

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 11 December 2018

## Play schemes for Children with Disabilities Progress Report

Item number 7.15  
Report number  
Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments [34](#)

### Executive Summary

---

This report is an update on the review of the play schemes and recommendations on the future delivery of the service and will set out proposals for full engagement with children and young people affected by disability to make sure services are shaped by the voice of lived experience.

The Council is committed to undertaking a review of social work and education services to enhance support to children and young people with disabilities.

A further report with information on the wider review of disability services will be brought to committee in March 2019.

## Play schemes for Children with Disabilities Progress Report

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Note this report and the changes that have been made to the delivery of the disability play schemes.
  - 1.1.2 Approve the recommendations in this report that:
  - 1.1.3 The CEC social work disability service will retain the responsibility for the running and management of the play schemes and will tender for a third sector organisation to recruit and train sessional staff to deliver the play scheme in partnership with the CEC.
  - 1.1.4 Prior to the tendering process we will engage with third sector providers to explore the possibility of developing a service specification that would allow the approved and trained sessional staff developing into a bank of staff that families with SDS budgets could approach.
  - 1.1.5 The CEC will also tender for a third sector organisation to provide a mainstream inclusion project to support children with additional needs to attend mainstream out of school and holiday activities.
  - 1.1.6 To agree a review of the wider disability services to realign the staff and service to manage and run the play scheme service during school holidays.

### 2. Background

---

- 2.1 A play scheme service for children and young people with disabilities has been delivered in Edinburgh for around 15 years. The aim of the disability play schemes is to create opportunities for disabled children and young people to participate in activities during the school holidays and to enjoy relationships with peers. The service has the additional benefit of providing a greatly appreciated level of respite to families who would otherwise face significant challenges in caring for their disabled children for the full duration of every school break.

The play scheme was originally run by parents from special schools in the city before being delivered by the council as part of its early years' service. The play

scheme was then delivered by a consortium of third sector organisations across several venues in the city. During 2016 the contract for delivering the disability play scheme went out to tender. The successful bidder for the service began delivering the service during the 2017 October school holiday. However, following the change of provider, several issues were raised by parents including the amount of provision available per child, and quality of the provision during to the October week. This necessitated the management of the play scheme being taken over by the disability social work service during the 2018 February holiday break. Following the Easter school holiday the service provider pulled out of the contract.

Under emergency measures the disability service managed the delivery of the play scheme during the 2018 summer and October school holidays. Under these emergency measures The Yard were contracted to recruit and train sessional staff to enable the play schemes to operate.

### **3. Main report**

---

- 3.1 Further to previous reports on the children's disability social work service and the holiday activity play scheme, there has been a temporary change in the management of the service. A senior manager was appointed at the end of June 2018 on a temporary basis to enable a review of the ways in which we assess, prioritise, and provide social work and social care services to children affected by disabilities and their families.
- 3.2 Engagement with parents and carers and constant feedback from parents and carers has been key to this review. This has included four focus groups involving parents and carers of children and young people who attend both mainstream schools and special schools. In addition, parents and carers have been able to submit their own comments in writing.
- 3.3 Feedback has also been sought from potential service providers and discussions held with school head teachers. It is clear from all involved that the play schemes provide a very good opportunity for children and young people with disabilities to socialise and be involved in activities that are not open to them in mainstream provision. The play schemes also provide parents with a means of respite day care that would be difficult to replicate.
- 3.4 The direct management of the play schemes has allowed us to better understand the challenges of running this service in the city. The play schemes look after some of the most vulnerable and complex children in the city. The service delivery needs to be reliable, professional, and safe. The children attending need to have high-quality care and positive experiences.
- 3.5 As the play schemes provide day-care to children with complex disabilities the play scheme requires to be registered with the Care Inspectorate and managed by a

registered manager. The service needs to have competent and professional leadership and management and trained and supported staff.

