**Cheshire West and Chester**

**Short Breaks Service - Market Engagement**

**Contract Start date -1st April 2022 - Contract End Date 31st March 2025**

Cheshire West and Chester Council is seeking to commission a range of short breaks which

• will support parents of children and young people with Special Educational needs (SEND) to access a break from their caring responsibilities, and

• enable children and young people to have fun, develop independence skills through their short break; make new friends, learn new skills, develop confidence and meet their full potential and develop their strengths

 Cheshire West and Chester Council recently approved the Short Break Commissioning Strategy 2021 – 2025 which outlines its intentions for the delivery of short breaks. The main reasons why we need a Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy:

1. To set out our shared vision for short breaks

2. To offer flexibility and choice. Families should be able to access services close to where they live. The services should help parents and children build networks that connect them to their community. This will help Cheshire West and Chester achieve good outcomes for children and families.

3. To ensure we can sustain short breaks in the long term. It is difficult to manage the demand for residential short breaks. This is not going to get easier with the financial constraints which local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are facing. We expect more people to want these services in coming years and we must meet current and future need. We want to provide services that are value for money. The money we have for short breaks must be spent where there is the greatest need.

4. To make sure that people who use short breaks are treated fairly and consistently and that the short breaks are there for people as and when they need it.

5. To improve the Creative Breaks service, by ensuring it is fair, equitable and can be delivered within the resources available. The Creative Breaks service increases social opportunities for disabled children, young people and their families. Eligible families can be allocated up to £1000 a year per service user, to enable disabled children and young people to have a fun experience and parents to have a break away from their caring responsibilities.

**Why do we need a Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy?**

Previously we have not had a commissioning strategy for Short Breaks. Targeted Short Breaks services are commissioned, whilst short breaks services for children and young people with more complex needs are purchased as and when required. This means that sometimes providers cannot be responsive enough to need, parents have to wait to access a service and services may not be providing best value for money. The strategy focusses on ensuring the parent receives a break from their caring duties as well as ensuring the child receives a great experience.

**What is the main focus of the Short Break Commissioning Strategy?**

The commissioning strategy includes key principle for future short breaks service which are:

1. Support carers with their caring responsibilities.

2. Ensure services are outcome focussed and, where appropriate, link into supporting a child’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan)

3. Ensure families are in control of how they use short breaks and know how to access them.

4. Prioritise the child and parent/carer experience and perspective when designing the services delivered and how they are accessed.

5. Offer disabled children and young people the opportunity to learn new skills, make new friends and reduce loneliness.

6. Reduce escalation to more statutory services, i.e. services provided by the local authority which could include social services

7. Involve children and their families in the decision-making process.

8. Maximise the use of specialist resources and universal services within communities

9. Ensure staff are qualified and skilled to deliver safe and high-quality services.

10. Offers a range of short breaks to support the needs of carers and disabled children and young people with the right mix of services which are person centred and respond to family’s needs

11. Are fairly accessed; priority will be for those who need it most and eligibility for services will be clear and transparent.

12. Offer supports young people in their transition to adult services and packages of short break provision that are comparable to those available from Adults services

13. Are continuously improving and that they are good value for money.

Whilst developing the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy public consultation was undertaken which lasted 8 weeks. Emerging themes from the consultation are:

The emerging themes from the consultation are:

i. Short Breaks need to be better publicised

ii. After school clubs every day are essential

iii. Inclusive and accessible childcare to support working parents

iv. Ensure short breaks are flexible, not rigid and paperwork is kept to a minimum.

Parents indicated that they would like to use short breaks after school, during school holidays, at the weekends and access overnight residentials. This demonstrates the changing needs of parents since the previous commissioning of short breaks services took place, which predominantly provided evening groups.

Future community based short break provision will include sessions after school, at weekends, in the school holidays, and some activity based residential provision. It is intended this will be available for children and young people with targeted needs and complex and specialist needs.

As part of the commissioning process we would like to meet with short break providers to discuss our future plans in order to understand:

* What experience do you have of providing short breaks?
* What innovative ways have you delivered short breaks and what has been the impact?
* What’s working well in other areas and what are the main challenges
* What are the preferred models for the pricing schedule, i.e. hourly session rate, cost per annum etc?
* How would providers prefer to bid for work, i.e. on a locality, activity, complexity of need basis

Please let us know if you would like a book a Teams meeting to meet with commissioners and discuss further.

Dates and times for meetings are available as follows:

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| 15th July  | 9.00 – 10.00 | 10.00 – 11 .00 | 14.00 - 15.00 | 15.00 – 16.00 |
| 19th July | 14.00 – 15.00 | 15.00 – 16.00 | 16.00- 17.00 |  |
| 21st July | 9.00 – 10.00 | 11.00– 12.00 |  |  |

Please contact debbie.pitcher@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk to book a slot, indicating which would be your preferred date and time.

Alternatively, if you would like to provide responses to the areas covered above please e mail them to Debbie Pitcher by 22nd July 2021

It is intended that the Invitation to tender will be available on The Chest from early September. A notice confirming dates will be provided nearer the time.