

**To:** Council

**On:** 13 December 2018

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**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

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**Heading:** Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1** On 28 June 2018 agreed the following:  
“That Council recognises the difficulties in providing playscheme services to ASN children in Renfrewshire over the summer months since Capability Scotland withdrew. Council also recognises the frustration of parents and notes that progress had been made to maintain the service and committed to continue working with parents. Council agrees a continuance of the service and that a detailed report be brought to the full Council for further consideration.”
- 1.2** The concerns of members were raised following the decision of Capability Scotland to withdraw from providing a service for children who attended Kersland and Clippens Schools and the bases in St. Anthony's and St. Paul's. The service was known as the Additional Needs Playscheme however, it was a “day care service” registered with the Care Inspectorate. This meant that the service was required to satisfy the conditions for registration and was subject to inspection on a regular basis.
- 1.3** Capability Scotland had provided the playscheme, on behalf of Renfrewshire Council under contract from 2003 until the end of 2016. In early 2017, Capability Scotland gave notice that they were no longer able to deliver the playscheme. Staff from Children's Services acted to deliver a replacement service at Easter and summer 2017 and again at Easter and summer of 2018.

- 1.4** The replacement for the Capability Scotland service operated by Children's Services is open to children who attend Riverbrae School, St. Anthony's Base or St. Paul's Base. The replacement service is a day care provision registered with the Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate visited the service for two days during the summer of 2018 for inspection purposes. The service was graded as very good in the four areas inspected and the inspection report is attached at appendix 1.
- 1.5** The Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme is now well established as a Renfrewshire Council service and will continue to be delivered in future years. The ASN playscheme is viewed positively by the parents of children who access the service. This report highlights some areas of challenge in continuing the service and outlines how these are being addressed.
- 1.6** Members were also concerned that children with additional support needs attending mainstream schools or Mary Russell had no access to support over the school and were therefore being disadvantaged in comparison to mainstream pupils. This report also highlights how children with additional support needs who attend mainstream schools or Mary Russell School can access activities in the school holiday periods.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that members:
- [a] note the continued provision of the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme for children who attend Riverbrae School and the bases at St. Anthony's and St. Paul's;
  - [b] the progress of the parent/children's services working group; and
  - [c] note the opportunities available for children who attend Mary Russell School or mainstream schools.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1** Local authorities do not have a duty to provide playschemes during holiday periods. Recognising pressure on parents of children with complex additional support needs Renfrewshire Council entered into a contract with Capability Scotland in 2003, for school holiday provision for children attending Clippens School, Kersland School, and the bases at St. Anthony's and St. Paul's. The scheme was open to the pupils from these schools as there was a recognition that they were the children with the most complex care needs.

- 3.2** The service was known as the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme however it was a day care service for children and was registered with the Care Inspectorate as such. Where a service provides personal care, or the supervision of children is for longer than two hours the service is required to register and meet the requirements of the Care Inspectorate.
- 3.3** The ASN Playscheme was delivered by Capability Scotland under a contract until the end of 2016. Capability Scotland withdrew from the contract to deliver the service indicating they were unable to meet the registration criteria put in place for the provision by the Care Inspectorate. The recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and registered staff was the main challenge faced by Capability Scotland in meeting the Care Inspectorate registration requirements.
- 3.4** From April 2017, Renfrewshire Children's Services has delivered a registered day care service as a direct replacement for the Capability Scotland Service. The replacement service is known as the Renfrewshire Playscheme and provides an equivalent level of support to that previously provided by Capability Scotland.
- 3.5** Children attending Riverbrae School or one of the bases at St. Anthony's or St. Paul's are eligible to attend the service. Again, this was to ensure that those impacted by closure of the Capability Scotland service had an equivalent replacement service. The new service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide support for a maximum of 35 children each day and to operate 5 days per week.
- 3.6** During the summer of 2018 the service operated 4 days per week. This was a result of challenges in securing sufficient staff to operate the service 5 days each week. Children attended the service from 10.00am to 2.00pm and most children made use of the transport provided.
- 3.7** 136 children attended the playscheme over the summer of 2018. Most children were allocated a total of 5 days over the summer holiday in 2018. During summer 2017, 163 children participated in the playscheme with an allocation of 4 days per child. When Capability Scotland delivered the service 112 children were registered for the playscheme. The allocation of places was managed by Capability Scotland and ranged from 1 day to 7 days. The new service has adopted a more equitable access policy for those eligible to attend.
- 3.8** As noted in the Care Inspectorate report a small number of parents responded to their questionnaire, however those who did were generally happy with the provision. The principal areas of complaint are related to the allocation of 5 days per child, the length of the day and transport. Most parents value the service, however would like their child to be able to attend for a higher number of days during the holiday periods.

## **Working Group**

- 3.9** A group of parents of children who attend Riverbrae and the two bases has been working with Children's Services to develop further the new service. The parents are keen that the first area to be addressed is the length of the day for children, followed by the number of days allocated and recognise that the transport is a challenge due to the needs of individual children.
- 3.10** Over the last two years the Council service operated 4 days per week. The operating hours for the service was from 10.00am to 2.00pm. The possibility of extending the operating hours (including providing the service over 5 days each week) is being explored at present.
- 3.11** Following the meeting of Council in June 2018, Enable Scotland contacted the Council to offer support to developing services for children with additional support needs in Renfrewshire. Enable Scotland, the largest charity in Scotland working with people who have a learning disability. A meeting was held with Enable Scotland to discuss the services provided by Renfrewshire Council. The Director of the Charity has indicated that the Renfrewshire Playscheme provision is a strong model and is greater than that provided in other local authorities.
- 3.12** The Director from Enable Scotland has met with the parents involved in the working group. The parents and Enable Scotland are looking to develop a relationship to explore future developments for supporting children with additional support needs in Renfrewshire.

