



Essex County Council

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

14:00	Thursday, 06 April 2023	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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For information about the meeting please ask for:

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		Pages
1	Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest	4 - 4
2	Questions from the Public A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. Please note that members of the public wishing to ask a question must email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk by noon on the day before the meeting (Wednesday 5 April) and that questions must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.	
3	Call-in: Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23)	5 - 7
3.1	Appendix A - Cabinet Decision - Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (including appendices)	8 - 82
3.2	Appendix B - Notification of Call-in from Cllr Mike Mackrory	83 - 83

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|-----|---|---------|
| 3.3 | Appendix C - Additional information provided by the Cabinet Member since the call-in | 84 - 86 |
| 3.4 | Appendix D - Procedure for managing call-ins reflecting the provisions contained within the County Council's Constitution | 87 - 89 |
| 4 | Date of Next Meeting
To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 11 May 2023, in Committee Room 1, County Hall. | |
| 5 | Urgent Business
To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency. | |

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

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| 6 | Urgent Exempt Business
To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency. |
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Agenda item 1

Committee: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Councillor R Gooding	Chairman
Councillor S Barker	
Councillor M Durham	
Councillor J Fleming	
Councillor M Goldman	
Councillor I Grundy	
Councillor C Guglielmi	Vice-Chairman
Councillor J Lumley	
Councillor P May	Vice-Chairman
Councillor A McGurran	
Councillor R Playle	
Councillor L Shaw	
Councillor W Stamp	
Councillor A Wiles	

Co-opted educational representative members may advise and vote on all matters relating to children's services in schools. Two places are available for church Diocesan representatives. Two further places are available for parent governors at maintained schools in Essex (one primary and one secondary school). All places are vacant but a new nomination for a church Diocesan representative has now been received – an update will be provided at the meeting.

Reference Number: PAF/10/23

Report title: Call-in: Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23)	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 6 April 2023	For: Decision with options indicated below
Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

This agenda item is to consider the call-in of proposed Cabinet Decision Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23) - and take one of the actions described below.

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to agree one of the following courses of action as defined in the Constitution for a scrutiny committee when considering a call-in:

- (i) **allow the proposed decision to be implemented without further delay;**
- (ii) **refer the proposed decision back to the decision taker setting out in writing its concerns; or**
- (iii) **refer the matter to Full Council, also with a record of its concerns.**

3. Background

- 3.1 On 24 March 2023 the proposed Cabinet Decision - Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23) - was called-in by Councillor Mike Mackrory with the support of Councillors Marie Goldman (a member of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee), David King and Stephen Robinson.
- 3.2 A copy of the Cabinet decision paper is attached at **Appendix A**. A copy of the Notification of Call-in received from Councillor Mackrory is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 3.3 In line with the procedure for handling the call in of a decision, an offer to hold an informal meeting between the Member calling in the decision and the

decision taker to discuss the issue was offered. However, Councillor Mackrory advised that this was not required and that he wished the call-in to proceed straight to formal committee for consideration.

- 3.4 The Committee has previously specifically looked at short breaks provision for children with disabilities, in 2019 and 2020. A petition on proposals for future respite care at Lavender and Maples residential facilities was submitted to the County Council on 18 March 2019. Issues raised in the petition were included in a discussion on the provision of respite care at the Committee's meeting on 27 June 2019 - the petitioners also attended and gave evidence.
[Link to 27 June 2019 meeting papers](#)

The Committee made five recommendations on the day – see Minute 5 of [PAF 27 June 2019 minutes](#) .

- 3.5 Thereafter, on 10 October 2019 the Committee considered updates on the broader review of the service at the time and the specific recommendations made at the June 2019 meeting – see Minute 4 of [PAF 10 October 2019 minutes](#) . See also [Link to 10 October 2019 meeting papers](#)
- 3.6 A further specific update was considered during the pandemic via Zoom enabled virtual meeting on 18 June 2020 - see Minute 4 of [PAF 18 June 2020 minutes](#) . You will see from this set of minutes that some momentum was lost due to pandemic and thereafter any further updates were only part of broader Children's and Families services updates on the pressures being faced during and coming out of the pandemic. [Link to 18 June 2020 meeting papers](#)

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Since the call-in was received, the Cabinet Member has provided three pages of additional information (**Appendix C**).
- 4.2 **Appendix D** is the procedure for managing call-ins reflecting the provisions contained within the County Council's Constitution. Councillor Mike Mackrory with the support of Councillors Marie Goldman (a member of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee), David King and Stephen Robinson will be invited to detail their grounds for the call-in and then the Cabinet Member with Lead Officer(s) will be invited to respond before detailed questioning from members of the Committee.
- 4.3 Having considered the proposed decision, the Committee may:
- (i) allow the proposed decision to be implemented without further delay;
 - (ii) refer the proposed decision back to the decision taker setting out in writing its concerns; or
 - (iii) refer the matter to Full Council, also with a record of its concerns.
- 4.4 Upon a referral to a decision taker, the proposed decision shall be reconsidered

within five clear working days amending the decision or not before adopting a final decision.

- 4.5 If the Committee does not refer a decision to either the decision taker or the Council, the decision shall take effect at the conclusion of the meeting of the Committee.

5 List of Appendices

- A. Cabinet Decision - Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23) (also attached the Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment).
- B. Notification of Call-in from Councillor Mike Mackrory.
- C. Three pages of additional information provided by the Cabinet Member since the call-in, titled 'Overnight Short Breaks Provision 2023 (Forward Plan reference number: FP/032/02/23).
- D. Procedure for managing call-ins reflecting the provisions contained within the County Council's Constitution.

Forward Plan reference number: FP/032/02/23

Report title: Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years	
Date: 21 March 2023	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Clare Burrell, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Clare.Burrell@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1. Everyone's Essex sets out four strategic aims and 20 commitments to residents with specific commitments specifically for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their parents/carers
- 1.2. Essex County Council wants to support residents' health, wellbeing, and independence by creating a good place for children and families to grow and to enjoy good health at all ages.
- 1.3. The Essex Short Breaks offer comprises a wide suite of provision available to over 5400 registered children and young people and their families. Overnight Short Breaks form one part of the wider offer and is available to children and young people with SEND when a need is identified through social care assessment.
- 1.4. Parents who are carers often spend a lot of their time caring for their children in comparison to other parents. Overnight Short Breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family thereby contributing to their resilience and stability. Furthermore, by having the opportunity to attend Overnight Short Breaks, good outcomes are delivered for children and young people through delivery of high quality social and independence skills development opportunities.
- 1.5. The Overnight Short Breaks offer provides parents and carers of children and young people with SEND an overnight break from their additional caring responsibilities, by offering care for the child or young person at an Ofsted registered home or with foster carers.
- 1.6. Since 2019, when a review of Overnight Short Breaks was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee, the offer has been developed to improve access to trained foster carers and externally commissioned provision. The offer also now encompasses care provided in the family home by paid carers whilst the parent carers take a break away from the family home.

- 1.7. The Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy, published in 2021, set an objective to review the current Overnight Short Breaks offer with a view to improving and diversifying the support available for parents/carers. This paper sets out the learning from the review and provides recommendations to improve the offer.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Agree to maintain a mixed economy of internal overnight provision, home based provision, family based (delivered by ECC trained foster carers) and external provision for overnight short breaks for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability which shall include:
 - 2.1.1 ceasing to use Lavender House in Colchester for overnight short night breaks with effect from 30 June 2023; and
 - 2.1.2 the extension of provision at the Maples in Harlow so that it operates with a minimum capacity of five beds and a maximum capacity of eight beds (dependent on the behavioural and social needs of the children staying) for seven nights of the week with effect from 30 June 2023.
- 2.2. Note that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years will take a decision on the future use of Lavender House.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide short breaks for eligible families with disabled children. Short breaks give carers a break from caring while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.
- 3.2. Under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, local authorities must provide, as appropriate, a range of services for disabled children and their families which includes overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere. This must be provided where a need is identified through social care assessment.
- 3.3. The Council's current short breaks offer comprises a wide suite of provision from preventative approaches including Overnight Short Breaks as well as other early help offers such as Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities which do not require a social care assessment for children and young people with SEND to access them.
- 3.4. This paper is concerned with the Overnight Short Breaks element only of this offer.
- 3.5. The current range of Overnight Short Breaks available includes:

- **Internal Offer:** overnight short breaks at two sites run by ECC: The Maples in Harlow and Lavender House in Colchester.
 - **External Offer:** overnight short breaks commissioned provision through several providers and sites including Achieving Aspirations (with sites in Bury St Edmunds, Clacton and Sudbury), St Christophers Cottage (based in Southend) and Peartree (in Hertfordshire).
 - **Family based care:** Overnight short breaks provided by trained foster carers in the foster carers home.
 - **Home based care:** Overnight short breaks provided in the child or young person's home by a carer, affording the parent carers to take their short break away from the home. This is sometimes delivered through Direct Payment, and sometimes through Council-sourced provision.
- 3.6. Following a paper taken to the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019, and engagement with families, it was informally agreed that the wider short breaks offer would be reviewed in 2022 to ensure that parents, children and young people can access overnight short breaks provision which meets need and enables good outcomes within the available financial envelope.
- 3.7. The time enabled the development of a wider range of overnight short breaks and meant that some of the young people accessing provision would become adults, and no longer require provision, which would minimise the impact of any change.
- 3.8. In 2021, there was significant engagement with families using the service to develop the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy 2021-2026 of which Overnight Short Breaks is one component. Over 400 families responded to this consultation and 20 families took part in interviews. The Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy was finalised in October 2021.
- 3.9. The Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy set out that the Council would review the range of Overnight Short Breaks provision and ensure existing provision is as efficient as possible and appropriately targeted to those most in need of support.
- 3.10. This review is now complete, and the proposals are set out in this report.

National Context and Local Authority Benchmarking

- 3.11. As of 31 March 2020, there were 167 short-break-only homes in England.
- 3.12. A third of all local authorities had no short-break-only homes within their boundaries. Of the 100 local authorities that had short-break-only homes within their boundaries: 64 had one home, 21 had two homes and 15 had three or more.

3.13. Most short-break-only homes (64%) were local authority run, compared with around 15% of all children's homes.

3.14. Short-break only homes have the best inspection profile of any of the four sub-groups of children's homes. They had both proportionately more outstanding and proportionately more good outcome judgements (*Children's homes providing short breaks, published 10 August 2021, Ofsted*).

3.15. The commissioning team met with ten local authorities who are ECC's 'statistical neighbours' – having similar economic and demographic make up to Essex. Common experiences across local authorities included:

- A shortage of foster carers on the whole, alongside a lack of specialist foster carer availability due to complex long-term placements
- High demand related to behaviours that challenge
- Difficulty fulfilling support packages which leaves them reliant on the market
- Transitions to adult services could be improved
- Staff shortages across the board
- Some families do not like care within their home so refuse direct payments, although the need could be met for the child or young person in their own home/bed.

Capacity and Demand

3.16. As at November 2022, there were 142 children and young people registered across all Essex Overnight Short Breaks, with a total number of 3,934 nights allocated between them. This is broken down below to reflect the quadrant and type of overnight short breaks.

Provision	Number CYP	Number of Nights	Quadrant information
Family Based Care	37	1079	Delivered across the County but minimally in South
External Provision	34	756	Heavily utilised in South with smaller numbers across the other quadrants
The Maples	23	702	Mainly used by children and young people in West
Lavender House	12	468	Mainly used by children and young people in Mid and North
Home Based Care	10	162	Mostly used in North and South
Combination of above	2	168	North and South
On Hold	5	160	This represents children and young people who are not currently able to take up Overnight Short Breaks, for example because they are in hospital.
To be confirmed	17	439	This includes children and young people who have had overnight short breaks agreed at panel, but those nights are being identified

			for them. For example, this may be time spent identifying and building a relationship with a foster carer.
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- 3.17. Analysis of registration data, alongside engagement with families and staff, also demonstrated that different provision meets differing needs. For example, the external market is well suited to responding to medical and healthcare needs and the internal provision is well suited to respond to complex behavioural challenges.
- 3.18. Over the previous three years the range of overnight short breaks has developed considerably, particularly the family-based care offer. The highest volume of overnight short breaks demand is now being met through specialist foster carers.
- 3.19. Family based care is well suited to children and young people for whom large groups can be overwhelming and home-based care is well suited to ensure that children and young people who require consistency or specific non-transportable equipment can remain in their own home, in their own bed.

Engagement with Families, foster carers and internal staff

- 3.20. As part of a robust communications plan, parents have been engaged and kept informed throughout the review and then formally consulted. Efforts have been made to ensure engagement and consultation is accessible through one-to-one meetings, both face to face and online. The intention is that, should the recommended option be taken forwards, parents will continue to be engaged and supported through any transitions because of changes to provision.
- 3.21. In April 2022, the commissioning team asked families using the service how they would like to engage with the review. A survey and interviews were then undertaken to explore families' experiences of overnight short breaks. The engagements sought to understand what was working well and what could be improved.
- 3.22. To recognise and garner views of the highly skilled and experienced Overnight Short Breaks staff teams, several meetings and workshops were held, and they were kept updated on developments through regular communications. An open survey link was also shared to ensure staff could raise concerns or offer ideas anonymously if they preferred.
- 3.23. The insights from the parent carer interviews and survey are set out below:

Theme	
Referral Process	The referral process is straightforward. "All brilliant, no stress". However, there is a perception that families are offered Overnight Short Breaks as last resort.
Environment	There was consistent praise for the environmental set up of the internal and external overnight short breaks homes, particularly in relation to safety features, fixtures, and equipment. Several families accessing Lavender or

	Maples commented that family-based care was not appropriate for their child or young person as it was not robust enough and their children might damage the foster carers home.
Staff	There was also consistent good feedback relating to staff across the offer. <i>'There are trained LD professionals – we really value them in our team around the child meetings, they are really involved. They have helped him reach developmental goals – he can now go to the toilet himself – something we were not convinced he would ever be able to do' – parent carer accessing the Maples</i>
Support provided and outcomes	Support provided and outcomes: There was consistent praise for the offer but desire for more of it, and for more families to be able to access it. There were also comments relating to improved availability, particularly at weekends. Several positive outcomes for both the children, parents and siblings were captured – from life skills, to confidence, to impact on parent carer relationships. <i>'The benefits... well, it saved our marriage. I don't say that lightly.'</i> – parent carer accessing the Maples
Improvements	Families spoke of a lack of preparation for when a young person reaches adulthood, and anxieties from parent carers that when they reach 18, they will be mixing with older people in adult's provision. There were also comments made relating to support needed for parents from the wider social care system.

3.24. The insights from foster carer interviews are set out below:

Theme	
Foster carer motivation	Every foster carer interviewed had a background in social care, SEN education, care sector or residential homes. Several were nearing retirement, or their own children had become adults and they wanted to support their communities. <i>'It's not just a job. It's not just to pay the bills. You have to have some passion and understanding for these families and for the children. And you need to get something out of it too – it's got to be rewarding.'</i>
Referrals	There was good feedback for social workers, supervision and support offers. Foster carers favoured slow relationship development with family with introductions to be done in neutral venues or in their home. Many set out that they would have children to attend teas or dinners before staying overnight for example
Outcomes	Several foster carers mentioned the children they provide Overnight Short Breaks for require quieter environments, and that the stay is led by the child. Several spoke of their continuous professional development and desire to be able to take children with more complex needs but the

	environment (or need for specialist equipment) did not always make this possible
Improvements	One foster carer explained that she was often called last minute on a Friday afternoon for emergency placements, which led to many foster carers no longer taking emergencies as a result. There was also feedback related to unclear and burdensome processes to receive pay.

