

TITLE OF REPORT: Support for Disabled LAC

REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

Summary

This report details the Council's provision made to support disabled Looked After Children. For the purposes of this report this includes arrangements made for children accommodated under Care Orders (S31), those placed in voluntary care (S20) or those accommodated for an agreed series of short term breaks (S20).

Background

1. There are currently 190 children open to the Council's Disabled Children Team. The majority of children receive support under Children in Need (CIN) arrangements or via Team Around the Family (TAF). Reviews of these packages of support are usually undertaken by the Team Manager or Senior Social Worker within the Disabled Children's Team. At present 20 children open to the Disabled Children's Team are LAC (either S20 or S31) and are therefore reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).

Short Breaks

2. The Council has a duty to provide short breaks which are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting and are provided under S17, S20 or S31 of the Children Act 1989.
3. The breaks usually have two aims, to enable the child to participate in safe, fun and interesting activities, and to provide a break to parents from their caring role.
4. Part 3 of the 1989 Act sets out local authorities' powers and duties to provide support services for children in need and their families. The definition of children in need includes children who are disabled within the meaning of the 1989 Act. Short breaks can be provided by local authorities through the use of their powers under:
 - section 17(6) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation as part of a range of services in order to

- discharge their general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need; and
- section 20(4) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation 'for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare'.
5. In consultation with parents / carers, the local authority may decide to provide short break accommodation for the child under section 20(4). Providing accommodation on this basis has no effect on the parents' parental responsibility and, of course, parents can remove the child from the accommodation at any time. They retain overall responsibility for the health, education and longer term planning for their child, although they may ask for assistance from the local authority.
 6. Breaks provided for children under section 20(4) mean that those children are looked after during the period of their break and are consequently reviewed by IROs. In Gateshead there are currently 14 children receiving this type of break.
 7. The Council also has a duty to publish the Short Breaks Service Statement. This was revised in May 2016 and is attached at Appendix 1.

Children in Foster Care

8. There are currently 3 children who are in foster care placements. Carers are also eligible to receive additional support to enable them to receive a short break from their caring responsibilities. In some cases, this includes access to Grove House, Grace House and Bradbury View overnight short breaks and others receive support during school holidays through attendance at Active Kidz or FACETS (the Council's specialist holiday provision for children with autism).
9. Further information on overnight shortbreaks accessed by Gateshead children is available at:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/DocumentLibrary/CBS/Care/grove-house/Grove-house-leaflet.pdf>

<http://www.gracehouse.co.uk/>

<http://www.percyhedley.org.uk/education-services/residential/bradbury-view/>

Children in Residential Care / Residential Schools

10. There are a small number of children whose needs are so complex that they cannot be met within a family setting. These children all have an Education, Health and Care Plans and so the majority are placed in 52 week residential school placements. Current placements are at Underley Gardens and

Northern Counties Schools with a further placement likely to be made at the Fullerton House (Doncaster).

Recommendations

11. Member of OSC are asked to note and discuss the content of the report.