

# **Future provision of overnight short break care**

**Update to Scrutiny Committee**

**November 2023**

# Background

- The Council has a statutory duty to provide short break care for disabled children, including overnight stays according to assessed needs.
- SCAS have been commissioned to provide residential short break care on behalf of TfC since Dec 2018.
- TfC plan to provide residential short break care in-house going forward, as agreed by the Council

# Current provision

- Children with the highest needs are continuing to attend Grace House for overnight short breaks.
- SCAS are operating the service at reduced capacity due to staff shortages.
- Staff are supporting the transition of children to other provisions where possible.
- The last overnight stay at Grace House will take place on 19 November.
- All remaining SCAS assets will then be removed and the service will close on 30 November.

# Alternative arrangements

- 4 young people have reached the age of 18 and have transferred to Adult Social Care.
- Transition planning is underway for 8 young people aged 16 and 17 years to SCAS short breaks homes.
- 15 children and young people are accessing a Direct Payment, this includes 2 Personal Budgets.
- 8 children have been referred to a new short breaks home in the Tees Valley area. 4 children's referrals are being progressed, with one child due to begin overnight stays in November. We await a response regarding the remaining 4 referrals.

# Alternative arrangements

- One young person with complex health needs has commenced stays at St Oswald's, Newcastle, with 2 further referrals under consideration.
- 2 children are accessing Short Break Foster Care.
- 1 child is accessing CQC registered Family Care & Support.
- 1 child has closed; parents have withdrawn consent.
- We continue to explore an alternative support for 1 child.
- 3 families are not willing to discuss an alternative as yet.

# Additional support

- Breathing Space programme is offering additional support out of school and during holidays to children with autism or SEMH needs.
- We are continuing to explore other alternatives with parents including supported holidays and additional commissioned community short breaks provision.

# Our New Short Breaks Home

- A project has been set up to support TfC deliver its statutory duty to provide short breaks for disabled children, including overnight stays according to assessed need.
- An alternative home has been found which is suitable and capital investment to fund its purchase and amendment has received Cabinet approval.
- The project will involve the purchase, amendment, staffing, registration and successful go live of a TfC managed Short Break home providing significant benefit to Sunderland children and families. On-going success would be defined by Ofsted inspection, experiences and progress of children and young people, and a balanced budget.

# Project Update (Oct 2023)

- The Project Team is in place and working together to ensure that pace of action continues.
- Property purchase continuing with legal checks being undertaken.
- Planning consultants appointed and property plans (required for planning application) being drafted.
- Communication Plan being drafted and will include communication to staff, parents, carers and community:
  - Further Q&A session for families to share progress and engage in future planning.
  - Work with individual families to identify specific supports to meet their children's needs.
  - Planning group with parents and carers and children and young people.
  - STARS and Young Commissioners groups to guide our coproduction with children.



# Project Next Steps (timescales)

- Complete property purchase (by end Nov23).
- Submission of planning application (by end Nov23).
- Planning application process complete (by Mar24 Tbc).
- Property amendment requirements understood (by Dec23).
- Tender process, for company to undertake amendments, complete (by end Feb24 Tbc).
- Clarification of longer-term timescales understood (by Mar24)
- Likely 'Go Live' at this stage would be end 2024 (depending upon amendment, recruitment and Ofsted registration timescales).