3.25. The insights from internal staff engagements are set out below:

Theme	
Perception of cost	There was a perception from staff that internal is easier to access, offers better outcomes and costs less than external provision.
Meeting need	Staff set out that as children aged, and physically grew their physical and behavioural needs were becoming more difficult to manage at home. Staff also set out that families with wider needs, such as financial deprivation, solo parenting, parental conflict, mental and emotional health needs were able to receive emotional support from the Overnight Short Breaks home.
Working together	There was feedback that the system works well together, across the social worker, Overnight Short Breaks home, education and family. <i>'We've known young people for long time so are able to pick up when they're feeling down and to support them as well as share our finding with families and other professionals' – Residential worker</i>
Mapping outcomes	Through an exercise to better understand outcomes for children and young people accessing internal provision it became apparent that recording of outcomes could be strengthened and that there was a wide range of social, developmental, and aspirational outcomes being delivered for children and young people with SEND
Ideas and aspirations:	Several staff were keen to develop the offer and gave suggestions such as developing skills workshops for young people or doing direct work with parent carers to understand the developmental needs of their young people
Staff welfare	Staff expressed their anxieties about any changes and that they would like to see definitive answers as to the future of the Overnight Short Breaks offer.

Options considered and formal consultation

3.26. Following this informal consultation, four options were considered by the project team which included member representatives from Commissioning, Children's Social Care, Finance, and Procurement.

3.27. Three options were discounted as they were either not achievable within the financial envelope or were not able to meet demand.

- 3.28. The conclusion arrived at following the informal consultation is that there are advantages to a mixed economy of provision: an internal, external and family and home-based provision. This enables the offer to meet a range of needs and choice.
- 3.29. The two internal sites (Lavender and the Maples) run with small staff teams adequate to meet current demand. However, this means that they cannot run at maximum capacity as the staff to children ratio would not be appropriate or meet Ofsted requirements. From October 2022 through to March 2023, Lavender House was running with one child or young person in the provision for 86% of the time. This impacts the outcomes for the child, who is not staying alongside their peers, and is not best value for public money.
- 3.30. There is not the funding available to expand the teams at both internal sites and expanding two teams would mean excess capacity in the service, which is not required to meet current demand.
- 3.31. A single internal premises running at higher capacity with increased staffing levels can meet demand and offer improved availability of nights (both weeks and weekends), something families had identified as an improvement.
- 3.32. The Maples in Harlow is specifically built for these services and, although needs some general updating, it is structurally sound, meets Ofsted requirements and attracts consistently good feedback relating to its secure and robust environment. It is also fully up to date with tracking hoists and specialist equipment.
- 3.33. Lavender House in Colchester, however, would require more investment over time due to its age and likely future maintenance requirements. It is also not as attractive to Ofsted as it is on two levels which impacts who can stay, and how many. Lavender House would also require additional tracking hoists and equipment to meet likely future demand.
- 3.34. As a result, a proposal was developed to deliver the internal Overnight Short Breaks offer from one premises, the Maples in Harlow. Having one team at the Maples would allow for an increased capacity to deliver nights to more children at any one time. The proposal would mean a minimum capacity of five children and a maximum of eight dependent on scheduling requirements based on the individual needs of the children. It would also be open 7 nights a week instead of 5 nights per week in term time.
- 3.35. This proposal would enable ECC to meet current demand and future-proof the offer for potential future increases in demand for the internal provision. A higher ratio of staff to children will also enable improved opportunity to respond to a wider range of needs, which enables more capacity to focus on independence skills development.
- 3.36. A formal consultation was launched in November 2022 and closed on 31 January 2023. It was widely circulated on the Short Breaks Facebook page, emails to families and every family accessing Lavender House were offered a face-to-face direct consultation meeting. We received 44 responses.

3.37. The consultation received mixed responses which are summarised below:

- For most of the families who access Overnight Short Breaks, the proposal to condense the ECC internal provision at the Maples and Lavender House sites to The Maples will have minimal impact and many families feel that it is positive that there will be more availability and flexibility on when they are able to access overnight short breaks.
- For families that currently access overnight short breaks via direct payments or family-based care only, there will be no impact from the proposed change.
- Some families who are eligible for short breaks clubs and activities and who do not currently access overnight short breaks feel that they need to be more aware of what Children's Social Care services are available and how they may be able to access Overnight Short Breaks.
- Of the 14 families currently accessing Lavender House, seven are not in support of the proposal primarily because of the increase in travel times and the financial impacts of the cost of that travel together with worry about being further away from their child.
- The remaining seven families are either in support of the proposal because it would offer the opportunity to block book nights for longer than 5 nights or are unaffected as their young people reach 18 before April 2023 and therefore will no longer be using the overnight short breaks provision.
- It is recognised that the 7 families who access Lavender House that live in the Colchester and Tendring districts are the most impacted by the proposal through increased travel times and costs.
- These families who live in the north east of the county have told us they will feel anxious about their child/young person being so far from home during the duration of their short breaks if the only option is to travel to the Maples in Harlow. Two have indicated that they may have to cease using the internal provision if the proposal is approved.
- For most families living in the west, mid and south of the county, travel times and costs from home or school setting to access the Maples remains the same or improves.

3.38. Full details of the consultation response can be found in Appendix 2. A full breakdown of the impact on the directly impacted families can be found in Appendix 1: Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment.

3.39. This proposal enables ECC to repurpose Lavender House to service delivery needs across the children's social care system in Essex.

3.40. If this is agreed a consultation with employees will determine opportunities for the 18 staff based either at Lavender House or at the Maples in Harlow. There may be opportunities to redeploy people in other roles in the service.

3.41. ECC will explore how best to support families currently attending Lavender House through each child's individual care plan to ensure that all families are offered suitable alternative provision which meets the needs of those families as well as Lavender House. This might include:

- Working with the families to access alternative overnight short breaks provision at the Maples, with an externally commissioned provider or through family or home based care.
- Home to School Passenger Transport assistance to alternative overnight short breaks provision
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.

3.42. The Maples does not require specific development to enable it to meet the additional demand, although improvements to some specialist equipment would enable children and young people to have access to equipment that supports their sensory, social and physical developmental needs..

4. Links to our strategic ambitions

4.1. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:

- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Connect us to each other and the world

4.2. This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Plan:

- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

4.3. Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:

- Improving access to provision in terms of geographic spread, families will not be required to drive as far to access the offer.

5. Options

Option 1: Maintain a mixed economy of internal, external, family based and home-based provision which includes delivery from one ECC-run site at The Maples and the closure of Lavender House. (Recommended)

- 5.1. This option will enable demand to be met through internal provision at The Maples in Harlow, externally commissioned provision across and outside the County, family based and home-based care.
- 5.2. This is the option with the most amount of opportunity to deliver service improvements by delivering from a single premises, which is built for purpose, and can have a single staff team that will enable increased service capacity through more flexible scheduling. This will result in improved availability of placements at weekends and placements for 7 nights of the week.
- 5.3. This option will include increasing the staff capacity at The Maples and increasing the number of nights that The Maples is open. Dependent on scheduling around children and young people's needs, the capacity will be a minimum of 5 children and a maximum of 8 children visiting each night. This equates to 1,820 – 2,912 nights per year.
- 5.4. This is more than is currently delivered through the two internal premises (which are open 5 nights per week in term time) due to the two premises having limited staff capacity to have multiple children staying with high levels of need. For example, between October 2022 and March 2023, for 86% of the time, there was only one young person visiting Lavender House.
- 5.5. This will mean ECC no longer delivering Overnight Short Breaks from Lavender House in Colchester.
- 5.6. The benefits and risks to this option are set out in the table below:

Benefits	Risks
A mixed economy of provision enables the offer to meet demand, need and to offer choice in the provision available to families.	A staff consultation and restructure will take place to determine recruitment requirements. Recruitment is challenging across the care and residential sector and so there are likely to be vacancies whilst the team at the Maples expands.
One staff team at the Maples means an increased capacity to deliver nights, meeting current demand and future-proofing the offer for potential future increases in demand. This means a higher ratio of staff to	A small number of families are disadvantaged by an increase in travel time from home/school to alternative provision. This will also impact on Home to School Transport arrangements. The

children to enable improved outcomes.	Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment sets out the impact on the 7 families affected in relation to journey time, fuel costs, and carbon emissions.
The Maples requires low levels of maintenance and refurbishment to ensure it meets ongoing need.	Transitions to alternative provision for families currently accessing Lavender House will need to be managed sensitively. In some cases, direct payments will need to be considered to ensure no additional full costs are passed to families. All transition support requirements will be considered and agreed through the child or young person's care plan.
The proposal would not require lengthy design phases to develop a new build/new premises, and there would be no cessation of the service.	
This option also has the potential to improve staff training and equipment so that children and young people with specific healthcare needs can access the provision, improving the capacity of the internal offer to meet a wider range of needs over time.	
Improved staff capacity supports independence skills development of young people to support the move to more independent living.	
An indicative budget of £471,000 would ensure the current level of externally commissioned nights is maintained	
This option would enable Lavender House to be repurposed to service delivery needs across the children's social care system. If the space was used to deliver services for CWD then it is possible that existing staff could be retained.	

5.7. The costs of this option are based on an internal staff team at the Maples made up of:

- 1 FTE Residential Home Manager
- 1 FTE Deputy Home Manager
- 6 FTE Advanced Skills Workers
- 20 FTE Residential Workers (Days)

- 8 FTE Residential Workers (Nights)
- 1 FTE Caretaker

- 5.8. The remaining savings will need to be identified from the wider Short Breaks and CWD budgets including External Overnight Short Breaks, the Light Touch Care Hours budget and Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities budgets.
- 5.9. It is also anticipated than in year one staff consultation and recruitment will mean potential underspend due to staff vacancies as the new offer mobilises.
- 5.10. Families currently accessing Lavender House would be supported to transition to appropriate alternative provision by the end of June 2023.
- 5.11. The Premises Maintenance/Development Requirements are set out in Appendix 3. The Maples does not require specific development to enable it to meet the additional demand, although improvements to some specialist equipment would enable children and young people to have access to equipment that supports their sensory, social and physical developmental needs. This is marked as desirable rather than essential in the Appendix.

Option 2: Reform the overnight short breaks offer, maintaining a mixed economy of internal, external, family based and home-based provision which includes delivery from one ECC site, Lavender House and not the Maples. (Not Recommended)

- 5.12. This option is similar to option one, but the internal offer would be from Lavender House rather than from The Maples.
- 5.13. Lavender House requires considerable investment to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in the long term which is set out in detail in Appendix 3: Premises Maintenance/Development Requirements.
- 5.14. Lavender House was a former care home. The building is split over two levels, it is not permissible to place children and young people with mobility needs upstairs due to fire risks. This has an impact on scheduling and the level of capacity that Lavender House can offer. This impacts our ability to increase capacity to meet demand. The Maples is built for purpose and therefore there are not limitations on the rooms that can be used and thereby offers the opportunity to increase capacity for families to access.
- 5.15. There are currently fourteen young people accessing Lavender House. In March 2023, five of those will no longer require access to Lavender House due to turning 18 years old or due to changes in their care plans. A further four will turn 18 within a year of any change to service being implemented.
- 5.16. There is an external market provider presence in the north of the county which can increase the options available to families, but not in the west which could increase the number of families impacted by the change significantly. This means that Option 2 would increase risks of not being able to find appropriate provision for families.

5.17. As a result, this option is not recommended.

Option 3: Commission the entire offer externally via a procurement exercise (not recommended)

5.18. The cost per night is considerably lower when commissioning externally, even when considering the need for higher ratios of staff to children for some needs. This would enable significant savings to be met.

5.19. However, there is not the capacity in the market to deliver all allocated nights and therefore this option could mean ECC has limited mechanisms to meet its obligations under the Children Act 1989.

5.20. This option would not meet all types of need or offer choice to families, for example those with significant behavioural needs. As a result, it is not recommended.

Option 4: No change (not recommended)

5.21. This option would mean maintaining provision as it currently stands. This option represents missed opportunities to ensure demand is met whilst offering value for money and improved outcomes for children and young people.

5.22. It would mean risk in the longer term as, without significant investment, Lavender House may become not fit for purpose and may impact Ofsted outcomes.

5.23. The current staffing levels across each of the premises also means that for considerable amounts of time only one child is staying overnight. For that child they are missing out on social connection with peers, shared activities and therefore are not experiencing the full spectrum of potential outcomes that they would in a busier, fully staffed home.

5.24. The benefit of this option is that the increased travel times will not impact the 7 families currently accessing Lavender House.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1. Financial implications

6.1.1 The recommended option of delivery of the internal offer of overnight short breaks from The Maples only will require the two flats and eight beds being operational seven nights per week. This is a change from the current offer of one flat with four beds being available for Overnight Short Breaks for five nights per week. The forecast cost of the new service model for 2023/24 from July 2023 is set out below. Due to the new operating model commencing in July residual costs will be incurred at the Lavender site for the 3 months for the period of April to June.

	The Maples April 2023 to March 2024 £000	Lavender House April 2023 to June 2023 £000	Total £000
Staff	1,095	160	1,287
Non-staff Costs	78	22	100
Total Cost	1,173	182	1,387
Budget 2023/24 (before savings)	671	738	1,409
Variance (under) / over	503	(556)	(54)
Savings 2023/24			400
Residual Savings to be delivered			346

6.1.2 The Short Breaks service has a savings target in 2023/24 of £400,000 and delivery of Overnight Short Breaks from The Maples is forecast to make a small contribution of £54,000.

6.1.3 Delivery of the remaining Short Breaks savings in 2023/24 will be achieved through the rightsizing and re-shaping of the following budgets:

Service	2023/24 Base £000	2023/24 Saving £000	2023/24 Original Budget £000
External Overnight Short Breaks	687	(216)	471
Light Touch Care Hours	100	(55)	45
Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities	1,492	(75)	1,417
Total	2,279	346	1,933

6.1.4 No additional capital investment is required to allow The Maples to operate the two flats for seven nights per week with ongoing maintenance costs and equipment purchases funded within the permanent revenue budget. Request for capital investment will only be made when necessary.

6.1.5 There is a financial risk to the delivery of the savings target in 2023/24 due to the following:

- a) The transition to The Maples is expected to be completed by the end of June 2023 at which point Lavender House will cease to be an overnight short breaks provision. However, the re-purpose of Lavender House to meet children's social care delivery needs is not expected to be completed before the Autumn 2024. The monthly cost of running Lavender House per month is £61,000 and will need to be absorbed into the overall cost of the Lavender House proposal.
- b) No redundancy costs are expected to be incurred in the change in Overnight Short Breaks provision as staff could transfer to The Maples, re-deployed within the Council or remain at Lavender House as the site is re-purposed. If, however redundancy costs are incurred these will need to be funded through the Children and Families budget.

- c) Families currently attending Lavender House may require additional support during the initial transition of young people to The Maples. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis determined by the needs of the young person.

6.1.6 Changes to home to school transport arrangements for the families currently attending Lavender House but who are to transition the Maples have been considered as part of this decision. Out of the 14 families, only 8 will be affected, however these currently do not receive support for home to school transport, therefore an additional cost to the Council is not expected.

6.2. Legal implications

6.2.1 The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 place a duty on local authorities to provide a range of services for disabled children and their families which includes “overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere.

6.2.2 The proposals are a way of meeting statutory need. Commissioners believe that the re-procured service will better meet the needs of service users.

6.2.3 Affected service users have been consulted on the proposal.

7. Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.2. The equality comprehensive impact assessment (ECIA) indicates that, although the recommended proposal in this report will positively impact most families impacted by the change, it does have a disproportionately adverse impact on 7 children and young people with SEND currently accessing Lavender House.

