

Wiltshire Council

Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body
26 November 2013

Children's Select Committee
3 December 2013

Overnight Short Breaks for Children with SEND – rapid scrutiny exercise

Purpose

1. To report to the Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body and the Children's Select Committee the outcome of the rapid scrutiny exercise held on 7 November 2013 to look at the proposed revisions to overnight short breaks for disabled Children and Young People in Wiltshire.
2. To make recommendations to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services in regards to this issue.

Background

3. On 1 October the Children's Select Committee received a report summarising the joint review between the Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group on overnight short breaks for disabled Children and Young People in Wiltshire. Having discussed the report, the Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise – a small working group of non-executive members – to consider the proposals and supporting information in detail, with findings and recommendations being referred to the decision maker as appropriate.
4. Authority was delegated to the Committee Chairman for seeking membership and for making arrangements to link this exercise with a public meeting being arranged at the request of members of the public. The public meeting was subsequently held on 6 November and five of the six members of the rapid scrutiny group attended. The rapid scrutiny exercise itself was held on 7 November with the following in attendance:

Cllr Jon Hubbard	Lead Member for the exercise, Chairman, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Jacqui Lay	Vice-Chairman, Children's Select Committee

Mr Ken Brough	Co-opted Member, Children's Select Committee
Rev Alice Kemp	Co-opted Member, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Simon Jacobs	Member, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Sheila Parker	Member, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Laura Mayes	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Julia Cramp	Associate Director (with CCG), Quality Assurance, Commissioning, Performance, Schools and Early Years Effectiveness
Matthew Look	Lead Commissioner
Henry Powell	Senior Scrutiny Officer

5. The following papers were made available at the meeting:

- Report to the Children's Select Committee on the Review of Overnight Short Breaks for Children with SEN/LLDD – 1 October
- Consultation document
- Equality Impact Analysis
- Q&A on the review
- Notes of the public meeting – 6 November, Guild Hall, Salisbury
- Slides of the presentation given by Julia Cramp at the public meeting
- The results of a survey of parents of children at Exeter House School, Salisbury, which was circulated at the public meeting.

Process

6. The rapid scrutiny exercise was held on 7 November at Wiltshire Council's Shurnhold offices in Melksham. The group considered the written evidence listed above, the views expressed at the public meeting on 6 November and verbal evidence provided by Wiltshire Council officers. Discussions focused on the following:

- Clarifying what the alternative service model being proposed consisted of.
- How the predicted costs of the proposed new service model have been calculated.
- The nature of the early intervention services that would receive increased investment following Hillcote's closure.
- Possible reasons why the use of Hillcote has decreased in recent years, including the development of the Short Breaks scheme, changing attitudes to residential units and a lack of parental awareness and social worker referrals.

- How Hillcote's suitability for a child or young person is assessed and the numbers of children and young people who meet the criteria.
- Arrangements for recruiting the proposed specialist carers.
- Arrangements for quality assuring and monitoring the proposed specialist carers.
- The potential impact of the proposals on parental transport arrangements and costs.
- Back-up arrangements if a specialist carer stops operating.
- The viability of potential alternative service models, including smaller residential centre(s).
- The consultation process followed and whether the results accurately capture the views of those potentially affected by the proposals.

Recommendations

7. The rapid scrutiny group recommends that Wiltshire Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services notes the following comments and makes appropriate representations to the Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body on 26 November. A formal response at the Children's Select Committee on 3 December 2013 is also requested.

The rapid scrutiny group accepts the argument that a revised provision of services for children and young people with SEND could lead to greater accessibility of services overall, assuming the retention of a specialist residential centre (i.e. Canon's House). However, little information has been provided to evidence that the proposed alternative service model would adequately meet the needs of service users. The group therefore has considerable concerns about the proposals and the amount of information provided to support them. The group's concerns are as follows:

1. **The proposals have not been properly costed in the following ways:**
 - a) **No figures have been provided to demonstrate how the predicted cost of specialist carers (£40kpa, per carer) has been arrived at (for example, figures from other local authorities who have already adopted this system). The group are sceptical that this sum is realistic given the high upfront costs the carers will face in order to properly adapt and equip their homes;**
 - b) **The potential impact of the new specialist carer scheme on the future use of Canon's House and its sustainability in the long term does not appear to have been considered.**

The group therefore concludes that the cost neutrality of the proposals has not been substantiated. The availability of the savings proposed for reinvestment in early intervention services therefore cannot be assumed either.

2. Given historic difficulties recruiting foster carers for young people with more complex needs, the Council may face considerable difficulties recruiting and approving the specialist carers proposed. No information has been provided demonstrating how this will be achieved (for example, from the experiences of other local authorities who have already adopted this system), particularly within the ambitious timeframe of April 2014.
3. It has been reported that specialist carers would be subject to the same quality assurance and safeguarding checks as foster carers for children and young people without SEND. The group believes that the greater vulnerability of children and young people with SEND demands a much more robust system of monitoring to protect the children's welfare and to protect the specialist carers.
4. No information has been provided to show how continuity of provision for service users will be maintained if a specialist carer decides to stop operating. This could have a serious impact on service users and their families.
5. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed specialist carer scheme will be able to provide care at short notice, for example, when a young person's parent is taken ill.
6. The group has received anecdotal evidence that parents have not been made aware of or offered provision at Hillcote when it may have been appropriate for their child. The group are therefore concerned that a lack of information and guidance, rather than a lack of demand, has contributed to the decline in Hillcote's use in recent years.
7. It has not been demonstrated what emergency plans will be put in place to ensure continuity of service if Canon's House was temporarily unable to operate, for example because of a fire.
8. It is reported that a proportion of the savings from the proposed closure of Hillcote would be reinvested in Early Intervention services. However, no information has been provided on what these services

will actually consist of and how their effectiveness has been assessed.

Members of the Overnight Short Breaks for Children with SEN/LLDD rapid scrutiny exercise

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Background documents

Report to the Children's Select Committee on the Review of Overnight Short Breaks for Children with SEN/LLDD – 1 October