- 3.6 During the 2018 summer and October school holidays the service has been managed by staff from the CEC respite service at Seaview, the Disability Family Support service at Hillview and the Disability Behavioural Support service based at Hillview. This has led to a curtailment in service delivery and cannot be sustained without an increase in staffing across these services and a review of positions within these services.
- 3.7 It would be very difficult for any third sector provider to find the number of experienced and competent managers required during each school holiday period to run and manage the play scheme service to ensure the service is run safely.
- 3.8 The emergency arrangement with The Yard has seen The Yard carry out an intensive recruitment process. The Yard were able to recruit approximately 140 sessional staff to work in the play schemes during the summer holidays. Some staff were only available for particular weeks during the school holidays and the venues were only available for five weeks. The Yard were able to recruit approximately 70 staff to work during the October break.
- 3.9 All the children attending the play schemes require one to one or two to one staffing. The number of staff available enabled us to operate three separate venues during the summer holidays and two venues during the October holidays.
- 3.10 Staff were recruited from a variety of settings. The higher number of staff available during the summer holidays is related to the availability of students on holiday from universities and colleges.
- 3.11 Looking ahead there are at least three potential methods of service delivery for the play schemes.
- 3.12 Firstly, we could again put the contact out to tender. This would allow a variety of third sector agencies to tender for some or all the play scheme provision. This could lead to a single provider or another consortium delivering the play schemes. This approach could have benefits such as the experience, creativity, flexibility and added value that third sector providers can bring. However, meetings with potential third sector providers have highlighted that there is concern about whether the play schemes in their current format are deliverable by an organisation external to the CEC. Going to tender at present runs the risk that no bids will be received for some or all the service and as we have already seen awarding a contract is not a guarantee that a service can and will be delivered in the longer term.
- 3.13 Secondly, the CEC could directly run and deliver the play scheme service. There are some potential difficulties for the CEC to manage and deliver a service that runs with many staff for such short periods. Whilst these difficulties are not insurmountable they do represent challenges. For example, it suits most of the sessional staff involved to have zero hours contracts. This allows staff to choose the weeks that they do and do not work during the school holidays. Advertising for staff, recruiting them and employing large numbers of people on short term

contracts and managing this requires intensive HR activity at particular times of year. It would be very difficult for the CEC HR team and processes to work in such a resource intensive manner. Experience has shown that third sector partners have the ability to reach and recruit play scheme sessional staff.

- 3.14 Thirdly the CEC could tender for a third sector organisation to work in partnership to deliver the play schemes as we have done in the current crisis. That would see the CEC take responsibility for the running and management of the play schemes, sourcing venues, taking bookings, quality controlling service delivery, managing the staff on a day to day basis and associated functions whilst the third sector organisation would (as the Yard have done) recruit and train sessional staff. One potential spin-off from such a partnership is that it **could** lead to the approved and trained sessional staff developing into a bank of staff that families with SDS budgets could approach. This requires further discussion.
- 3.15 The recommendation is that the third option should be pursued. This would involve a review of the wider disability services to realign the staff and service to manage and run the play scheme service during school holidays. Alongside this we would tender for a third sector partner to recruit and train sessional staff.
- 3.16 Currently any parent with a child with a disability attending a mainstream school or a special school can apply for a place on a play scheme and these places are awarded on a first come, first served basis. Each parent can apply for up to six weeks of provision. The chart in **appendix one** details the number of children with disabilities attending special schools, language units and mainstream schools within the city.
- 3.17 The number of children with disabilities eligible to attend the play schemes is approximately 1,000 (see appendix one). These children age in range from just under five years of age to 19 years of age. Many of these children and young people can access mainstream provision either with or without additional support. Clearly a number of these young people have no desire to attend the specialist play schemes and many families would not apply for a play scheme place. However, attempting to serve such a wide and diverse population of children and young people within a singular provision is not viable.
- 3.18 We believe that we are likely to be able to recruit similar number of staff during the Easter holidays 2019 as we did during the summer holidays and we believe that can recruit a similar number of sessional staff during the February break 2019 as did during the October break 2019. As the children and young people attending the play scheme require one to one or two to one staffing we will be able to deliver the following play scheme provision.
- February break – two venues for one week with provision for up to 70 children and young people
  - Easter holidays – three venues for two weeks with provision for up to 130 children and young people per week