- 7.3. A full understanding of the impacts is set out within the ECIA including the potential cost implications of increased travel times and/or distances.
- 7.4. ECC will explore ways to support families currently attending Lavender House through the child's individual care plans. This might include:
- Home to School Passenger Transport assistance to alternative overnight short breaks provision
 - Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
 - Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.

8. List of Appendices

- 8.2 Appendix 1: Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment
- 8.3 Appendix 2: Children with Disabilities (CWD) Consultation and Key Findings Report
- 8.4 Appendix 3: Premises Maintenance/Development Requirements

9. List of Background papers

- 9.1. Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy 2021-2026
- 9.2. Children and Young Peoples Plan Refreshed September 2020
- 9.3. Essex Local Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027: My Life, my rights
- 9.4. Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment - originator review

Reference: ECIA480755208

Submitted: 02 February 2023 11:30 AM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Recommissioning of CWD Overnight Short Breaks Provision 2023

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks give parent carers and siblings a break while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence, and have fun.

Within the overall short breaks offer, children and young people can access ECC Overnight Short Break (OSB) services if they are: aged between 0-18 and have a diagnosis of special educational needs and/or a disability.

Overnight Short Breaks provision currently consists of 3 key elements, internal ECC provision (The Maples and Lavender House in Harlow & Colchester), Family Based Care, which is delivered through Short Breaks Foster Carers, and External Provision, e.g., Achieving Aspirations, Christopher's Cottage, Home Based Care and Direct Payments.

Currently, 142 children and young people have agreed OSB packages of 4128 nights. Of those 142 children and young people, 17 are waiting for provision to be identified. 34 children/young people access The Maples in Harlow and 14 children/young people access Lavender House in Colchester which will reduce to 11 during the period January 23 to April 23 as young people transition to adult services. An overall picture of the demand for each element of the Overnight Short Breaks provision is as follows: (numbers as at Nov 22):

Provision	Number CYP	Number of Nights
Family Based Care	37	1079
External Provision	34	756
The Maples	23	702
Lavender House	14	468
Home Based Care	10	162

Following a planned review of the overnight short breaks offer, there is a preferred option to condense the current internal offer as demand can be met at a single location and offer more capacity for families to access which may also include additional weekend nights. The single location would be The Maples, in Harlow. There we are confident that the new model of delivery at the single location will allow more targeted work to be carried out with individual families to develop young people's skills.

The Maples is a purpose-built facility that is better set up to meet the demand for the overall internal provision for OSB.

Family Based Care, Home Based care, Direct Payments and the element of External Provision will be maintained within the condensed offer and no proposed changes are considered. With regard to the internal provision, there would also be no change to the number of approved overnight short breaks that families are eligible for, the proposal means they will be delivered from The Maples.

Lavender House in Colchester would no longer be used to deliver OSB's but there is a separate proposal for this building to be repurposed to enable ECC to meet the challenge of solo Children's Social Care placements for Children & Young People with ASD.

Currently, families in the North and Mid of the County mainly access Lavender House and therefore may need to travel to the Maples in Harlow to access internal Overnight Short Breaks. The total number of eligible nights for families that currently access Lavender House is 513 per annum.

The condensed offer will be more cost effective and meet Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable increased capacity for OSB by expanding the offer across 7 nights a week, which families are asking for. The increased capacity also has potential to deliver nights currently delivered through external provision.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: The condensed offer will be more cost effective and meet Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable an overall increased capacity for OSBs by expanding the offer across 7 nights a week, which families are asking for. The increased capacity also has potential to deliver nights currently delivered through external provision.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Helen Lincoln (Children, Families and Education)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Beverley Egan (Children's Services and Early Years)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: An ongoing ECC Project Team consisting of Children & Families Commissioners, Operational CWD Colleagues, Finance Reps, Legal Rep and Citizen Insight will oversee the decision-making process and will also oversee the implementation of any changes should the preferred option be approved. The Decision is expected to go to Cabinet in March, following a full consultation with families, social care professionals and staff teams at Lavender House and The Maples which is being carried out during December 22/January 23.

The findings of the consultation will be shared back to families and staff in February. Should the decision be made to proceed with the preferred option, a staff consultation for the 15 affected staff at Lavender House will take place during April/May 2023.

Full implementation of any approved changes will take place during the Summer of 2023.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: No

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles, Carers, Levelling up health

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Family resilience and stability, Outcomes for vulnerable children, Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex, Tendring

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Sex

Nature of impact: None

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: None

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: A full consultation with families has taken place from the beginning of December 22 which run for 8 weeks through to the end of January 2023. This was via an on-line survey which will be sent to all families accessing both The Maples and Lavender House, Foster Carers, Social Care Professionals and staff members at both sites.

The 11 Families who access Lavender House were offered face to face meetings in November & December 2022 to talk through the proposal and to help them better understand the impact to them and their children/young people.

The central findings of the consultation will be shared with families once the consultation has been completed, this is expected to take place in February 2023 and will be via a face-to-face meeting with families. Feedback from the consultation will also be shared with staff at both sites.

Should the preferred option be agreed, there will be a change to how the service is operated and also changes to the current staffing levels. There will be a 45-day consultation for the staff affected at the Lavender House site. This will be fully supported by HR functions, Commissioning and Operational Team Managers from within CWD. The preferred option will increase the number of available internal overnight short breaks for families across Essex and possibly increase availability at weekends which families have told us they want.

However, the preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North of the County who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore the following options for alternative arrangements for those families affected though exploring the following options:

Home to School Passenger Transport: Transport for those families that are eligible is currently provided from the ECC 'Home to School Transport Service' via current contracts between Passenger Transport Teams and various Transport Providers across the County. ECC will also explore options around transport continuing to be provided in this way and using existing providers to provide the transport to alternative provision instead of Lavender House in Colchester. Elements to be considered would include the medical and behavioural needs of the young person and any specialist health training needs for passenger transport assistants travelling with the young people.

Individual Arrangements with Families who transport the Young Person to their Overnight Short Breaks themselves. ECC will work with those families who currently provide their own transport to/from the Child/young person's short break needs and explore the impact of increased travel times and costs and look at ways families can be supported.

Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, External provision, and Foster Carer provision.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: The affected 11 families have all been contacted individually and have been offered a face-to-face meeting with the Short Breaks Team to explore the possible impact of increased travel times and to start to consider a solution to travel requirements by working with the families involved directly. Through the consultation feedback with families, ECC will be better able to understand and measure the impact of the increased travel times.

A further element from initial conversations with families is that the additional distance involved does raise some anxiety for some parent/carers who live in the North of the County around being so far away during the duration of the Overnight breaks and fear of any emergency situation/medication needs. ECC will explore any possible impacts with families as part of on-going conversation and explore other options for the provision of overnight short breaks in a different way if needed.

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: Negative

Extent of impact: Medium

Harwich

Nature of impact: Negative

Extent of impact: Medium

Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Canvey Island

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This has been marked positive due to the overall impact of the service that ensures families overnight short breaks needs are met. The Overnight Short Breaks are received well by families, and has positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND relating to the development of independence skills are demonstrated through family and staff engagements. However, a small population in the North of Essex is negatively impacted in terms of travel times and this is set out below.

In relation to the Levelling Up areas, at the time of the proposed change, there will be 11 families who may need to transition from Lavender House in Colchester to another alternative overnight short breaks offer. Geographically, in terms of where these families live, this is split as follows:

North Essex: Colchester & surrounding areas: 3 (including Wormingford, Kelvedon and Stanway)

North East Essex: Tendring: 4 (including Frinton, Brightlingsea, Harwich, St Osyth and Clacton)

South and Mid Essex: 4

The preferred option will mean there is a high negative impact on 7 families who live in Harwich, Jaywick and Clacton areas due to the increased travel time needed to access the Maples in Harlow, but no loss of overall service or change to the number of nights they are eligible for. ECC are confident that there will be increased flexibility around when they are able to access their overnight short breaks, including possible increased availability of weekend nights.

Overnight short breaks for families living in the South of the County, including Basildon & Canvey Island are predominantly provided through external provision and this will remain unchanged.

Currently, 21 of 23 families who access overnight short breaks at The Maples live in West Essex and consultation with families show they trust the staff and environment, the building is purpose built, is on one level and Ofsted feedback has been good on the support provided.

Rural North – there are several families accessing external provision through Achieving Aspirations in Bury St Edmunds and therefore any impact on families in this area will be low.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: As part of the consultation, affected families have already all been contacted individually and have been offered a face-to-face meeting with the Short Breaks Team to explore the impact of increased travel times and to consider potential mitigations to the impacts of increased travel time and costs.

Initial conversations with families demonstrate that the additional distance involved raises some anxiety due to parent/carers being further away during overnight breaks stays and those fears are based on responding to emergency situations/medication needs. ECC will explore any possible impacts with families as part of on-going conversation and explore other options for the provision of overnight short break nights in a different way if needed.

What actions will be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts, including timescales: The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North-East of the County who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased Transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore the following options for alternative arrangements for those families affected though exploring the following options:

Home to School Passenger Transport: Transport for those families that are eligible is currently provided from the ECC 'Home to School Transport Service' via current contracts between Passenger Transport Teams and various Transport Providers across the County. ECC will also explore options around transport continuing to be provided in this way and using existing providers to provide the transport to alternative overnight short breaks provision instead of Lavender House in Colchester. Elements to be considered would include the medical and behavioural needs of the young person and any specialist health training needs for passenger transport assistants travelling with the young people.

Individual Arrangements with Families who transport the Young Person to their Overnight Short Breaks themselves. ECC will work with those families who currently provide their own transport to/from the Child/young person's overnight short breaks and explore the impact of increased travel times and costs and look at ways families can be supported. This may include direct payments to ensure that the cost impacts are absorbed by ECC and not passed onto families.

Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, External provision and Family Based Care.

The ECC Overnight Short Breaks Project Team will also ensure the transition of overnight short breaks to alternative provision will be carefully considered and enough time will be allocated to ensure families and children/young people can transition in a way that works for them.

Home to Overnight Short Breaks Costs for families

The total estimated additional fuel costs per annum for all 11 families to access alternative provision is £4,258 which is based on an average fuel price at January 23 taken from the Tendring Area and is based on a diesel price and a average family sized car. The estimated costs are calculated on the number of current journeys carried out by families in the North from home to Lavender House, and the additional cost to travel to The Maples in Harlow. These costs do not include the journeys where Education Transport is provided from School to any overnight short breaks provision.

For the 7 individual families living in the North, the estimated additional costs to travel to alternative provision, based on travelling to The Maples range from an additional £158 to £1,331 per annum.

For the 4 families who live in Mid & South Essex, the estimated annual costs of additional travel range from a reduced amount of £62.16 to an additional £80.16 per annum.

School to Overnight Short Breaks Cost for Families

Some families where the young person is aged 15 or over and use home to school transport to access overnight short breaks at Lavender House currently contribute towards the costs of this service. Should the decision be made to proceed with the preferred option ECC will work with affected families to explore how to support the families with additional costs involved.

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Looked after children

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Veterans

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: As part of the review carried out in the summer of 2022, an online consultation with family carers of children/young people who access overnight short breaks gave us insight into the value of the overall provision and its positive impact on families.

The consultation told us that the ECC internal OSB provision is well received by families, the venues need to be robust and secure and the staff need to be warm and friendly and highly skilled. It also told us that availability can be issue and families would like to be able to access more nights at weekends. There was also a perception that Overnight Breaks are often seen as the last resort for families.

The consultation also told us that some families accessing the service are on a low income/single working parents and being able to use the Overnight Short Break provision is enabling them to maintain employment. Consultation with one family member suggested that employment was for their own mental and emotional health because they had several benefits stopped when they took up employment and were only earning £600 per month.

Some quotes from the consultation are:

Parent/Carer The Maples: "This service has saved my marriage - I don't say that lightly. I am on a range of medications myself – anti-depressants and beta blockers'

Parent/Carer The Maples: "Staff at The Maples are trained LD professionals – we really value them in our team around the child meetings, they are really involved. They have helped him reach developmental goals – he can now go to the toilet himself – something we were never going to see him do. They focus on life skills and Maples managed to do that. They worked with him to inspire confidence – foster carers don't have a wet room to help an adult-sized child learn without worrying about mess".

Parent/Carer Lavender House: “Lavender House is a great place, it is looking tired but it’s very welcoming. The child I support has access to good care, communications is clear and the staff are consistent and lovely people. It’s a shame there are empty units there when there is a demand for places.”

Parent/Carer The Maples – “We are a small cohort and an expensive one – but we will bring far more expense when we are no longer able to cope and go into crisis. Long term care is far more expensive than short breaks. Early Intervention and a Holistic Approach is required to support children like ours and families like us, as ICS come into power they and local authorities should seek to work closely and have more budget sharing, particularly for families with higher needs”

The preferred option will increase the number of available internal overnight short breaks for families across Essex and possibly increase availability at weekends which families have told us they want.

However, the option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North of the County who access overnight short breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore the following options for alternative arrangements for those families affected though exploring the following options:

Home to School Passenger Transport: Transport for those families that are eligible is currently provided from the ECC ‘Home to School Transport Service’ via current contracts between Passenger Transport Teams and various Transport Providers across the County. ECC will also explore options around transport continuing to be provided in this way and using existing providers to provide the transport to alternative provision instead of Lavender House in Colchester. Elements to be considered would include the medical and behavioural needs of the young person and any specialist health training needs for passenger transport assistants travelling with the young people.

Individual Arrangements with Families who transport the Young Person to their Overnight Short Breaks themselves. ECC will work with those families who currently provide their own transport to/from the Child/young person’s overnight short breaks and explore the impact of increased travel times and costs and look at ways families can be supported. This may include direct payments to ensure that the cost impacts are absorbed by ECC and not passed onto families.

Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, External provision and Foster Carer provision.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: As part of the consultation, affected families have already all been contacted individually and have been offered a face-to-face meeting with the Short Breaks Team to explore the impact of increased travel times and to consider potential mitigations to the impacts of increased travel time and costs.

Initial conversations with families demonstrate that the additional distance involved raises some anxiety due to parent/carers being further away during overnight breaks stays and those fears are based on responding to emergency situations/medication needs. ECC will explore any possible impacts with families as part of on-going conversation and explore other options for the provision of overnight short break nights in a different way if needed.

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This has been marked positive due to the overall impact of the service that ensures families overnight short breaks needs are met. Overnight short breaks are received well by families, and positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND relating to the development of independence skills are demonstrated through family and staff engagements. However, a small population in the North of Essex is negatively impacted in terms of travel times and this is set out below.

In relation to levels of deprivation, at the time of the proposed change, there will be 4 families who may need to transition from Lavender House in Colchester to another alternative overnight short breaks offer who currently live in coastal towns of Harwich & Clacton/Jaywick and possible areas of deprivation in the North East of the County.

The proposal will mean there is a high negative impact on families who live in Harwich, Jaywick and Clacton areas due to the increased travel time needed to access the Maples in Harlow, but no loss of overall service or change to the number of nights they are eligible for. ECC are confident that there will be increased flexibility around when they are able to access their overnight short breaks, including possible increased availability of weekend nights.

Overnight short breaks for families living in the South of the County, including Basildon & Canvey Island are predominantly provided through external provision and this will remain unchanged.

Currently, 21 of 23 families who access overnight short breaks at The Maples live in West Essex and consultation with families show they trust the staff and environment, the building is purpose built, is on one level and Ofsted feedback has been good on the support provided.

Rural North – there are several families accessing external provision through Achieving Aspirations in Bury St Edmunds and therefore any impact on families in this area will be low.

