Short Breaks Market Engagement – 5th September 2023

Question and Answer

As part of the Market Engagement event on 5th September, a question-and-answer session took place, a summary of which is below:

Question 1:

When a child gets to 18, are they then expected to use the direct payments in order to still access the service?

Answer:
Yes.

Question 2:
Will payments be made annually with the block contracts of three years?

Answer:
It's quarterly at the moment so is likely to be the same.

Question 3:
We're based right on the county border and Somerset Council were happy that parents or carer would accompany the children on the short breaks and they saw a value for parents meeting each other and sharing their experiences. Would you be interested in an accompanied short break programme?

Answer:

I think ideally, we prefer a complete break for carers, but we're not ruling it out and we'll make a judgement throughout the quality evaluation in the tender but in terms of what we looking for and what we're prioritising, it is for a complete break for children with more complex needs.

Question 4:
I have a question about the timeline, you're saying that it comes out in October. I'm just wondering how long we have to complete it?

Answer:
It should be advertised for 35 days minimum so you have that amount of time within in which you can complete your tender submission.

Question 5:
Has there been any sort of mapping in terms of sort of current short breaks provision in order to see where the gaps are? If you're saying families don't want to travel for any longer than an hour, are there any cold spots that providers can look to fill?

Answer:
We'll work towards issuing some guidance on needs along with the tender documentation; not unexpectedly, the Portland, Weymouth, Dorchester sort of access is the area of the highest incidence of need. However, it would also be fair to say that we do have need in West Dorset where perhaps we don't have as many services as what we'd like. Again, there's always the rurality of North and the more rural areas. We have encouraged provision in Blandford and Sturminster Newton and I would reiterate that, but I think West Dorset seems to be an area that has a lower proportionate level of provision than we'd ideally like.

Question 6:
Thinking of the practicalities; when we're actually applying for this tender, are we only applying for funding up to the age of 18 and direct payments or individuals paying for the 18 to 25?

Answer:
We want have a reasonably flexible approach. Having said that, the funding isn't expanding for targeted early help services without assessment. So, while I don't want to see young people (18-25) without access to services I think in reality that young people will have to start funding services via direct payments when they reach 18. If they're not eligible under the Care Act then, if there is a need, we would want to support ongoing access to services but I think what we'd be encouraging is that the funding stream changes at 18 to direct payments.

Question 6 (part 2):
So with those young people, are they assessed before they get to 18?

Answer:
Yes. There's a transition team that starts to assess need at the time of significant benefit but certainly around 16/17 years old we'd like to reduce that 14/15 years old so that families and young people are clear about what services they're going to receive. So yes, that's not something that we would want to see come up as an issue when the young person is 17 ¾. What we want to see is that that young person has a plan and funding agreed at least six months before they're 18 and we anticipate given that we'll have a holistic social care service that that will be less of an issue because it will be the same service managing and providing and supporting those young people through childhood into teenage years and then young adulthood.

Question 7:
Will the team become a 0-25 social care team, a disabled children and young people's social care team rather than them having to move over from Childrens Services to Adult Services at that 18 cut off?

Answer:
Yes, that's the aim we're considering at the moment. We're working on different models of how it might work. So that is part of the Birth to Settled Adulthood work that the Council is working on at the moment and the aim is to have a seamless service.

Question 8:

When people are applying for the framework, is it intended that they are looking for regular work essentially, or regular provision over the whole three years contract? How does that sit with the kind of spot purchase of, say, a long weekend away with a provider just on a one off basis?

Answer:

When we refer to short breaks, what we are talking about is support that maintains family stability, family functioning and is therefore not a short term change orientated service. It is one that is usually a long term service that identifies a care plan; the easiest example is residential overnight short breaks where a young person might have a break with a carer or a children's home for a weekend a month and that's on an ongoing basis. Subject to review, we know need may change but we know that ability is permanent and substantial, so once a service has started it usually recognises the need and that requirement is for ongoing care. So what we're not talking about in the main is ad hoc services. Also, because children who are disabled often have complex needs and they need consistent care and there are risks around multiple carers in terms of safeguarding disabled children so that is the context in which this discussion about short breaks is set. In the main, we're talking about a series of planned short breaks rather than individual one-off breaks.