

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Disabled Children's Service

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What is the Disabled Children's Service?

- DCS is a specialist social work service assessing and providing support to 400 of the most disabled children in North Yorkshire.
- These children have severe learning disabilities, multiple physical disabilities, complex medical needs, classical autism and behaviour that challenges.

- DCS works with children who meet the eligibility criteria. This was agreed following public consultation in 2007.
- Eligibility Criteria

The Disabled Children's Service provides support for disabled children and young people where the disability has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities

AND

There are significant difficulties in meeting needs within their family, broader support networks or through local universal provision

Whilst eligibility decisions are based on individual need and professional judgement, including to what extent the impairment affects their lives and the lives of those who live with and care for them, it is likely that the disabled child or young person will fit into one or more of the following definitions:

- A significant, permanent and enduring physical disability*
- A significant global learning disability*
- A severe and enduring communication disorder*
- Autism with a significant global development delay and may have challenging behaviour*
- A significant sensory impairment*

Staffing and Resources

- Staffing (from 1.10.19) – DCS Manager, 4.5 Locality Team Leaders, 18.5 Social Workers and 2.5 Family Support Workers
- 3 Children's Resource Centres; Nidderdale (Harrogate), Morton-on-Swale and Cherry Tree Lodge (Scarborough)
All 3 are rated as Outstanding by Ofsted
- Budget (from 1.10.19) c£5m

The legal framework

- The Local Authority has a general duty to assess families who request an assessment for their disabled child under s17 Children Act 1989
- The Local Authority has a duty to promote the welfare of Children in Need- disabled children are defined as CIN under s17 Children Act 1989 and to provide accommodation under s20 Children Act 1989 if required
- The Local Authority has an absolute duty to deliver services to meet needs identified under s2 Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970 irrespective of the available budget
- The Local Authority has duties under Short Breaks Guidance 2011 to provide a range of services (short breaks) to support and sustain parent/carers in their role with disabled children
- The Local Authority has duties under carers legislation to support carers and young carers by providing breaks and services to support their employment and learning

Case Numbers

- Children using the service – 400 which includes the following;
- 27 Looked After s20/s31 Children Act
- 20 'Modified LAC' Regulation 48
- 5 Child Protection Plan
- 340+ s17 Children Act/Short Breaks Guidance

Short Breaks Services

- 170+ families use Direct Payments
- 10 young people have overnight short breaks with Direct Payment Personal Assistants
- 20 young people have overnight short breaks with foster carers
- 50 young people have regular or holiday day care in the Children's Resource Centres
- 50 young people have overnight short breaks in the Children's Resource Centres
- 150+ families receive care from Registered domiciliary care providers

Key issues for DCS

- The cost of purchasing care is high and increasing; National Living Wage, Auto-Enrolment pensions
- The availability of domiciliary care is less and decreasing
- Parents find it hard to use Direct Payments because they cannot recruit Personal Assistants
- Recruiting and retaining skilled staff in Children's Resource Centres is difficult
- Reductions in the budget for DCS is affecting support to families
- Significant reduction in health funding (over £200k less since 2017)
- The service has overspent since 2012

Key issues for the Council

- The range of legal duties in respect of disabled children is wide and the Council has to balance the budget against the risk of legal challenge
- Availability of budget cannot be used as a reason not to meet assessed needs
- Rising expectations from families, especially those with children with autism who do not meet the DCS eligibility criteria – this creates pressure in the Children and Families Service
- Reducing the budget of DCS does not necessarily save the Council money long term because short breaks help sustain children to stay with their families

Case Example 1

S is 16, she has severe learning disability, profound physical disabilities, epilepsy (30+ seizures a day), gastrostomy fed, wheelchair user, special diet and needs a trained escort. S needs total care from her parents or carers

S receives a mixed package of support including 30 overnight stays a year at a Children's Resource Centre, regular holiday breaks at the CRC, one teatime break each week and day care alternate weekends

This package gives S's family regular breaks from the intensity of caring for their daughter and S enjoys the breaks and does things she enjoys

Case Example 2

D is 15 she has global developmental delay and severe learning disability. She does have some speech but usually communicates by symbol. She is one of four children at home, one of whom is autistic. Mum finds it hard to meet the needs of her children. She is a single carer. Her former partner was abusive to her and the children

D can become fixed about what she wants to do which can make her moving between school, home and the CRC difficult. She has 12 overnight stays a year at the CRC but mum also has regular care in the home each morning and evening to help her with all the children but in particular D

The indicative budget was £19k but the cost of supporting this family is in excess of £30k. Without this level of support D could not remain living at home with her family and her autistic sibling would probably have to leave home too

Case Example 3

J is 10. He is autistic with very challenging behaviour. He has no speech but points at symbols to communicate. His behaviour is very difficult to manage, often needing 2 or 3:1. He will attack other young people and staff. He has moved from one special school to another as the first could not meet need

His Indicative budget is c£9k but the cost of meeting his complex needs in a number of settings is over £22k. He is commencing overnights at a CRC shortly. He receives day care in the home, with providers in holidays and at a specialist group setting. A sitting service gives the family occasional breaks in the home

Without these services J's mother would not be able to look after him and even with a significant package of care he may not be able to live at home until he is 18

Questions???