The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North of the County who access overnight short breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

There are 5 families who will live in the Clacton and the surrounding areas. ECC will work with these families to consider travel arrangements for them to access overnight short breaks at the Maples. Through assessment, any families that are eligible will receive support with the costs of additional travel, as previously explained there are a number of transport options which can be explored, or, if needed, a fuel allowance via direct payment for families will be available for any families in financial hardship.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: As part of the consultation, affected families have already all been contacted individually and have been offered a face-to-face meeting with the Short Breaks Team to explore the impact of increased travel times and to consider potential mitigations to the impacts

of increased travel time and costs.

A further element from initial conversations with families is that the additional distance involved does raise some anxiety around being so far away during the duration of the overnight breaks and fear of any emergency situation/medication needs. ECC will explore any possible impacts with families as part of on-going conversation and explore other options for the provision of overnight short break nights in a different way if needed.

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Parents who are carers spend a lot of their time caring for their children in comparison to other parents. Overnight short breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family, thereby contributing to their resilience and stability. Furthermore, by having the opportunity to attend overnight short breaks good developmental outcomes are delivered for children and young people with SEND.

As part of the review carried out in the summer of 2022, an online consultation with family carers of children/young people who access Overnight Short Breaks gave us valuable insight into the value of the overall provision and its positive impact on Families.

The consultation told us that the ECC internal OSB's provision is well received by families, the venues need to be robust and secure and the staff need to be warm and friendly. It also told us that availability can be an issue and families would like to be able to access more nights per week. There was also a perception that overnight breaks are often seen as the last resort for families.

Some quotes from the Consultation carried out in the Summer of 2022

Parent/Carer The Maples: "This service has saved my marriage - I don't say that lightly. I am on a range of medications myself – anti-depressants and beta blockers"

Parent/Carer The Maples: "Staff at The Maples are trained LD professionals – we really value them in our team around the child meetings, they are really involved. They have helped him reach developmental goals – he can now go to the toilet himself – something we were not convinced he would ever be able to do. They focus on life skills and Maples managed to do that. They worked with him to inspire confidence – foster carers don't have a wet room to help an adult-sized child learn without worrying about mess".

Parent/Carer Lavender House: "Lavender House is a great place, it is looking tired but it's very welcoming. The child I support has access to good care, communications is clear and the staff are consistent and lovely people. It's a shame there are empty units there when there is a demand for places."

Parent/Carer The Maples – "We are a small cohort and an expensive one – but we will bring far more expense when we are no longer able to cope and go into crisis. Long term care is far more expensive than short breaks. Early Intervention and a Holistic Approach is required to support children like ours and families like us, as ICS come into power they and local authorities should seek to work closely and have more budget sharing, particularly for families with higher needs"

The preferred option will increase the number of available internal overnight short breaks for families across Essex and possibly increase availability at weekends which families have told us they want.

The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North of the County who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore the following options for alternative arrangements for those families affected though exploring the options listed above.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: As part of the consultation, affected families have already all been contacted individually and have been offered a face-to-face meeting with the Short Breaks Team to explore the impact of increased travel times and to consider potential mitigations to the impacts of increased travel time and costs.

A further element from initial conversations with families is that the additional distance involved does raise some anxiety around being so far away during the duration of the Overnight breaks and fear of any emergency situation/medication needs. ECC will explore any possible impacts with families as part of on-going conversation and explore other options for the provision of overnight short breaks in a different way if needed.

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to the built environment / energy?: No

Does your decision / policy involve designing service provision and procurement to minimise freight and staff travel and enable use of active and public transport options?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to waste?: No

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: Yes

What are the mitigating actions?: The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the North of the County who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 families will be subject to increased

transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore the following options for alternative arrangements for those families affected though exploring the following options:

- Home to School Passenger Transport: Transport for those families that are eligible is currently provided from the ECC 'Home to School Transport Service' via current contracts between Passenger Transport Teams and various Transport Providers across the County. ECC will also explore options around transport continuing to be provided in this way and using existing providers to provide the transport to alternative provision instead of Lavender House in Colchester. Elements to be considered would include the medical and behavioural needs of the young person and any specialist health training needs for passenger transport assistants travelling with the young people.
- Individual Arrangements with Families who transport the Young Person to their Overnight Short Breaks themselves. ECC will work with those families who currently provide their own transport to/from the child/young person's short break needs and explore the impact of increased travel times and costs and look at ways families can be supported. This may also include direct payments to ensure that the cost impacts are absorbed by ECC and not passed onto families.
- Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, External provision, and Foster Carer provision.

The ECC Short Breaks Team will also ensure the transition of overnight short breaks to alternative provision will be carefully considered and enough time will be allocated to ensure families and children/young people can transition in a way that works for them.

School to Overnight Short Breaks Cost for Families

Some families where the young person is aged 15 or over and use home to school transport to access overnight short breaks at Lavender House currently contribute towards the costs of this service. Should the decision be made to proceed with the preferred option The ECC Short Breaks Team will work with affected families to explore how to support the families with additional costs involved.

People living in high areas of deprivation: If the preferred option is agreed, The ECC Short Breaks Team will work affected families who live in Harwich, Jaywick and Clacton areas where there is a negative high impact due to the increased travel time needed to access alternative provision.

Date they will be achieved: 01/06/2023

Which characteristics do these mitigating actions apply to?: Disability - learning disability, Disability - mental health issues, Disability - physical impairment, Disability - sensory impairment, Carers, Looked after children, People who are unemployed / economically inactive, People on low income, Working families, People living in areas of high deprivation, People living in coastal areas

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 02/02/2023

Name of person completing the ECIA: Neil Songer

Email address of person completing the ECIA: neil.songer@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Children, Families and Education

Your service area: Commissioning

Your team: C&F Commissioning Team

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk

Children with Disabilities

Overnight Short Breaks Consultation

Key findings

9th March 2023

Agenda

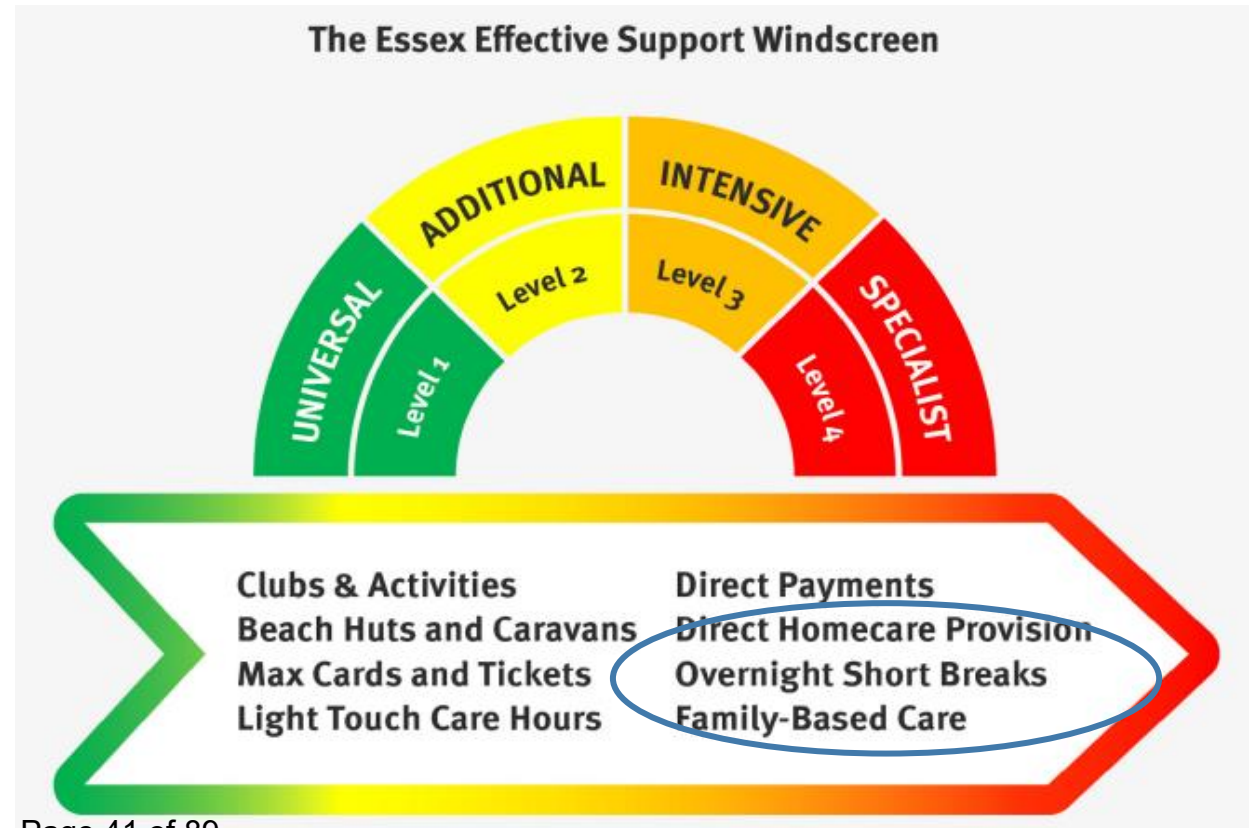
- 1 Councillor Egan to introduce the session**
- 2 Background and Context**
- 3 Current Demand**
- 4 Introduction to Consultation**
- 5 Consultation Findings**
- 6 Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment**
- 7 Next Steps**

What are Short Breaks?

Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks gives parent carers and siblings a break while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.

Children and young people can access ECC short break services if they are:

- aged between 0-18, or 19-25 and have a personal budget
- have a diagnosis of special educational needs and/or a disability
- living within the administrative borders of Essex County Council



Strategy Objective

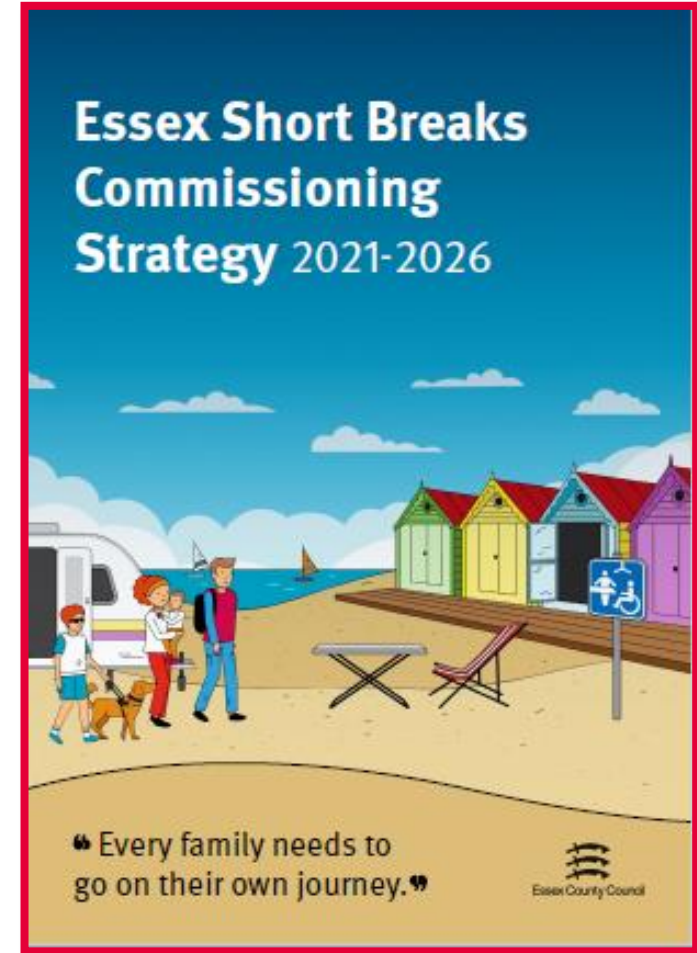
Objective 5: Parents, children and young people can access overnight short breaks provision which meets need and enables good outcomes

What will we do:

We will review our offer for overnight short breaks to ensure it is sustainable and meeting need.

We will expand the range of options that are available as an alternative to overnight residential care, including our foster care offer, considering improvements that could be made through developing improved commissioning frameworks for short break foster care.

We will ensure our existing provision is as efficient as possible and appropriately targeted to those most in need of support.



Current Demand

This table shows the current demand of the 5 main elements of the overnight short breaks offer.

Family Based Care	External Providers	Maples	Lavender	Direct Payments
37 Children	34 Children	23 Children	14 Children	10 Children
1079 Nights	756 Nights	702 Nights	579 Nights	162 Nights
	Heavily utilised in South with smaller numbers across other quadrants	Mainly West CYP	Mainly North and Mid CYP	Mostly used in North and South - only 1 Child in West and none in Mid

142 children and young people currently have agreed OSB packages of **4128** nights between them.

Admission to EEC-run Overnight Short Breaks

Year	Lavender House Admissions		The Maples Admissions	
	Number of young people	Number of nights per annum	Number of young people	Number of nights per annum
2016	2	36	4	72
2017	7	270	1 3 emergencies	24 300
2018	4	140	11	240
2019	1	36	2	24
2020	5	156	4	124
2021	4	171	1	24
2022	4	168	4	73
2023	-	-	3	30

Introduction:

The Overnight Short Breaks offer includes internal provision (The Maples in Harlow and Lavender House in Colchester), Family-based care (foster carers that enable families to have short breaks), Direct Payments (where a professional carer attends a family home overnight) and Externally commissioned provision such as Achieving Aspirations and St Christophers Cottage

Following a review of the Overnight Short Break provision, the Council is proposing to make changes to the overnight short breaks offer which would mean that the Lavender House site in Colchester will no longer provide Overnight Short Breaks and therefore families may need to use alternative provision. A consultation was undertaken to gather the views of parent carers and their families who are currently accessing overnights short breaks, or may need to access them in the future. The consultation findings will help ECC understand the impacts the changes will have on families across the County.

An online consultation ran for a period of 8 weeks from the 7th December until the 31st January (extra weeks were included due to the Christmas Period).

Prior to the consultation going live and throughout it being live, families who currently access Lavender House were given the opportunity to meet with officers from the Overnight Short Breaks Project Team to understand the proposed changes and to have an initial discussion about how this may impact them.

The consultation was circulated to all families currently receiving Overnight Short Breaks, CWD Social Care Professionals and staff at both the Lavender and Maples sites.

The Consultation was also promoted via social media via the ECC Short Breaks Facebook page and shared by Essex Family Forum.

Understanding families who use Overnight Short Breaks

The proposed changes will mean that there will be increased availability at one site, The Maples in Harlow. It will be staffed at full capacity, 7 nights per week, and have a maximum of 8 beds capacity per night – a maximum of 2,912 available per year.

The proposed change means that families currently accessing Lavender House will no longer have access to Overnight Short Breaks at this site, and this will may mean that alternative provision will need to be sought, which will include The Maples in Harlow.

ECC understands that the impact of the changes will be most felt by families who currently access Lavender House and live in the Colchester and Tendring areas, through possible increased travel times to access alternative provision for overnight short breaks.

Therefore, ECC understand that families who live in the North East of the County may have different views to families who live outside of these areas so the consultation findings seek to reflect the difference in the views provided by respondents.

