

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Thursday, 28 November 2024

Holiday Hubs for Children Affected by Disabilities - Update

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the ongoing work being undertaken by Children, Education and Justice Services Officers and parents.
 - 1.1.2 Note that the February and Easter Holiday Hubs will go ahead, as outlined in the report
 - 1.1.3 Note the provision is not statutory and provided at the discretion of City of Edinburgh Council.
 - 1.1.4 Note that the provision of Holiday Hubs continues to impact on the safe and effective delivery of statutory duties, given the complexities and the risks associated with the limited resources.
 - 1.1.5 Note the need for staffing support, going forward, as agreed following consultation with parents groups.
 - 1.1.6 Note for 25/26 that further consultation with regards to the model of delivery will form part of the budget setting process and associated governance.

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Report

Holiday Hubs for Children Affected by Disabilities - Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of the options available to deliver play-based activities, to children with additional support needs and their families during the school holidays, including the actions taken to engage with parents and providers to consider a safe and financially sustainable provision.
- 2.2 This report has been informed by the views of the parents and their contributions to the working group.

3. Background

- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has funded play based activities, throughout the school holidays, for children affected by disability for nearly 20 years, working in collaboration with Community and Voluntary organisations. These are known as Holiday Hubs.
- 3.2 These play-based, holiday activities, were established to provide leisure facilities for children with additional support needs who could not access mainstream activities.
- 3.3 Contracts were awarded to five providers, who have been delivering the Holiday Hubs since June 2023 (three-year initial contract period). The contracts are reviewed every 6-months, with the Council able to make amendments according to funding outcomes, in line with other contracts.
- 3.4 The current provision covers 10 weeks of the school holidays, with families receiving four full weeks of support a year, hosted currently in 7 venues across the city. Support is not offered over the Christmas Period.
- 3.5 The provision is generally allocated on a first come, first served basis and is open to all children with an additional support need, regardless of their level of need for support. This results in some children, with the highest vulnerability and complexity of need, not being able access this holiday support. This raises risk around inequalities.
- 3.6 For this year, CEC received 485 requests for a Holiday Hub placement, for a total of 390 places (1560 places in all -with each family receiving 4 weeks).

- 3.7 The current system for parental contributions is self-identification aligned to the following criteria: no parent working £40 per week; one parent working £80 per week and two parents working £120 per week.
- 3.8 Additional one off Council funding was approved in May 2021, for a two-year fixed term post to develop the Holiday Hub provisions which ended in December 2023 and no other funding is available. Transport was funded for summer 2023 from a one off underspend from the Carers Act monies.
- 3.9 Based on the above, there is a pressing need to review the current provision. This was agreed at September Education, Children and Families Committee, with a report to come back into a special committee in November 2024.
- 3.10 The current contract is to provide meaningful activities during the school holidays for children with additional support needs. For the purposes of this contract, it needs to be considered through the single lens of this provision. However, from previous and more recent engagement with parents and providers, there are different needs and expectations that interplay and further emphasise the importance of this provision for families, including but not limited to:
- 3.10.1 Children affected by disability or with an additional support need who without holiday support would not be able to remain at home and who would then need a more intensive and costly support provision.
 - 3.10.2 Parents and carers of children affected by disability or with an additional support need who need support to be able to continue to work over holiday periods.
 - 3.10.3 Parents and carers who manage without additional support, apart from the holiday provision, and may need alternative support, if these weren't in place.
 - 3.10.4 The needs of children to access a safe and appropriate resource that meets their care, and support needs along with the need to access leisure facilities with their peers.
 - 3.10.5 The needs of wider family members, including sisters and brothers of children affected by disability, for protected family time.
- 3.11 All the above will be important considerations to differing degrees for families but are difficult to reconcile in one delivery model.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The provision of the Holiday Hubs in its current form continues to pose challenges as:
- 4.1.1 we can only maintain a commitment to this service if it is run and managed properly and safely and to do this will require the establishment of the two posts referenced in the report at 4.13.