- Summer holidays – three venues for five weeks with provision for up to 130 children and young people per week.
  - October break - two venues for one week with provision for up to 70 children and young people.
- 3.19 In total this will allow us to provide up to 1050 child/weeks of play scheme provision. There are currently approximately 1,000 children and young people eligible to apply for these 1050 weeks of play scheme provision.
- 3.20 The current first come first served system of allocating play scheme places discriminates against those parents and carers who have less access to IT and who are less able. This system also takes no account of need and no account of any other service being provided. In individual discussions and focus groups and parents have expressed serious misgivings about the first come first served basis of the allocation of places.
- 3.21 To address these issues going forward we have adopted a new system for allocating places on the play scheme. Parents and carers will be invited to apply for places. To be eligible for a place children and young people must be unable, due to their disability, to attend mainstream activities even without additional support. A deadline will be given that will allow all parents the time to apply for places. Parents and carers will be able to apply for between one to four weeks of play scheme provision. Parents with exceptional needs for support can apply for up to six weeks provision.
- 3.22 Once applications are received they will be assessed by social work managers and the places will be distributed based on need and the need that the family have for respite. If further information is required on any application the play scheme managers will contact parents/carers to discuss the application and will speak with other professionals such as school staff and NHS staff with parental permission.
- 3.23 To ensure additional activities for children and young people with disabilities the Education, Children and Families Committee increased the budget for holiday activities. This has enabled us to award £600k in grants to third sector organisations to create new activities for children with disabilities during evenings, weekends and during school holidays. Please see appendix two for details of the activities that have received grant funding.
- 3.23 To increase the ability of children and young people with disabilities to access mainstream holiday clubs and out of school activities part of the budget will be ring-fenced for a Mainstream Inclusion Project. We will offer a contract via tender for a third sector organisation to give support for mainstream activity providers to become more inclusive of disabled children with the aim of supporting 40 children or young people per year into mainstream child care and mainstream activities.
- The mainstream inclusion project will work alongside staff in mainstream childcare settings, including after school clubs and holiday clubs, to develop their capacity to include children with additional support needs within their services.

- 3.24 We will also engage with a third sector provider to supply a small additional play scheme for children with challenging behaviour. This model was successfully applied during the summer school holidays 2018.
- 3.25 During the 2018 summer and October 2018 holidays we engaged the services of bank nurses at one of our venues to enable us to accommodate children and young people with complex medical needs. We will continue this provision at one of our venues.
- 3.26 We have introduced free Saturday family swim sessions for parents and carers of children with disabilities at Braidburn Hydrotherapy Swimming Pool and these will continue. If these sessions are fully booked we will consider running a further similar scheme at another venue.

#### **4. Measures of success**

---

- 4.1 The children and families most in need of the provision of a specialist disability play scheme can access this service.
- 4.2 More children and young people with disabilities can access mainstream activities via supports offered.
- 4.3 Additional activities for children with disabilities are created via the grant awards to the third sector and initiatives such as the Saturday swim sessions.

#### **5. Financial impact**

---

- 5.1 The total budget for the holiday activities programme is £1.17m per annum. Parents make contributions to the cost of the play scheme on a sliding scale, paying £30, £70 or £100 per week depending on their financial circumstances. This contribution is likely to increase the budget by approximately £50k per annum.

#### **6. Risk, policy, compliance, and governance impact**

---

- 6.1 The holiday activity programme for disabled children and young people is a high-risk provision.
- 6.2 Assumption of management by council officers will reduce risk.

#### **7. Equalities impact**

---

- 7.1 An Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment (ERIA) was undertaken in March 2017, with due regards to the protected characteristics as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010. There were no negative impact outcomes.

## 8. Sustainability impact

---

8.1 No significant environmental impacts are expected to arise from this provision.

## 9. Consultation and engagement

---

9.1 A paper has been written and shared with parents and stakeholders as part of a consultation on the format of the play schemes for children with a disability.

9.2 Consultation meetings with parents have taken place.

9.3 Consultation with potential providers has taken place.

## 10. Background reading/external references

---

10.1 N/A

### **Alistair Gaw**

Executive Director Communities and Families

Contact: Sean Bell, Acting Senior Manager, Children with Disability

E-mail: [Sean.bell@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Sean.bell@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 469 3129

## 11. Appendices

---

11.1 Appendix 1 Overview of Projected Changes in Specialist Provision

## Appendix 1

### Overview of Projected Changes in Specialist Provision

Overview of Projected Changes in Specialist Provision in light of Demographic Changes