Key conclusions from the consultation process

- For a majority of the families who access Overnight Short Breaks, the proposal to condense the ECC internal provision at The Maples and Lavender House sites to the Maples only will have minimal impact and many families feel that it is positive that there will be more availability and flexibility on when they are able to access overnight short breaks
- For families that currently access overnight short breaks via direct payments or family based care only, there will be no impact from the proposed change.
- Some families who are eligible for short breaks clubs and activities and who do not currently access overnight short breaks feel that they need to be aware of what social care services are available and how they may be able to access overnight short breaks. Some feel at crisis point around needing additional support.
- It is recognised that families who access Lavender House that live in the Colchester and Tendring areas are the most impacted by the proposal through increased travel times and costs
- Families who live in the north east of the county have told us they will feel anxious about their child/young person being far from home during the duration of their short breaks if the only option is to travel to The Maples in Harlow. Some have indicated that they may have to cease using the provision if the proposal is approved.
- For most families living in the west, mid and south of the county, travel times and costs from home or school setting to access the Maples remains the same or improves.
- When asked if they thought families would be impacted by the proposal, 41% said they would be affected, 18% felt they would not be affected and 41% were not sure.

Face to Face Meetings with Families

November 2022 – January 2023

Face-to-Face Meetings with Families accessing Lavender House

- 14 Families who access Lavender House were contacted by letter in November 2022 to advise them that ECC was about to open a consultation regarding a proposed change to the way Overnight Short Breaks is delivered.
- Each Family were offered a face-to-face meeting with ECC to hear about the proposal in more detail and to have an initial discussion about any possible impact.
- 14 families are currently accessing Lavender House. 3 families are not impacted as their young people will become 18 and not be using the service from April 2023.
- 6 Face-to Face meetings with families took place during December 2022 and were attended by the ECC Commissioning Team and Operational CWD colleagues.

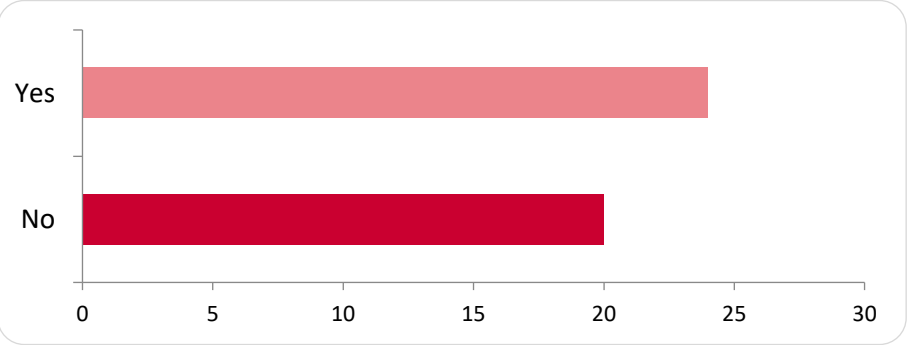
Key Themes from Face-to-Face Meetings

- Initial reservations by all families were shared about the possible additional distance and travel time to access The Maples in Harlow
- Some families started to share initial thoughts about options for travelling from home to The Maples, but most felt they would need support to look at any suitable solution.
- Some families shared that they felt that any alternative provision locally, e.g. Externally commissioned provision, Family Based Care or Direct Payments was not an option for their child.
- Some families were concerned about the transition to a new provision and that relationships will be lost with the current staff at Lavender House and there could be a lengthy process to build new relationships.
- Some families were concerned that the additional travel would mean very long days for their child which they may not tolerate and the distance may make it difficult to get to School on time.
- One family supported the proposal due to the potential ability to block book nights for longer than 5 days, affording them a longer short break still within their allocated provision.

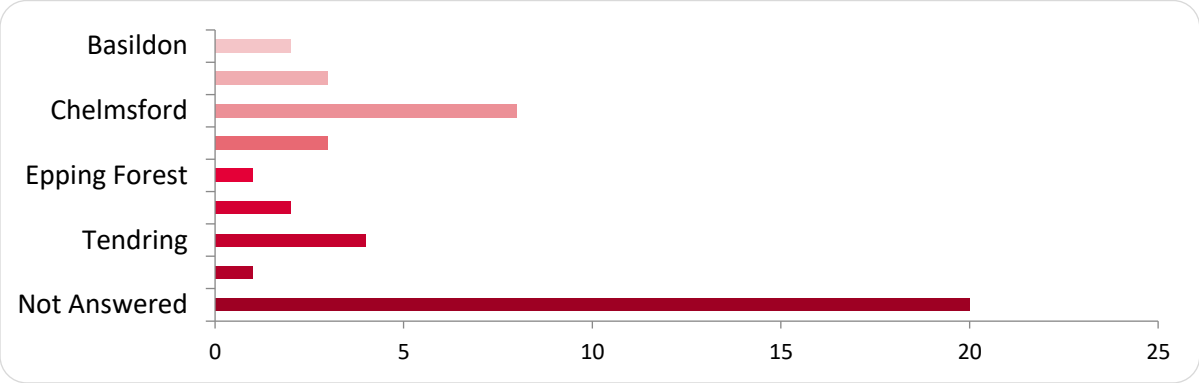
On-line consultation - Who gave their views

7th December 2022 – 31st January 2023

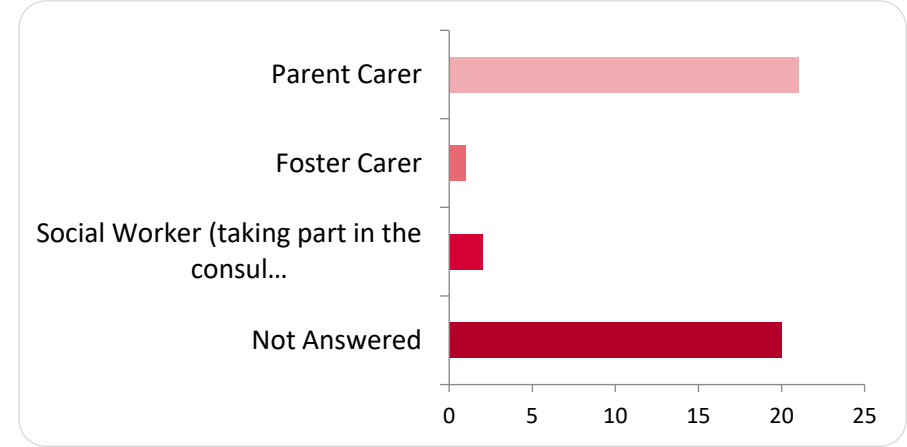
Do you currently access Overnight Short Breaks?



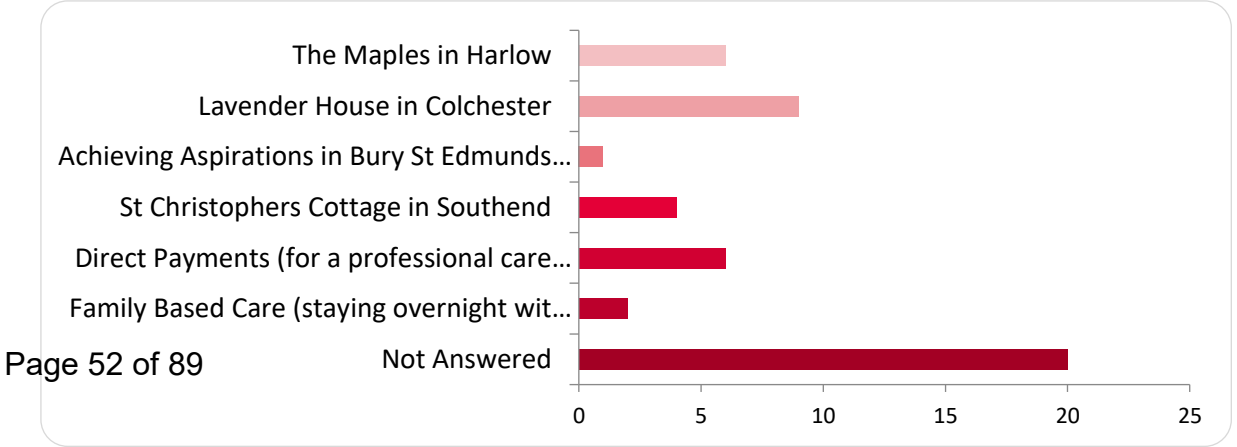
What district do you live in?



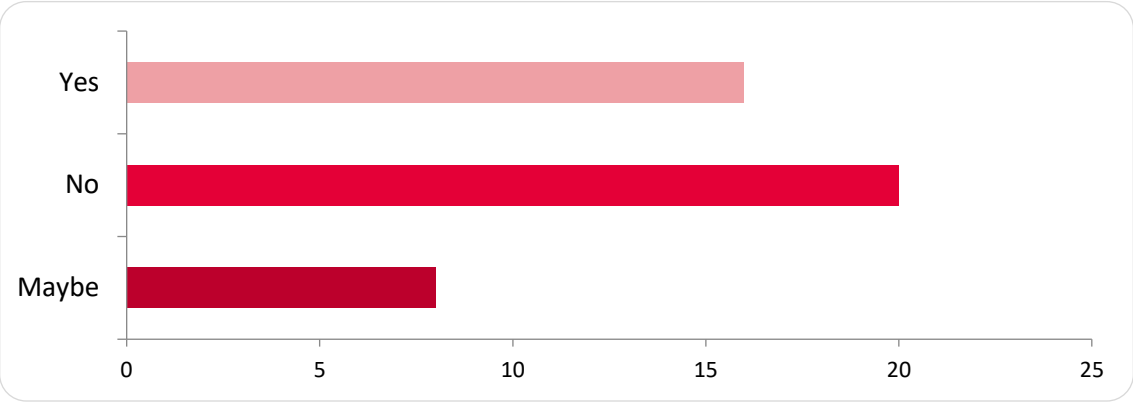
What relationship do you have with the child or young person(s) who is receiving Overnight Short Breaks?



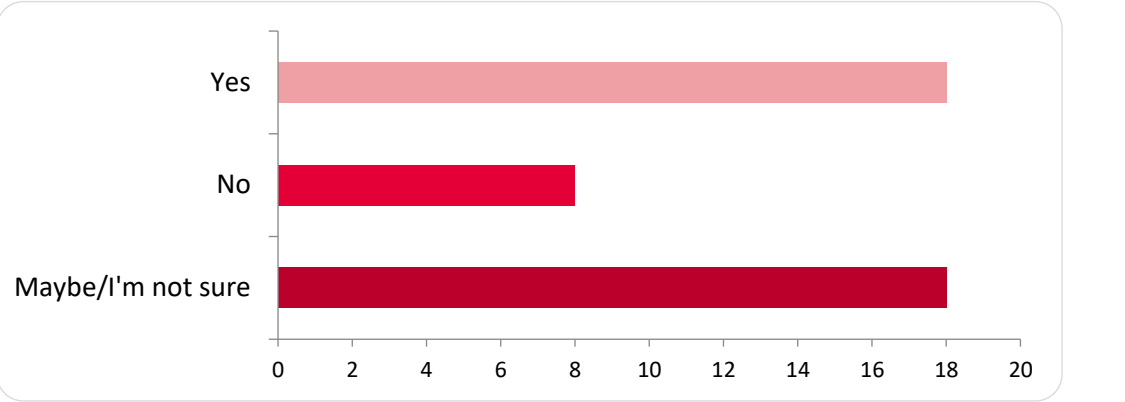
What types of Overnight Short Breaks does your child/young person(s) currently receive?



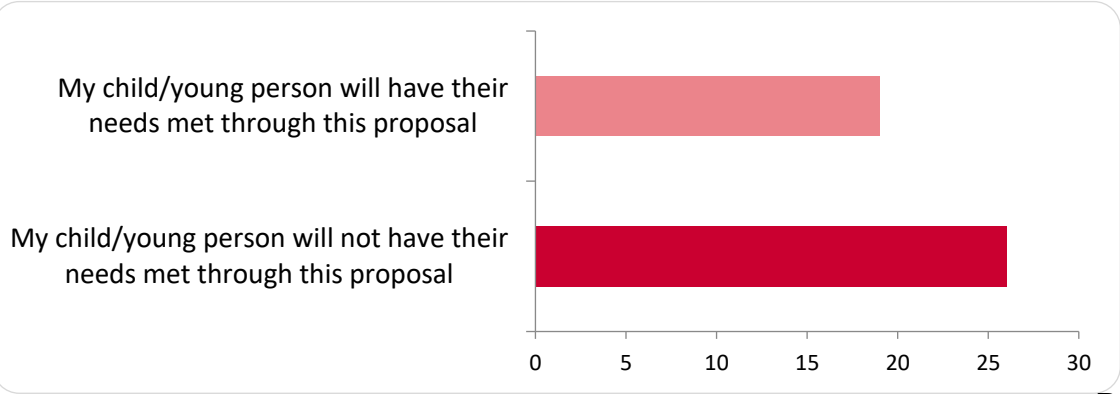
Do you understand the reason why the Council is proposing this change?



Do you think that your family will be directly affected by this proposal?



Thinking about the increase in the number of overnights available do you think that your child or young person(s) needs will be met?

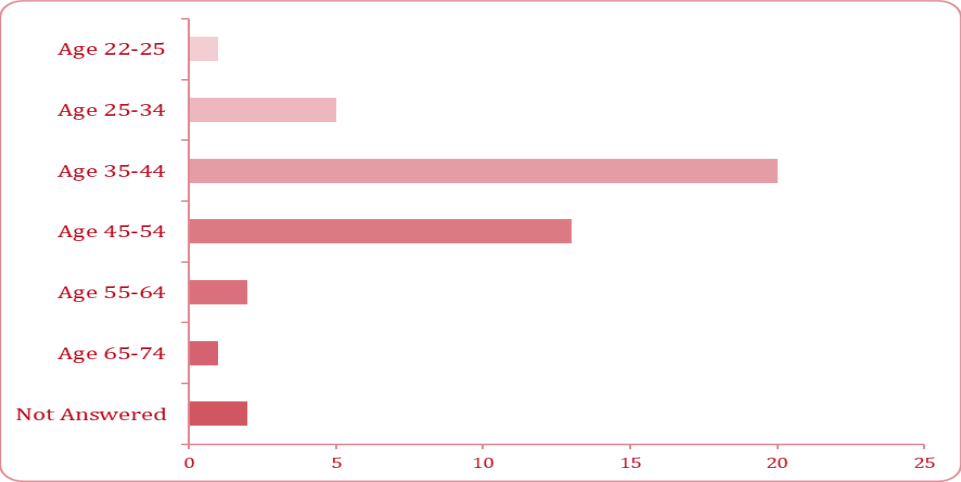


Number of children/young people by condition

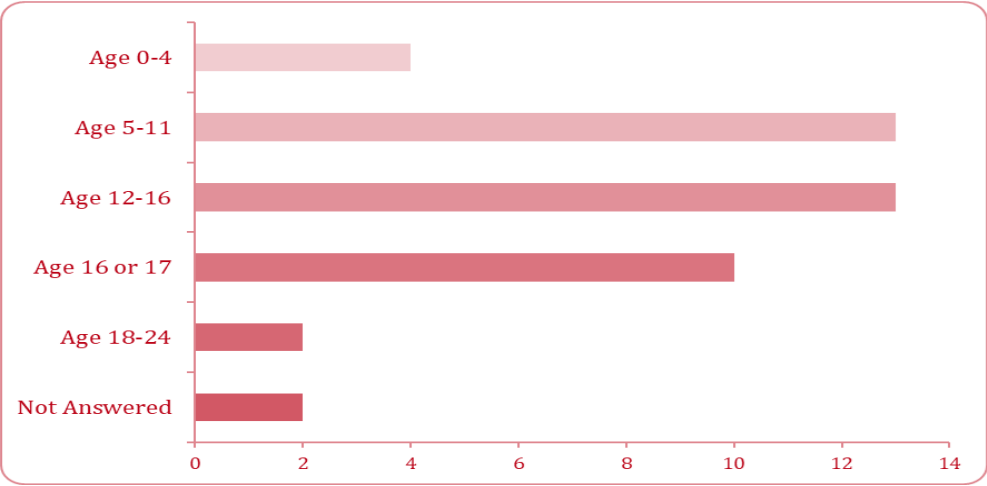
Hearing Impairment / Deaf	0
Visual Impairment / Blind	3
Deaf-Blind	0
Behaviour that challenges	23
Physical Impairment	9
Learning Disability/Difficulties	26
Autism Spectrum Condition	23
Complex Medical Conditions	7
Other	11