- 4.1.2 the lack of current resource presents a health and safety risk, (taking staff from core services) increases inequalities (more applications than places), and results in the service not being delivered within the available budget.
- 4.2 Five voluntary and informal working group sessions have taken place, attended by 20 parents, between 20 September 2024 and 7 November 2024. The purpose of these sessions was to agree a joint approach for future Holiday Hub provision. It was acknowledged that the timeframe was too tight to fully explore many options.
- 4.3 The parents group acknowledges that this is not a statutory provision, and that the Local Authority has provided this at their discretion, to support children with additional support needs promoting peer play and leisure activities. This doesn't however diminish required need and demand.
- 4.4 Holiday support has largely been delivered on a local hub basis with support being provided on a 1-1 staff to child ratio, by a range of providers. This means that children are not placed with a provision to meet their individual outcomes but are placed in provision as close to home as possible.
- 4.5 Primary consideration was given to understanding the level of need. The value of the provision was felt differently across the group. Most prioritised the importance of the break from caring for the whole family, while there was less emphasis on the opportunity for their child to enjoy activities during the school holidays, albeit this was still an important factor, particularly when considered against a child's social isolation and exclusion. This suggests the current provision does not meet the defined purpose as set out in section 3.
- 4.6 The group was provided with information on the volume of families accessing the service, and those waiting to access the service, which evidences how demand far exceeds the offer.
- 4.7 The risks associated with the current model cannot be underestimated. These include staffing, venues and budget, which all impact on the health and safety of the children attending the hubs:
- Staffing – ongoing recruitment crisis, inability to maintain safe staffing ratios with an over reliance on Council staff to provide cover. In practice this means taking statutory workers from the core task of supporting the most vulnerable families. This is an additional uncoded budget pressure and is unsustainable.
 - Venues – contractually the providers are responsible for sourcing/providing venues for the Hubs. In practice the Hubs are provided in our special school's estate, free of charge. Braidburn has been used as an additional venue to support the Hubs despite no contract in place, no budget for staffing or the required Care Inspectorate Registered Manager. This availability of school venues can be compromised by the need for schools to manage scheduled and unplanned maintenance and repairs over the holiday periods. This presents a further hidden cost and is again unsustainable.

- Budget –insufficient budget to meet demand, insufficient budget for staffing and venues, insufficient financial parental contributions to offset budget pressures.

- 4.8 The health, safety and wellbeing of the children and young people is paramount for City of Edinburgh Council and the parents. If this cannot be achieved, it was agreed that no provision should/could proceed.
- 4.9 To coordinate a lesson learnt approach, the group was then tasked with benchmarking the provision in City of Edinburgh Council against other neighbouring Local Authorities approaches. Although this task was not undertaken as expected; contacts with, and research on, other Local Authorities, indicates that Edinburgh is one of the very few authorities offering this level of provision.
- 4.10 The group's expectation and preferred option is that the City of Edinburgh Council commit to continuing to offer Holiday Hub support to children with additional support needs.
- 4.11 The priority condition to allow continuation of the Holiday Hub provision is that the service must be safe, fair, equitable, and affordable. To ensure this, officers propose implementing the following process changes to take effect from summer 25, subject to confirmation of budget availability through the Council's budget process:
- we will no longer allocate spaces on a first come first serve basis, there will be a cut-off date for applications
 - there will be no change to the criteria for accessing the service which will continue to be open to children with an additional support need.
 - if demand exceeds available provision the number of weeks allocated to each child will reduce accordingly to ensure all eligible applications receive a service.
- 4.12 Some of the changes suggested were discussed with the group who felt the rationale was clear and deliverable. The shift from a first come first serve basis was welcomed.
- 4.13 From a budget perspective the parents group agreed the proposal to ring fence part of the budget, for both a permanent Coordinator and a temporary (6 month) Development Manager to be recruited once a business case and ongoing budget has been approved. This will reduce the offer by an indicative pro-rata of £100k for the first year and £50k thereafter. In addition, a substantial increase in parental financial contributions was tentatively considered to offset some of the costs to allow the service to continue and will need to be further explored.
- 4.15 The provision of a temporary Holiday Hub Development Manager would provide a critical lens into the wider supports for children affected by disabilities and with additional support needs, and how these could interface/augment the holiday hub provision, as opposed to this being seen as stand alone. The coordinator post was agreed as a basic requirement.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The February and Easter provision will go ahead for those children who have been allocated a space.
- 5.2 Options for a proposed sustainable operating model will be presented once we have agreement on the available budget. A decision will not be taken on this ahead of the February committee.
- 5.3 The offer going forward into 25/26 will need to reduce to absorb the costs of a required staffing resource to review, coordinate, develop and manage the service.
- 5.4 This resource will seek opportunities to access external funding sources to ensure that this provision is not solely reliant on the Council and parental contributions.
- 5.5 Going forward from there, the aim is to have a safe, achievable, sustainable and financially viable holiday support provision, subject to ongoing funding being approved through the Council's budget process

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The February Hub is expected to be delivered within budgetary provision. The financial contribution for the 2024/25 staffing element along with the Easter provision will also be funded from 24/25 budget, the resulting budget pressure will be reported in future revenue monitoring updates.
- 6.2 In relation to 25/26 and beyond, all non-statutory provisions will be reviewed by Elected Members to consider the impact on the budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Any impact on equality and human rights, environment and climate change, economy including socio-economic disadvantage will be assessed and mitigating measures identified and implemented where applicable.
- 7.2 An Integrated Impact Assessment will form part of the proposed review.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan 2023-27. The City of Edinburgh Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.
- 8.2 Climate and Nature Emergency implications will be considered when designing the new service delivery model

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Any identified impact will be assessed, and mitigating measures implemented where applicable.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Holiday Support for Children Affected by a Disability.pdf](#) Committee report
- 10.2 [7.9 Holiday Support for Children Affected by a Disability.pdf \(edinburgh.gov.uk\)](#)
- 10.3 [Item 7.8 - Holiday support for children affected by a disability, 2 March 2021](#)
- 10.4 [Meeting of Education, Children and Families Committee on Tuesday, 11th December, 2018 - Modern Council \(edinburgh.gov.uk\)](#)
- 10.5 [Meeting of Education, Children and Families Committee on Tuesday, 14th August, 2018 - Modern Council \(edinburgh.gov.uk\)](#)
- 10.6 [Meeting of Education, Children and Families Committee on Tuesday, 6th March, 2018 - Modern Council \(edinburgh.gov.uk\)](#)

