the council would enter into a grant funding agreement between the council and the grant recipient setting out, inter alia, the grant sum and payment profile, the purpose for which the grant is to be used, the requirement to provide evidence of matched funding and the requirement to provide to the council evidence of use of the grant by way of accounting records and receipts and provisions. The council will be entitled to withhold, suspend or require repayment of grant in the event of non-compliance by the grant recipient with the terms of the grant funding agreement.
37. The relatively low value of the individual grants that will be made means that the services provided by local charitable organisations or service providers would not be subject to the provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, however the evaluation of any grant application should be transparent, proportional and non-discriminatory.

## **Risk management**

38. There is a risk that no suitable applications for the grant are received. As mitigation, the grant will be widely advertised and promoted across Herefordshire, including on the Council Website and through relevant provider/ community networks.
39. Applications may be received from specific parts of Herefordshire, limiting the impact of the funding in other parts of the county. This will be mitigated through the design and evaluation of the grant scheme to ensure geographical reach of the funding is included in award criteria.
40. Applications may not reflect the needs of the local community. As mitigation, the council will ensure involvement of community groups, relevant professionals and family representatives in the design of the scheme.

## **Consultees**

41. In order to understand local experience of short breaks provision, Herefordshire Council undertook a short breaks telephone survey in 2017/2018 to gather views from families of children and young people in the county accessing short breaks. Families were asked to provide a rating of 1 to 10 against a number of set questions. When asked about how the local short breaks offer had helped their child, the following responses were received:

<b>How well has the short break helped your child to:</b>	<b>Rated 8 or more</b>
Have fun	85%
Take part in interesting activities and new experiences	64%
Be safe	60%
Develop positive life and social skills	60%
Spend time with friends and make new ones	48%
Be more independent or confident	47%
Prepare for life as an adult	34%

42. Feedback from families highlighted that children wanted to access more activities alongside other children, to increase socialisation, and that support currently provided, whilst meeting a number of key outcomes, may limit opportunity for increasing levels of independence for some children.
43. The implementation of the grants scheme intends to support access to universal activities for disabled children, thus creating greater opportunity for spending time with friends, and developing independence.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Short Breaks Grant – application criteria

## **Background papers**

None identified