Demographic Information of Respondents

Please tell us what age bracket you fall into

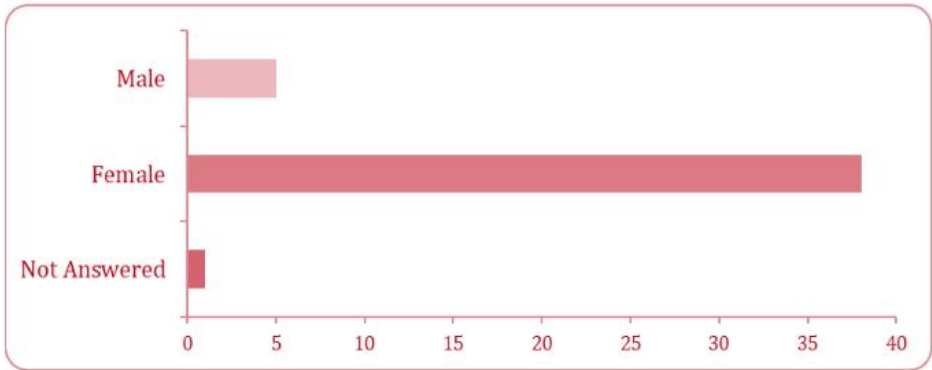


Age bracket of your child or young person(s) you care for

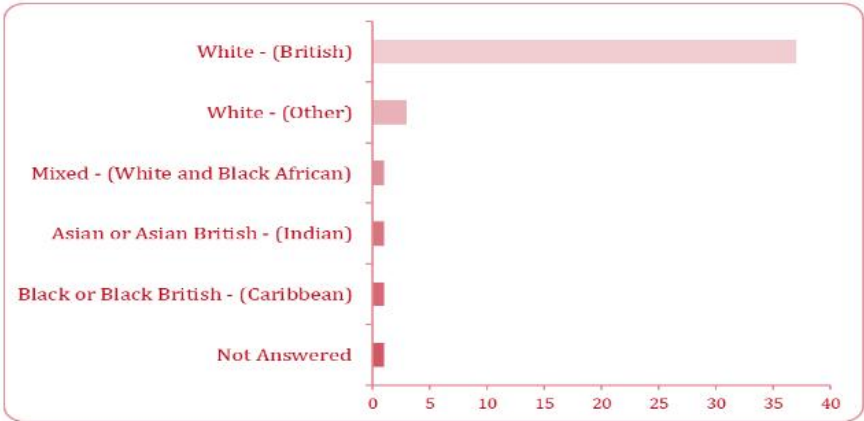


Demographic Information of Respondents

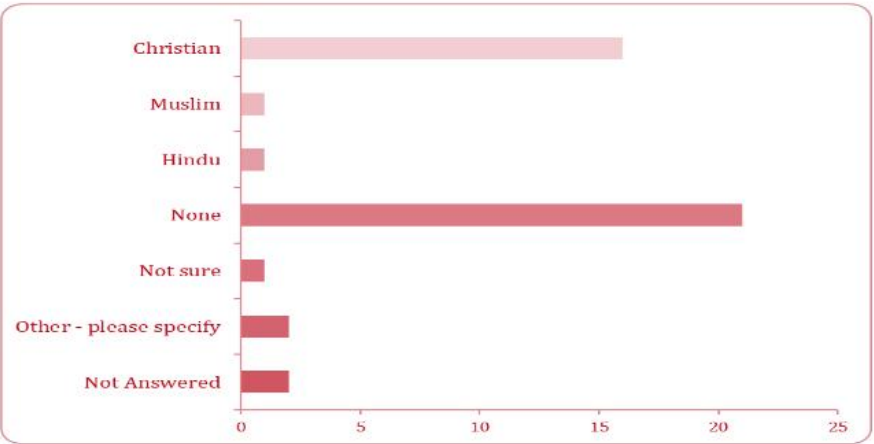
What is your gender ?



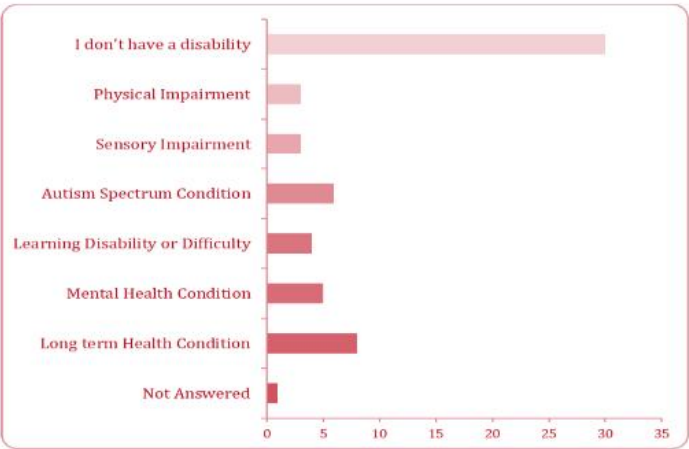
What is your Ethnicity?



What is your religion/Faith

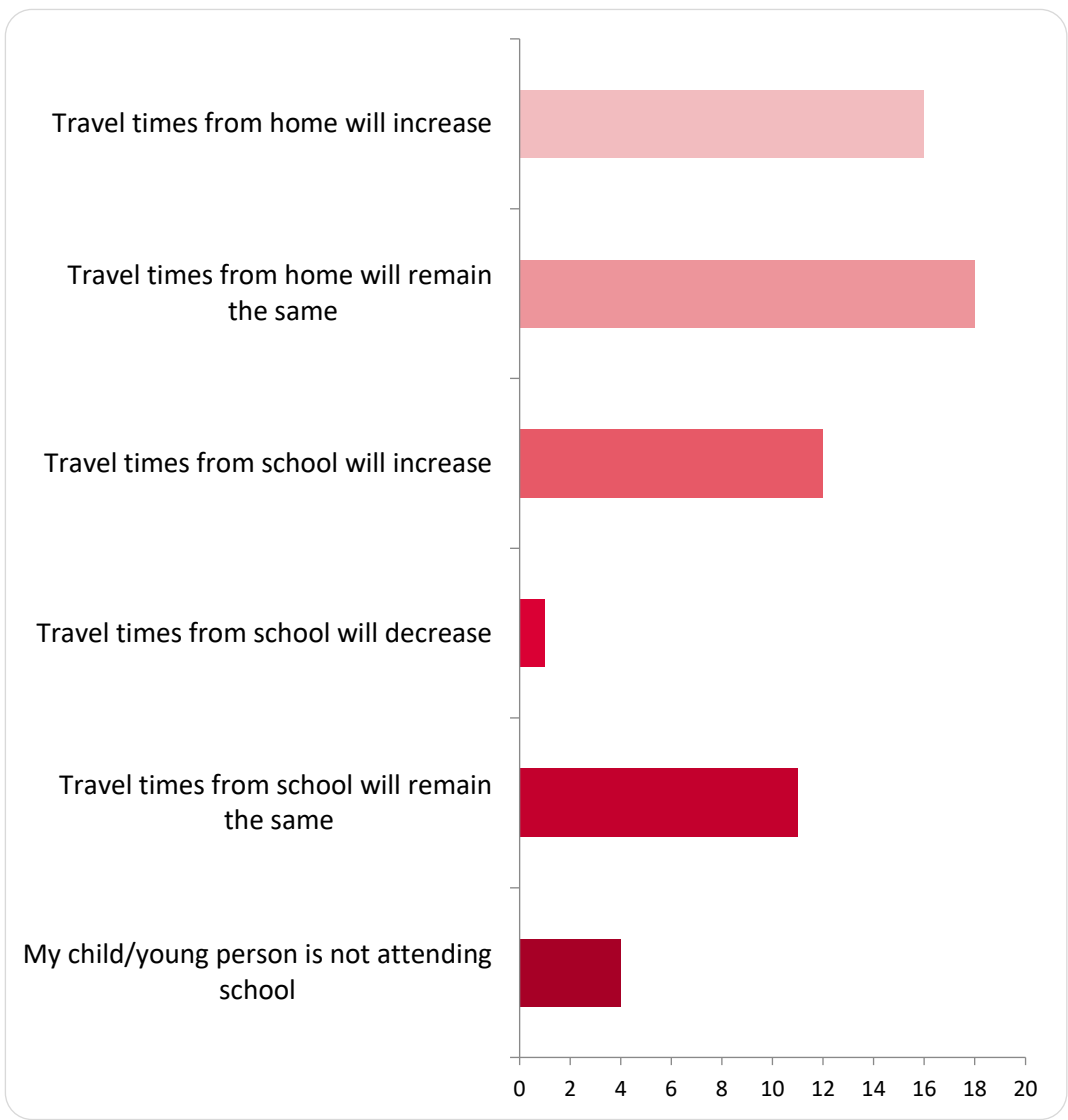


Disability - Do you consider yourself to have a special educational need and/or disability



THEME 1: Travel Times & Costs

Thinking about travel times to access overnight short breaks:



How will families be affected – what families told us

Travel times will increase for families who live in Colchester and Tendring areas who currently access Lavender House, if they were to access the Maples as alternative provision.

Any traffic problems may make the journey too difficult for some children who have complex behaviour/medical needs -they may not tolerate the journey.

There is a clear theme that respondents feel the increased travel times shown on route planners may not accurately reflect the actual journey time.

Families in the north of the county are concerned about their child being so far away in the event of an emergency.

The increased journey times for those affected from Overnight Short Break provision to school will cause them to be late for school and this will be reflected in school absence procedures.

Quotes from the On-line Consultation regarding additional travel

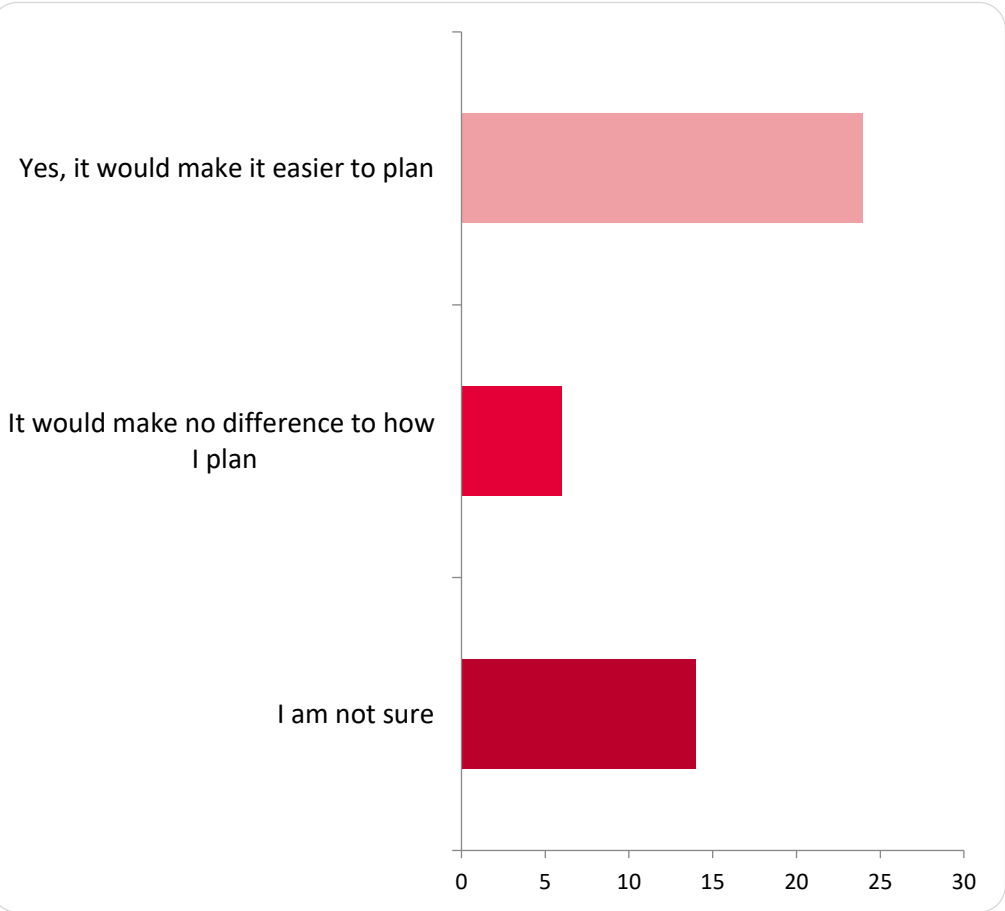
Parent Carer Lavender Family (Tendring) "Moving to Harlow is too far from where we live. Our son doesn't like being stuck in traffic and can present behaviours to show this. Our son doesn't like change. Getting to him in a emergency would take far to long."

Lavender Family (Tendring): "Google maps say 1hr 15 travel time but the reality is very different, more like 2 hours. My child has complex needs including epilepsy. The thought of having to get to Harlow in an emergency terrifies me. My child travels with equipment & has meds at specific times"

Lavender Family (Braintree) "We travel a lot and so the extra few miles from home won't be a problem. The college to maple journey will decrease and this will be rather beneficial in the mornings and after school"

THEME 2: Increased Availability of Overnight Short Breaks

Would an increase in the availability of overnight short breaks make it easier for you to plan when you access overnight short breaks?



How will families be affected – what families told us:

There was a perception that lots of families would try and access weekend breaks which would mean they would be difficult to access.

Families acknowledged that it may be easier to plan, but felt that the challenges of accessing the service would outweigh this for some.

There was a perception that new families may try to access any increased availability and therefore it would not have an impact due to increased demand.

Consistency in travel arrangements is important to families

Families told us they are concerned that valuable relationships and trust with staff at Lavender may be lost and transition to a new provision would be difficult and take time.

Quotes from the On-line Consultation regarding availability of nights

Family currently accessing the Maples:

"We recently requested an additional night per month - although this didn't get submitted to panel through fear of losing what we already have. Just a reminder that respite isn't about us having a jolly - more about us surviving. We don't ask for it lightly. It's a huge deal to build trust in a service that looks after your vulnerable child overnight. Will the new proposed system allow more desperate people onto the list? I'm sure that list in itself will swamp the increase in availability."

Family accessing The Maples

"I fundamentally disagree with the idea that there is a ""low capacity"" need for overnight respite in Essex. This situation has been created rather than being actual. There are several factors at play, but the most significant is ECC setting higher bars for families of disabled children and young people to obtain a Social Worker in the first instance. As a result, a reduced number of families can access funding for overnight respite so the ""need"" goes down. The children and families are still there, their needs however are just not being counted."

Family accessing Lavender House: "I

have concerns with my child being sent so far from home. Whether I'm taking him or transport. My son's social worker already turned down his initial place which was somewhere in Hertfordshire due to distance. If we lose lavender it's another much needed service lost. It's the only respite I have & we waited over 2 years for a suitable placement. Sadly Harlow is not an hour up the road & the A12 is a nightmare."

THEME 3: Eligibility of Overnight Short Breaks

What families told us who are not currently accessing Overnight Short Breaks

13 families (45%) who responded to the online consultation do not currently access Overnight Short Breaks.

Overnight Short Breaks eligibility is identified through social care assessment and agreed at a multi-agency panel. It is not clear from the responses if the families are in receipt of social care.

Many families with children with disabilities told us they wanted more information about how to access Overnight Short Breaks.

