

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 151(c)

Subject: Deputations

Date of meeting: 13 February 2025

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public.

Notification of the following Deputations has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

1) Deputation: General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital & Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26

As a parent of a child with complex needs + disabilities - and as representative of parent campaign group Send Us a Break - I ask you to consider how the budget can meet needs for short breaks/childcare/ respite for SEND children

Additionally how does this budget support findings and recommendations of the Independent Service Review of Disability Respite and Residential Services commissioned by the LA April 24?

You have obligations under Short breaks legislation to provide childcare/short breaks/ respite for parent/carers of SEND children - provision is wholly inadequate and has been for years. We have welcomed commissioners listening since March 24, however, provision remains inadequate, particularly for children like my son with complex needs requiring 1:1 support.

Despite some provision developments figures speak for themselves - there is inadequate financial provision for SEND children - especially those needing 1:1 specialism. (Evidenced in the statistical data provided in the Additional information 1+2)

Residential respite - essential provision for children with complex needs giving families a break enabling them to continue caring for their child at home. We ask you to consider the impact of the proposal to rent out the Drove Road flat to other LA's generating income to fill budget deficits - instead of using it creatively to develop support for SEND children in your own LA! There is already a waiting list for respite. This proposal is despite your commissioned review recommending utilising Drove road space to develop day care, holiday clubs, respite, workforce development and training and an emergency respite bed.

Additionally the residential respite budget is insufficient to meet the need for SEND families. (This is evidenced in the Additional information 3)

We also ask you to consider how this budget supports plans to develop an appropriately trained, skilled workforce to support us caring for our children? The Direct payments scheme relies on PA's - a limited workforce and minimum wage barrier. Drove Road is also experiencing significant workforce challenges resulting in respite cancellations, with provision grinding to a complete halt recently due to zero staff. How does your budget provide capacity for the overdue workforce development plan supporting the entire SEND sector including breakfast + after school clubs, short breaks, DP's/PA's and residential respite?

In making a speech to cabinet we wish to raise your awareness of the lack of equality for childcare in the city for SEND children - and inform you of the impact on families with SEND children when there is insufficient childcare short breaks and respite care.

Supported by:

Natalie Woods (Lead Spokesperson)

David Rafferty

Kate Bloc

Helen Irving

Alexander White

Rhianydd Summersett

Stephanie Fallows

Laila Zaghari

Priya Sathy

Victoria Captain Johnson-Kio

Nicola Billington

Ruth Bassett

Supporting Information:

1- Statistical information - provision of specialist holiday short breaks versus the need (supply and demand)

It has been extremely challenging for us to access meaningful transparent data re the need for and the provision of short breaks for children with complex needs. The council have frequently responded to our complaints with statistics that are meaningless and mask the true extent of how little is provided in relation to need. For example citing that hundreds of sessions have been provided without detailing how long a session is and how many children with complex needs those sessions are divided between.

The statistical data we have managed to obtain recently includes the following:

Summer school break 2024

Specialist provision with 1:1 support was 257 days (average of 5 hours per day) for children requiring 1:1 support - given that a minimum of 49 children require short break specialist provision (*based on numbers applying for specialist provision over the Christmas break*) this equates to 5 days provision per child in the whole 6 weeks of the school summer holidays.

Christmas school break 2024

49 families requested specialist provision with a minimum requirement of 1 day and for some families 2 days - only a total of 15 spaces were offered across two days, so 34 families with a need for specialist provision got nothing. Additionally one of the days offered was cancelled due to staff sickness resulting in only approximately 16% of families with children with a high support need being offered any provision at all in a two week school holiday break.

In contrast - non SEND children can access 5 days per week (up to 8 hours per day) for the entire school holidays if parents need this provision to enable them to work or study.

NB: these stats relate to applications from 49 families needing specialist provision over Christmas - the only data we have. However as parent/carers we are aware that there are approximately 220 pupils in special education in the city who need 1:1 support - many more who need a lower level of support (2:1) in the familiar structured safe school environment will need higher support (1:) in the community and in unfamiliar environments.

This evidences the actual need for both targeted and specialist provision is far higher than the numbers currently accessing provision. We know anecdotally of many families being unaware of the LA's obligation to provide short breaks and what the current provision is and numbers of parent/carers joining Send Us a Break is increasing all the time.

2- Statistical information - cost of specialist short breaks (inadequate budget)

The council's proposals to develop short breaks that have recently been shared with parent/carers to comment on will only enable between 13-16 families to access 3 specialist sessions per week per school holiday for one child. We know that 49 families needed specialist short break provision for the Christmas break. The cost of a 6 hour specialist short break is high - £297

An intention has been expressed to provide 3 days per week short breaks in school holidays - if 49 families need specialist short breaks for 3 days per week this totals a required provision of 1911 days per year. This would cost £567,567

Based on the actual numbers of children in the city in special education requiring 1:1 support it is clear that those eligible for specialist provision is much higher than 49 families.

Statistically it is therefore impossible to fulfil your statutory obligations in meeting the need - even with parental contributions - on a short breaks budget of £130,000
NB: these statistics do not include SEND children in the targeted category - a percentage of whom you also have a statutory obligation to provide short breaks for.

3- Statistical information - cancelled Drove Road residential respite sessions in last 10 weeks

There have been at least 4 families who have experienced a total of 11 cancelled residential respite stays.

On 5th February all residential respite stays were cancelled as Drove Road had zero staff to cover the respite service.

There is currently a waiting list for residential respite at Drove Road and Tudor House and the time to secure provision is often lengthy

There is a growing number of families with SEND children who are not currently accessing Drove Road but know they will need to in the near future who are not being consulted with.