Free Standing Special Schools	2015 - 2016 Baseline								By August 2030							
	Classes based on capacity				Roll based on capacity				Classes based on capacity				Roll based on capacity			
	Nurs	Prim	Sec	Total	Nurs	Prim	SEC	Total	Nurs	Prim	Sec	Total	Nurs	Prim	SEC	Total
Braidburn	1	4	6	11	8	32	48	88	1	7	7	15	8	56	56	120
Oaklands	1	4	3	8	8	32	24	64	1	4	3	8	8	32	24	64
Gorgie Mills	0	0	12	12	0	0	72	72	0	0	10	10	0	0	60	60
Rowanfield	0	8	0	8	0	48	0	48	0	8	0	8	0	48	0	48
Panmure	0	0	6	6	0	0	54	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kaimes *	0	6	11	17	0	36	66	102	0	0*	16	16	0	0	96	96
St Crispin's	0	6	5	10	0	30	30	68	0	4	8	12	0	36	36	72
Pilrig Park	0	0	11	11	0	0	88	88	0	0	10	10	0	0	80	80
Prospect Bank	0	7	0	7	0	56	0	56	0	7	0	7	0	56	0	56
Redhall	0	9	0	9	0	72	0	72	0	9	0	9	0	72	0	72
Woodlands	0	0	10	10	0	0	80	80	0	0	10	10	0	0	80	80
ESS			3				12	12							12	12
<b>Total Special School</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>760</b>
% of school population								1.7%								1.2%
Language & Communication Classes*		14			84			84		18*				108		108
Enhanced Secondary Provision			20				100	100			20				120	120
Senior Phase Hubs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	40/60	40/60
<b>Total located in mainstream</b>								184								268/288
<b>Total located in Special and mainstream</b>								988								1020/1040
% of school population								2.1%								1.6%/1.7%

\* Interdependent

## Grant Awards

Organisation	Project Title	Description of activity
Lothian Autistic Society	Holiday Activity Programme	An 8 week structured programme during school holidays for young people with autism that combines an award scheme for personal development with opportunities to explore a variety of outdoor activities. The programme will also introduce young people to cultural opportunities through the Edinburgh Fringe.
ENABLE Scotland	The Active ENABLE Club	ENABLE Scotland will deliver a Holiday Activity Club throughout the City of Edinburgh. Our aim is to deliver 3 activity days per week of the Edinburgh school holidays. The hours per day will be from 10am- 4pm. We aim to support up to 15 children per activity day.
The Speech Language Communication Company (SLCo)	BRICK CLUBS	A series of Brick Clubs for CYP with disabilities (speech, language and communication). Brick Clubs, using principles of co-design, comprise 6 - weekly blocks using LEGO®-based therapy. Brick Clubs are therapist-led, focused around fun and friendship whilst improving social communication skills. These skills are key determinants of attainment and wellbeing.

WHALE Arts	Play, Sense, Create	Action research project led by WHALE Arts delivering creative activity sessions with children and young people with disabilities and their families.
Action for Children	Therapeutic Activity Programme	Action for Children will deliver a stimulating and safe weekly, term-time Therapeutic Activity Programme for disabled children/young people to socialise and have fun whilst giving their families a break from caring. Needs-led activities will reflect age, abilities and preferences of children/young people, with a combination of building and community-based provision.
Barnardo's	Barnardo's Autism Clubs	Two clubs - one for juniors, one for seniors. Each club runs for 90 minutes, once a week and is aimed towards children and young people with autism who are facing issues either at home or at school.
Action Group	Sunday Club	A fortnightly programme of activities for children and young people with complex medical needs. On alternate Sundays up to 20 participants will get six hours of safe, supported and stimulating play, chances to try new things, visits to places to explore and opportunities to make friends with their peers.
Core Assets Scotland	Take 5	A family-focused residential short-break in Kielder held during Edinburgh City Council school holidays for children, young people and their families to enjoy an inclusive community where the most severely disabled child/young person can enjoy taking part in activities alongside able-bodied family member in a fun and caring environment.
Northfield / Willowbrae Community Association	The Saturday Drop-in	The Family Drop-in offers a much-needed service for the whole family on a Saturday afternoon. It is for families who have children with a disability and their siblings. Activities are designed to support children with additional support needs and autism. Parents get peer support and advice sessions from invited specialists.
Lothian Autistic Society	Saturday Adventure Programme	A fortnightly programme of activities for children and young people with complex medical needs. On alternate Saturdays up to 15 participants will get six hours of safe, supported and stimulating play, chances to try new things, visits to places to explore and opportunities to make friends with their peers.
ComputerXplorers SEScotland	ComputerXplorers Tech Club	A weekly technology club for children on the autistic spectrum and/or mild learning difficulties offering computing related sessions in everything

		from Lego Robotics and Minecraft to coding and animation. The aim is to provide an opportunity to socialise in a safe environment while learning some new skills along the way.
Royston Wardieburn Community Centre	Saturday Drop In	The Saturday Drop in session provides a safe environment for families of children with a range of additional support needs to access recreational activities within their local community with youth work support provided. Children and their families can take part in organised activities or just relax and use the facilities independently with support on hand.