Families told us that the referral process can take too long, and they feel they have to fight to be heard despite feeling in crisis.

Some families felt the reason they do not get approved for overnight short breaks is because of where they live.

Some families feel that the proposal to condense the internal provision to one site will restrict the chances of overnight short breaks even further

Quotes from the On-line Consultation from families not accessing overnight short breaks

"I'm being refused despite meeting criteria and having a Tribunal ruling stating overnight respite is required so doubt any increase will have any impact."

"There is a need for respite care which at the moment is not being met. Many younger children do not have social workers and therefore do not get access to these facilities. If special schools parents/carers were surveyed you would find that both Maples and Lavender House would be full seven days a week."

"Respite has never been offered to our several disabled daughter of 8 years old, I'd imagine this is due to us not being local as we are castle point area"

Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment

Reference: ECIA480755208

Executive Summary

Overview of Decision

Overnight Short Breaks (OSB) provision currently consists of 3 key elements, internal ECC provision (The Maples and Lavender House in Harlow & Colchester), Family Based Care, which is delivered through Short Breaks Foster Carers, and Externally commissioned provision at overnight short breaks homes and through direct payments.

Currently, 142 children and young people have agreed OSB packages of 4128 nights. Of those 142 children and young people, 14 children/young people access Lavender House in Colchester which will reduce to 11 during the period January 23 to April 23 as young people transition to adult services.

Following a planned review of the overnight short breaks offer, the recommended decision is to condense the current internal offer as demand for internal provision can be met at a single location and offer more capacity in terms of the number of weekday and weekend nights available. The single location would be The Maples, in Harlow.

The Maples is a purpose-built facility that is better set up to meet the demand for the overall internal provision for OSB.

Lavender House in Colchester would no longer be used to deliver OSB but will be repurposed to enable ECC to meet other service delivery demands in children's social care.

The condensed offer will be more cost effective and meet Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable increased capacity of OSB nights, including improved availability at weekends, which families are asking for.

Outcomes and Measurements

Outcome: The condensed offer will meet demand and be more cost effective, meeting Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable an overall increased capacity for OSB by expanding the offer across 7 nights a week with a maximum capacity of 8 nights delivered at any one time.

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?:

An ongoing ECC Project Team consisting of Children & Families Commissioners, Operational CWD Teams, Finance Reps, Legal Rep and Citizen Insight will oversee the decision-making process and will also oversee the implementation of any changes should the proposal be approved. The decision is expected to go to Cabinet in March, following a full consultation with families, social care professionals and staff teams at Lavender House and The Maples. The reference for the paper is: FP/032/02/23 Recommissioning of CWD Overnight Short Breaks Provision 2023.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles, Carers, Levelling up health

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Family resilience and stability, Outcomes for vulnerable children, Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex, Tendring

Equalities Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Age	Positive	Low
Disability (LD)	Positive	Medium
Disability (MH)	Positive	Medium
Disability (PI)	Positive	Medium
Disability (SI)	Positive	Medium
Sex	None	
Gender Reassignment	None	
Marriage/Civil Partnership	None	
Pregnancy/Maternity	None	
Race	None	
Religion/Belief	None	
Sexual Orientation	None	

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Full consultation with families has taken place which included:

- Initial pre engagement contact
- Interviews
- Survey
- Formal Consultation
- Meeting with families accessing Lavender House

Although the proposal positively impacts most of Essex by way of delivering a single internal offer staffed at full capacity, and therefore an improved internal offer, there is a risk to a small number of families who live in the north of the county who access OSB.

7 families currently will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

This will also impact future families who live in Tendring who may have a need identified through social care assessment

Levelling Up

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Children and adults with SEND	Positive	Medium
Jaywick and Clacton	Negative	Medium
Harwich	Negative	Medium
Basildon	Positive	Medium
Canvey Island	Positive	Medium
Colchester (Town) -	Positive	Medium
Rural North of the Braintree District	Positive	Medium
Children on Free School Meals	None	NA
Young Adults	Positive	High

Rationale for Assessment – including data to assess impact

Overall Positive, but recognise that this will impact 7 families that live in the north of the county will be negatively impacted due to increased travel times and costs.

Additional costs for families who live in the Jaywick, Clacton and Harwich areas may range from £158 to £1,331 per annum, dependent on where their young people go to school and travel routes.

ECC will explore ways to support these families though the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Health Groups and Other Priority Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	None	
Homeless / Rough Sleepers	None	
Offenders / Ex-Offenders	None	
Carers	Positive	High
Looked After Children	Positive	High
Veterans	None	
People who are unemployed / economically inactive	Positive	Medium
People on low income	Positive	Medium
Working families	Positive	Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Full consultation with families has taken place alongside data analysis and research.

Overnight Short Breaks offer parent carers a break from their additional caring responsibilities, so that they can rest, recover and spend time on their own interests or other relationships. A quote from a parent carer at the Maples provides insight into the impact of a quality short break: *“This service has saved my marriage - I don’t say that lightly. I am on a range of medications myself – anti-depressants and beta blockers”*

Looked after children with disabilities benefit from the overnight short breaks offer as the short break offers carers the break from additional caring responsibility whilst ensuring the child has access to quality care and social connection.

One parent carer accessing Lavender House told us that their benefits had reduced since taking up work and they were on low income, but that the overnight short breaks enabled them to work overnight at a care home themselves.

Ultimately, delivering overnight short breaks to children and young people with SEND supports the stability, safety and wellbeing of the family or placement environment .

Geographical Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
People living in areas of high deprivation	Positive	High
People living in rural or isolated areas	Positive	Low
People living in coastal areas	Positive	Low
People living in urban or over-populated areas	Positive	Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Overall positive due to the overall impact of the service However, a small population in the North of Essex is negatively impacted in terms of travel times.

In relation to levels of deprivation, at the time of the proposed change, there will be 4 families who may live in the coastal towns of Harwich, Jaywick & Clacton that may need to transition to another alternative overnight short breaks provision.

There is a high negative impact on families who live these areas due to the increased travel time needed to access the Maples in Harlow.

Overnight Short Breaks provision for those living in South of the County will not change as their needs are predominantly provided through external provision and a similar situation for those living in the Rural North of the County.

ECC will explore ways to support these families though the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Families

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)	Positive	High
Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition	Positive	High
Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities	Positive	High
Families before, during and after couple separation	Positive	High
Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown	Positive	High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Parents who are carers spend a lot of their time caring for their children in comparison to other parents. Overnight short breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family including other children, thereby contributing to their resilience and stability. Furthermore, by having the opportunity to attend overnight short breaks good developmental outcomes are delivered for children and young people with SEND.

Some families expressed how accessing overnight short breaks had supported their marital relationships, and for others that the overnight short breaks staff had been a lifeline when going through separation.

It is important to recognise the extent of the positive impacts of receiving overnight short breaks on families of children with SEND needs. The consultation makes clear that a range of overnight short breaks enable positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their parent carers.

Climate

Does the policy or decision indicate there could be a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: Yes - Sustainable Transport / Travel

Rationale for Assessment – including data to assess impact:

The decision will impact 7 families that live in the north of the county will be negatively impacted due to increased travel times and costs.

The decision will mean increased transport needs and travel times for families to access one condensed provision in the West of the County. This means increases in carbon footprint.

The distance from the 11 families' homes to Lavender ranges from 0.7 to 36 miles. This equates from 2 to 57 minutes based on google maps, and from 0.4 to 4.12 CO₂/kg. The estimated fuel cost ranges from £0.35 per journey through to £7.87 per journey.

The distance from the 11 families' homes to the Maples ranges from 18 to 63 miles. This equates from 31 to 81 minutes (1 hours 21 minutes) based on google maps, and from 2.4 to 7.24 CO₂/kg. The estimated fuel cost ranges from £3.90 to £18.84 per journey.

Due to routing an increase in mileage does not always reflect increased travel times, and it should also be noted that estimated times are based on travel at peak times but do not account for traffic caused by individual incidents that can increase travel time significantly. For two families both mileage and travel time decrease.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: Yes

What are the mitigating actions?:

The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the north of the county who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 of the 142 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore ways to support these families through the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, Externally commissioned provision, and Foster Carer provision.

Meeting with Families accessing Lavender House

On 9th March 2023, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years hosted a meeting with families accessing Lavender House. Officers reflected the learning from the consultation and review. The feedback from the families in attendance are shown below:

Parents expressed anger as Lavender House has been a lifeline for them.

Parents expressed concern that they may forget to pack the child's medication, and it would take longer to bring it to them.

Parents raised that sometimes taxis are cancelled

Parents said that CAMHS were not aware of the consultation

Two parents set out that they did not want their child to go to someone else's house (family based care). "I want this – I don't want anything else"

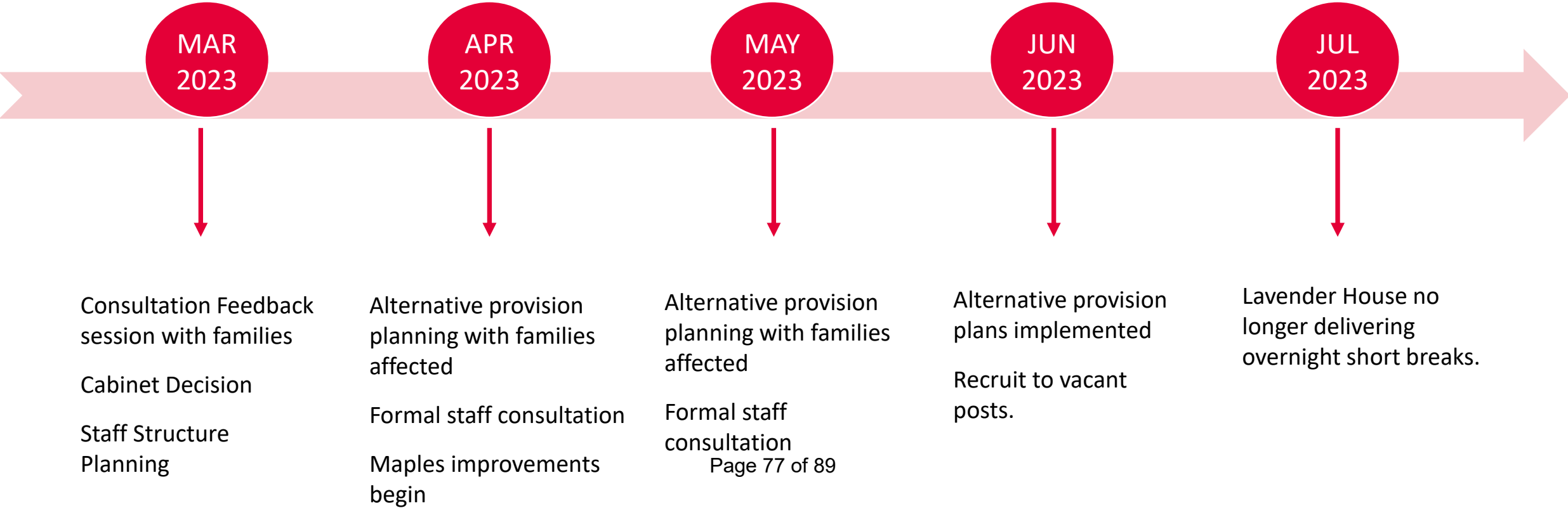
Parents expressed personal experiences of being on waiting lists or waiting a long time to be offered overnight short breaks at Lavender House

Parents expressed a desire to speak at Cabinet – this has been explored and will be facilitated in line with Cabinet procedures.

Next Steps

Next Steps

The recommended option to provide overnight short breaks from one internal premises, The Maples, alongside externally commissioned provision, family based care and home based care will be discussed at March Cabinet. Should the decision be made the following next steps will be undertaken.



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

Contact us:
shortbreaks@essex.gov.uk

Short Breaks Commissioning Team
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH

 **Essex_CC**

 **facebook.com/essexcountycouncil**

The information contained in this document
can be translated, and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

Appendix 3: Premises Maintenance/Development Requirements

The following table sets out the essential and desirable changes to the Maples which would be required if it was to be used as the single premises to deliver the internal overnight short breaks offer.

Activity/Requirement	Estimated Cost
<p>Desirable: Replace two specialist beds. Manufacture guidelines around bed provision have changed and manufacturers are now required to implement some additional anti-entrapment measures for smaller users (less than 146cm, 40kg and/or with a BMI less than 17). The additional demand means that some children visiting will meet this criterion and would therefore benefit from a specialist bed. Essex Occupational Therapists recommend an Accora Community bed with junior kit and an Accora floorbed2 with junior kit. The additional benefit of the floorbed, is that it goes right down to the floor, so children who perhaps cannot perform standing transfers but can crawl to/from the bed, can complete crawling transfers without needing to be hoisted, increasing their independence.</p> <p>Accora community bed: https://accora.care/gb-en/product/accora-care-beds-communitybed/ Accora floorbed: https://accora.care/gb-en/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FloorBed-1-Junior-brochure.pdf</p>	<p>£3,000</p>
<p>Desirable: Replace current freestanding high/low bath option for those requiring hoisted transfers/care assistance for a permanent, fixed option. It has a high/low function so carers can wash a child at an appropriate height. It can also have a cushioned bath support to help support with postural needs to bathe and a stretcher for changing that sits on top of the bath and folds when not in use. It can also have sensory features including underwater lights, sound and a spa feature, enabling children to benefit from improved comfort and enjoyment during bath time, and taking part in their own bath time care, increasing independence. Predicted cost set out below but subject to formal quote:</p> <p>Bath unit £7,346 Taps & Hardware: £590 Music Therapy £1,694 Bluetooth music connection £1210 Light Therapy £1210 Hydrotherapy £3000 Delivery and Installation £776 Additional 20% contingency for potential price increases £2130</p>	<p>£15,776</p>
<p>Desirable: 2 Shower Chairs for different needs. Children tend to either be washed whilst laying down on a bench or independently mobile and capable of standing. This leaves a cohort of children who rely on a hoist for transfers, but who are capable of sitting up and engaging in washing themselves (e.g children with certain muscular dystrophies, cerebral palsy presentations etc). Laying isn't always ideal for these children as they are not enabled to engage, and washing is just completed by carers. Having two shower chairs that can meet a range of needs would improve the offer considerably at the Maples</p>	<p>£2,782</p>

Desirable: New gates and fencing to the front of the premises to extend the safe outdoors space available to children and young people visiting.	Quote Requested from Mitie
Desirable: OSB are delivered to children and young people who are cognitively very able, but some are not able to clean themselves after using the toilet. This may include children and young people whose condition means that they cannot grip toilet paper, cannot reach behind them or cannot co-ordinate such movements. Many of these children/young people are in wheelchairs. Installing a toilet that has an arm that washes the user as well as dries them and can be cycled by touching a remote or infra-red sensor input those cycles through the features by waving an arm in front of it. The outcomes of this kit for the right user can be significant. It means that they can use the toilet without a carer having to clean them afterwards, with all of the independence, dignity and hygiene benefits that brings. Having access to such a toilet in The Maples would offer benefits to children and young people in terms of their own developmental outcomes and independence, and will enable the Maples to respond to a wider range of needs.	£5,000
Desirable: Mobile changing/shower bench in place is generally working well but can be a little small (approx. 1700mm length – generally enough for the majority of users but not for taller users). OT recommends a wall-mounted stretcher, but as there is enough room for a bench and storage where access can be gained for 2 carers, a mobile bench may be a better option.	£2379 + VAT £80 delivery
Desirable: Exercise Bike. Some of the children present with lots of energy to burn and discussions with parents have revealed that an exercise bike has been a helpful intervention at home.	
Desirable: Technological improvements such as IPADs for children and young people to contact family and friends (as appropriate and in line with their care plan)	£5,000
Desirable: Community planting/growing project. Vegetable and plant beds for the children to tend to, learn about where our food comes from and benefit from being outside and growing and caring for produce. This could include raised beds or a worktop where children using wheelchairs could access to plant seeds and in pots and a mini greenhouse. This has been trialled before, but it was challenging as whilst some children enjoyed it, others would pull plants out etc which was deflating for the children who enjoyed it. This will be revisited to explore links to community garden environments outside of the overnight short breaks provision, or ways to ensure those who enjoy it are not impacted by those who do not.	Estimated £5,000-10,000
Desirable: Sensory integration. There is a sensory room with some features such as different textures on the walls and lights, but there is room to develop this further. The sensory room is not large and there could be room to expand this, with an extension to the side of the building. There is room for some more diverse sensory activities, not just visual and touch, but also vestibular (sensation of movement) and proprioceptive (awareness of and use of limbs) as well as more interactive activities. This might include mini trampolines, a swing, balance ball, bean bag chill-out area, music etc. This would require specialist assessment from an OT trained in Sensory Integration and staff training for select members of staff on sensory integration and play as appropriate.	Not costed but to be considered in future planning of the Maples

The following table sets out the essential and desirable changes to Lavender House which would be required if it was to be used as the single premises to deliver the internal overnight short breaks offer.