## **Addressing the Challenges of delivering the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme**

- 3.13** One of the principal reasons that Capability Scotland decided to withdraw from the contract was the challenge they faced in meeting the requirements to satisfy the Care Inspectorate. Due to the complexity of the needs of the children attending the service the staff to child ratio is high. In addition, a number of staff are required to have a childcare qualification and be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).
- 3.14** Capability Scotland experienced significant difficulties in recruiting staff to work in the service and where they were able to recruit faced an issue with the staff not being registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. The annual turnover of temporary staff as highlighted as a key risk in the service.

- 3.15** Given the complex needs of the children accessing the service there is a need to ensure that staff working in the service are experienced and confident practitioners. Having staff in place who are familiar with, and able to meet the needs of the individual children is a priority for the service. Again, there is a need to balance staff who are familiar with the children's need and also qualified to work in childcare practice and be registered with the SSSC.
- 3.16** Children's Services has been able to ensure that there are sufficient staff operating the playscheme who satisfy the SSSC registration requirement and supplement this group of staff with other support workers and coaches.
- 3.17** Children's Services provided the manager of the playscheme and has over the past two years also deployed staff from Community Learning and Development to the playscheme.
- 3.18** The support workers are recruited from a range of staff who are on term-time contracts and are prepared to work additional hours over the summer period. This group of staff are predominately Additional Support Needs Assistants and early years practitioners. The coaches are drawn from those employed by Renfrewshire Leisure on a sessional basis.
- 3.19** It has been suggested that the Council change the contracts of all term-time employees to full-year contracts. This wouldn't be possible without the agreement of the staff concerned. However, this approach wouldn't resolve the issue as staff would still require having access to their holiday entitlement and would increase pressure on the Council's ability to deliver statutory services during the school year.

### **Preparing for 2019 Playscheme**

- 3.20** The Council has registered the present service with the Care Inspectorate and is committed to its continuation. Children's Services and Communities Planning and Housing Services will work in partnership to deliver the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme during Easter and summer of 2019. Preparations have commenced including seeking expressions of interest from staff interested in working for the scheme. The possibility of extending the hours of operation of the Playscheme is being explored.
- 3.21** The budget for the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme is £150,000. The operation of the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme will be contained within the budget provided.
- 3.22** Any expansion in the eligibility for access to the playscheme will reduce the number of days available for individual children.

#### **4. Current Council Services for children in the mainstream**

- 4.1** Renfrewshire Council doesn't deliver playschemes for children in mainstream schools nor does it operate a playscheme for children attending Mary Russell School. There are approximately 2500 children in Renfrewshire schools identified as having an additional support need. Additional support needs can be both long and short term or can simply refer to the help a child or young person needs in getting through a difficult period. The additional support needs can be due to disability or health, family circumstances or social and emotional factors.
- 4.2** The council does however provide holiday provision for children via Families First Clubs and Street Stuff. Families First Clubs are open to children in P1 to P4 who are entitled to a clothing allowance. The cost of running the Families First Clubs is in the region of £300,000 each year. Street Stuff activities are open to any child over the age of 8 is funded to the sum of £250,000. Children with additional support needs who meet the criteria for the Families First Clubs and Street Stuff can attend these programmes.
- 4.3** Renfrewshire Leisure operate activity programmes during school holiday periods. These programmes are for shorter days than the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme and staff can't undertake personal care tasks as the activities aren't registered care services.
- 4.4** Renfrewshire Leisure ran a parents' information evening and shared with parents from Mary Russell, the full range of activities available and which their children could attend. Children from Mary Russell and mainstream schools are already accessing the Renfrewshire Leisure activities.
- 4.5** It is recognised that parents of children who attend Mary Russell and mainstream would welcome the provision of a holiday activity programme. The council isn't in the position, nor it is resourced to deliver such a programme. This is the same position of all mainstream children.
- 4.6** Senior officers have looked at the availability of a workforce to deliver playschemes for an expanded service. There are challenges in securing sufficient staff to operate the present playscheme, the Families First Clubs, Street Stuff and the activity camps operated by Renfrewshire Leisure. Given these challenges it is likely that the Council would not be able to recruit sufficient staff who meet the qualification and registration requirements to expand the current service to children in mainstream or Mary Russell.

## 5. Summary

- 5.1 When Capability Scotland withdrew from operating the previous playscheme Renfrewshire Children's Services established an alternative service. The following is the progress made in ensuring the continued delivery of the service:
- the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme registered with the Care Inspectorate as a day care service for children attending Riverbrae School or the bases at St. Anthony's and St. Paul's Primary Schools;
  - parents have been involved in the planning of the above service;
  - the playscheme has operated during the Easter and summer holidays in 2017 and 2018;
  - parents have been introduced to Enable Scotland to look at how they organise their own activities;
  - Renfrewshire Leisure ran an information event for parents of children with additional support needs attending Mary Russell and mainstream;
  - the playscheme has received a positive inspection from the Care Inspectorate; and
  - preparation is underway to deliver the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme during the Easter and summer holidays in 2019.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – the Renfrewshire ASN Playscheme will continue to be provided within the budget of £150,000.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – the recruitment of sufficient staff with experience and who are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council remains challenging.
3. **Community/Council Planning** - None
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – None
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** - None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None

12. **Cosla Policy Position** - None

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**List of Background Papers**

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