Activity/Requirement	Estimated Cost
<p>ESSENTIAL: Master key system requires replacing as the locks/keys are no longer reliable which creates health and safety risks.</p> <p>The locks were originally sourced from overseas and there is not a UK equivalent. New locks need to be the same size as the current ones are required, or all new doors would be required. It is difficult to estimate the costs reliably.</p>	Cost unknown
ESSENTIAL: Currently use manual hoists which is not best practice, although permissible from an Ofsted perspective. Overhead hoists needed in two bedrooms	£6,000
ESSENTIAL: Rise and fall beds are very old and need replacing. 8 in total.	£16,000
ESSENTIAL: The changing bed attached to the wall in Ash bathroom needs replacing.	£4,440
<p>ESSENTIAL: Telephone and communications. An old telephone system is in place with 3 external lines and the ability to make internal calls. Handsets have broken over time so not all telephone points have a working phone. Replacements are not able to be sourced as it is not a system that is operational anymore.</p>	Cost unknown
<p>ESSENTIAL: All bathrooms in the 3 Flats (6 in total) have not been replaced/re-tiled for 22 years. On average, the total cost of installing a new home bathroom in the UK is about £6500-7000. To meet the requirements of a children's overnight short breaks home additional equipment will need to be considered, alongside ensuring children have the choice of a bath. Baths are not just a facility for personal hygiene but can be therapeutic for children and young people with SEND, providing relaxation and enjoyment, easing of pain and a precursor to treatments for skin conditions.</p> <p>Like bedrooms, bathrooms and ensuite areas must be designed to allow staff access in case of an emergency and promote the safety and wellbeing of the people living there. Flooring should be seamless, impermeable, and slip-resistant, but be easily cleaned. There should be the potential to incorporate low level lighting, to support access to the toilet through the night</p>	£60,000
ESSENTIAL: The Hollies kitchen is 22 years old. A mid-range kitchen is estimated to cost between £10,000 and £20,000 dependent on requirements. To meet the requirements of a children's overnight short breaks home additional equipment may need to be considered such as wheelchair accessible worktops.	£20,000
ESSENTIAL: The doors in The Hollies have been replaced however other external doors need replacing as if they would not currently withstand much in the way of challenging behaviour. Doors and windows may be	Cost unknown

replaced as part of the installation of an heat source air pump heating that is due to start imminently to meet carbon/environmental standards.	
ESSENTIAL: Overgrown trees present climbing risks, bird excrement, damage to guttering and attract neighbour complaints. They need to all be topped or removed and maintained annually	£3,000 plus annual maintenance costs
DESIRABLE: Showers were installed but otherwise they are 22 years old.	
DESIRABLE: There is a very old bedroom monitor system that is not fit for purpose. This needs to be decommissioned and consideration given to an alternative.	
DESIRABLE: Tap Isolators for when young people are causing flooding in bathrooms.	
DESIRABLE: Sleep in bathrooms had showers installed many years ago but are otherwise 22 years old and in need of modernising.	£10,000
DESIRABLE: Air conditioning. There is an air conditioning unit in Flat Beech that cools the lounge however the bedrooms and Flats can be very hot as windows are not able to be fully opened.	£3,000 per room as wall units or £500 per mobile unit.
DESIRABLE: Improved digital ways of working (both recording and in communication with young people) would bring Lavender more in line with other homes. New system requirements would need to be fully costed but based on recent builds of another short break system set up a conservative estimate is £20,000 (three month build)	£20,000

Notification of Call-in

Recommissioning of Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities (FP/032/02/23)	
Cabinet Member responsible Cllr Beverley Egan	Date decision published 21 March 2023
Last day of call-in period 24 March 2023	Last day of 10 working day period to resolve the call-in 11 April 2023
Reasons for Making the Call in <p>The Lavender House facility provides excellent care for these vulnerable children which meets their requirements, in some cases one to one supervision, and is not provided in the same secure and safe way by other private providers. For the children affected to have to travel from one side of the county to the other in Harlow is unacceptable given their particular health needs. For those parents who have to accompany their child and have other children in school, the journey makes this impossible. The particular health needs of these children mean that long journey times, sometimes by taxi, are not possible and would be detrimental to their health. Without these respite breaks parents will find it impossible to look after these children who will then become the full time responsibility of Children's Services. If these children are not helped in their early lives there is a real risk that later in life they will become the full time responsibility of Adult Social Care.</p>	
Councillor Mike Mackrory (supported by Councillors Marie Goldman, David King and Stephen Robinson)	Dated: 24 March 2023
Sections below for completion by Democratic Services Team	
Date call in Notice Received 24 March 2023	Date of informal meeting Not held
Does the call in relate to a Schools issue No	If yes, date when Parent Governor Reps and Diocesan Reps invited to the meeting Not applicable
Date of appropriate Scrutiny Committee Meeting (if applicable) 6 April 2023	Date call-in withdrawn / resolved

Title:	Overnight Short Breaks Provision 2023 (Forward Plan reference number: FP/032/02/23)
Purpose:	Following March 2023 Cabinet meeting and subsequent call-in, this supplementary information is provided to support the scrutiny meeting discuss the recommended option to improve the overnight short breaks offer. The reasons for calling in the decision are set out in the table below, alongside the risks and mitigations, and the benefits of the recommended option.
Date:	06 th April 2023
Enquiries:	Clare Burrell, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Clare.Burrell@essex.gov.uk

Reason for Call-in	Risks and Mitigations	Benefits and Opportunities
<p><u>Quality of Provision</u></p> <p>The Lavender House facility provides excellent care for these vulnerable children which meets their requirements, in some cases one to one supervision, and is not provided in the same secure and safe way by other private providers</p>	<p>Lavender House has provided excellent care for children and young people with complex needs, just as The Maples and external providers have done so. However, the building itself presents risks due to being on two levels. This means that young people with decreased mobility cannot stay upstairs due to health and safety requirements. This has an impact on the capacity of the building to respond to demand.</p> <p>This also means that for some of the time only one child or young person can stay at Lavender House, so they are not able to benefit from social connection to their peers.</p>	<p>The recommended option is based on one-to-one staff-to-child ratios, which enables capacity to be increased at The Maples.</p> <p>The quality and capacity of The Maples will increase due to the increased and improved staffing ratios, meaning that children and young people who elect to go to The Maples with specific one to one (or higher) ratio needs will not be segregated, and the service can respond to any future increase in demand.</p> <p>The Maples is built for purpose and can accommodate up to 8 young people at any one time.</p> <p>Externally commissioned providers are subject to the same regulations as internal provision. The provision commissioned by ECC is secure and safe, and quality assured.</p> <p>The staff at externally commissioned provision are highly skilled and committed to the families they serve.</p> <p>Externally commissioned providers sometimes have the benefit of in-team nurses, who can delegate specialist healthcare tasks to members of the staff team.</p> <p>Foster carers who provide family-based care go through robust safer recruitment processes and are trained to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for.</p>

		Most short breaks foster carers have worked in the social or care sector before becoming foster carers.
<u>Travel Times</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the children affected to have to travel from one side of the county to the other in Harlow is unacceptable given their particular health needs. For those parents who have to accompany their child and have other children in school, the journey makes this impossible The particular health needs of these children mean that long journey times, sometimes by taxi, are not possible and would be detrimental to their health 	<p>No young person will be expected to travel to unsuitable provision. Social Care carry out a needs assessment with families. That assessment determines which offer is most suitable for families and travel would be a decision factor.</p> <p>All 7 families currently accessing Lavender House will be supported to alternative provision based on need. Of those families, one is in support of the changes due to the additional choice it offers them, one lives in Mid-Essex and five live in Tendring.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that travel times will increase if a family living in the North East of the County chooses to travel to The Maples. If they choose to, then the most appropriate, efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements will be factored into care plans.</p>	<p>The proposed changes set out a range of overnight short breaks provision located across the County, including in North East Essex.</p> <p>The recommended change means being able to deliver more nights to families who need it, and for 95.1% of the families allocated provision, there are no additional travel implications.</p> <p>The engagement with families using Lavender has led to discussions about early transitions to adults' provisions when appropriate for the young person and will be developed alongside the changes to support the independence skills development of the young person. Tudor House in Stanway, Colchester is an example of adult's provision that could offer a local option for three of the young people who are turning 17 before the proposed changes take place.</p> <p>The 7 families currently accessing Lavender House will be supported to alternative provision which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Maples, in Harlow - Externally commissioned provision such as at Achieving Aspirations in Clacton - Overnight stays with trained specialist foster carers across the County - Care provided in the home overnight - Early transition to adult provision where appropriate and meets the needs of the young person.
<u>Sustainability and future planning</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without these respite breaks parents will find it impossible to look after these children who will then become the full-time responsibility of Children's Services. 	<p>Overnight short breaks will still be available, we are changing the model so that more families, not less families can access overnight short breaks.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 85 of 89</p>	<p>Overnight Short Breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family thereby contributing to their resilience and stability.</p> <p>Increasing provision by delivering at The Maples with higher staff ratios will improve the Council's capacity to respond to need and prevent children coming into care.</p> <p>95.1% of the families who access overnight short breaks will not be adversely impacted or will benefit from improved</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If these children are not helped in their early lives, there is a real risk that later in life they will become the full time responsibility of Adult Social Care 		<p>provision. 4.9% of the children and young people who access overnight short breaks will need to be supported to alternative provision that will meet their needs.</p> <p>Families who in the future who have overnight short breaks identified as a need through social care assessment will be supported to access provision that meets the identified need.</p>
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Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Procedure for dealing with Call-ins

Introduction

1. All parties will be advised of this procedure each time an executive decision is called in.

Constitution

2. This procedure complements the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule. The Procedure Rule takes precedence.

Notification of call in

3. The notification of call in should be set out in the format attached to this document.

Receipt of call in

4. On receipt of a valid notice of call-in made in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule, the Scrutiny Officer will (a) arrange for the notice to be acknowledged in writing; (b) for the decision taker to be formally notified in writing of the receipt of a notice of call-in; and (c) for the Chairman of the Committee to be informed where the Chairman is not a party to the call-in.

Reasons for call in

5. The member giving notice must in accordance with the Procedure Rule set out in writing the reasons for calling in the decision. It is important to get this right. If the call in reaches the Committee stage, the debate, including any evidence from witnesses, will be restricted to the grounds given for the call in. In addition, where the decision is being called-in following representations made by a Councillor who is not a member of the Committee, with that Councillor's agreement he/she should be identified in the reasons for the call-in and can therefore be acknowledged in the rest of the procedure.

Informal meeting

6. The informal meeting stage of the arrangements is of great value and could take a number of forms. If it is decided to proceed via an informal stage and no other arrangements emerge, the Scrutiny Officer will, as a matter of urgency, liaise with all interested parties to set up an informal meeting. Where the call-in has been made as the result of representations from a councillor who is not a member of the Committee, that councillor will be invited to attend the informal meeting. The Scrutiny Officer will normally attend the informal meeting and will within 24 hours produce a note for circulation to all parties to the meeting for approval.

7. Where at the informal meeting stage assurances are given by or agreements reached with Cabinet Members and the Scrutiny Officer is not present to take a note then those assurances/agreements should subsequently be confirmed in writing.
8. A report of any call-ins that are withdrawn as a result of an informal meeting will be included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Committee.

Committee stage

9. If the call-in is not withdrawn as a result of the informal meeting or an informal meeting is not held it will go to the Committee. The Committee should meet within 10 clear working days of the notice of call-in. Wherever possible scheduled meetings of the Committee will be used. Where this is not possible the Scrutiny Officer will liaise with the parties concerned and the Group Spokespersons on the Committee to arrange a special meeting.
10. The Scrutiny Officer will liaise with the parties concerned on behalf of the Chairman of the Committee to ensure that all those with a reasonable interest in the decision have an opportunity to be represented at the meeting, including any councillor whose representations have led to the call-in.

Call ins relating to Schools issues not dealt with by the People and Families Scrutiny Committee)

11. If the Call-in relates to a Schools issue then the representatives of Parent Governors and Diocesan Education Committees must also be invited and would have the right to vote on that particular item. This should be confirmed on the notification of call in.
(It should be noted that where the Education representatives attend with voting rights affecting the numbers eligible to vote on the Committee, the Administration is ultimately entitled to a natural majority of one over all other voting members.)

Information to be available for the Committee

12. The Committee will automatically be provided with copies of the decision, the reasons for the call in and the note of any informal meeting as part of the Agenda papers put together by the Scrutiny Officer. As much additional evidence as possible should be provided in advance of the meeting and in writing of not more than two sheets of A4. Should the occasion arise where more than two sides of A4 are required, the Scrutiny Manager will exercise his discretion as to whether this be allowed. This applies also to any statement to be made by outside witnesses. Maps and plans should also be made available where applicable. The intention is that the Committee should have a proper opportunity to assess the information being provided by both sides and to seek additional clarification as necessary.

Calling of witnesses

13. Witnesses may be called by either side. They will be expected to speak to the reasons for the call in. They will normally be given a maximum of three minutes each to address the Committee, subject always to the discretion of the Chairman. When calling witnesses attention should be given to the quality rather than the quantity of witnesses. Each witness should have something new and relevant to say to the Committee. The Chairman will exercise his discretion to curtail any witness simply repeating anything that has already been clearly explained.

Committee meeting

14. The procedure at the meeting will be as follows:
- The councillor responsible for the call in will be given the opportunity to make the case for calling in the decision.
 - Any local member associated with the call in will then be invited to speak.
 - Other interested parties will then provide evidence to the Committee.
 - The Cabinet Member will then be given the opportunity to answer the case and seek to justify the decision taken.
 - There will then be an opportunity for other members of the Committee to ask questions.

Chairing the meeting

15. The member responsible for the call in should not also Chair the meeting. If the Chairman is responsible for the call in the Vice-Chairman should take the Chair for that item. In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman should not take the Chair if he/she is responsible for a call in to be discussed at that meeting. If it is known that neither the Chairman nor the Vice-Chairman will be available to Chair the meeting arrangements will be agreed in advance with the Group Spokespersons.

Action following the meeting

16. Following consideration of a call-in by the Committee, the Governance Officer will liaise with the Chairman and Group Spokespersons to agree the formal notification of its decision to go to the interested parties and, if the call-in is referred to Council, to agree the wording of the report to Council.