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Holiday Hub Contract Risk Assessment
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Action notes from parental engagement session

HOLIDAY HUB
CONTRACT RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk/Complexity Factors		Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
A	Financial Risk	£0 - £25,000	£25,000 - £100,000	£100,000 plus
		[[<p>1. Braidburn Holiday Hub (HH)- Braidburn has provided 40 spaces per week in the past however due to operational and financial issues this is not sustainable and cannot be seen as an alternative to the current contracted provisions should a service failure occur.</p> <p>The Care Inspectorate Manager is a member of staff from Seaview Children's Unit.</p> <p>This Hub is co-ordinated and managed by staff from Seaview and the Hub is staffed by PSA/supply teachers. There is no budget for Seaview staff costs.</p> <p>The forecast for staffing the Hub was estimated at £115,000 per annum based on PSA rates of pay. This is not a contracted service and staffing costs are funded by parental contributions. Due to a lack of PSA availability supply teachers have been used to staff Braidburn, which has increased the budget by an estimated 90%. This service is not sustainable due to these financial and operational issues.</p> <p>2. Staffing – there is no budget to fund staffing to manage the Braidburn HH. Budget is also required to staff the HH provision to co-ordinate the service.</p>
B	Non-Financial Risk	Low/minor impact, with minimal effect on services and/or service users	Moderate impact, with some effect on services and/or service users	Major impact, with significant effect on services and/or service users
		[<p>1. Venue - CEC have supported providers by arranging for the use of special schools. Contractually the</p>	<p>1. Number of allocated weeks – Due to the volume of applications, we are unable to ensure every eligible application is offered 4 weeks service. We must treat each application fairly and for all applications</p>

			<p>providers are responsible for sourcing venues for their Hubs. Each provider must have a Care Inspectorate registration for the venue they run their Hub from. CEC have facilitated the registration of a second venue as a backup in case the provider cannot access their first option.</p> <p>The safety of our schools estate is CEC priority. Regular inspections and maintenance occur during the holiday to minimise disruption to education.</p> <p>In summer 2023 two HH had to be relocated due to last minute repairs required for the schools. As a one-off CEC arranged transport of children between their original and new venues at a cost of £15,840. This was a one off as there is no budget for transport and will not reoccur. Having their child access a HH as close to home as possible is a priority for parents as they must drop off/pick up their child, if a HH must relocate again we cannot guarantee the replacement venue is in similar location.</p>	<p>to receive a service we will have to reduce the number of weeks allocated to each child. A reduction in service may increase demand for statutory services for families who rely on this service as a break from caring.</p> <p>2. Staffing levels – due to the seasonal nature of the service provided recruitment, training and retention of staff is an ongoing issue for some providers. Providers rely on sessional workers to staff hubs which can present risks for recruiting the volume of staff to operate their hubs at capacity and safely.</p>
C	Strategic Risk	Low/minor impact, with minimal effect on services and/or service users	Moderate impact, with some effect on services and/or service users	Major impact, with significant effect on services and/or service users, and delivery of strategically important project/legislative duties
		[[<p>1. Future provision - In relation to 25/26 and beyond, all non-statutory provisions will be reviewed by Elected Members to consider the impact on the budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>2. Potential impact on statutory services – HH is not a statutory provision, and that the Local Authority has provided this at their discretion, to support children with additional support needs promoting peer play and leisure activities. There could be an</p>

				increase in demand for statutory services for families who rely on this service as a break from caring. 3. Staffing – if a provider is unable to deliver their contract there are no alternative supplier that could be sourced quickly to meet this requirement.
D	Reputational Risk	None/minor loss of confidence and embarrassment	Moderate loss of confidence and adverse publicity	Severe loss of confidence and public outcry
		[[[1. Reputational damage – there is a high risk of reputational damage to the Council as we have provided a HH style provision for nearly 20 years for children unable to access mainstream playschemes. Parents have voiced that provision should be increasing to meet the demand, now the eligibility criteria has changed from children affected by disability to children with an additional support need.
E	Complexity How complex is the contract?	Minor/minimal complexity, fairly common purchasing requirement	Moderate complexity, purchasing requirement with mix of stakeholders and goods/services	Major complexity, bespoke purchasing requirement with multiple internal/external stakeholders and goods/services
		[[1. The HH contract consists of 3 Lots – low, medium & high support needs. We have 6 contracts awarded to 5 providers over the 3 Lots. Contract levels range from 8 placements per HH to 40 per HH. In total there is a maximum of 116 Care Inspectorate registered placements per week over the 6 contracts.	[1. HH Care Inspectorate Registration - although the contract is in place for 4 years there is no guarantee that the Care Inspectorate will issue relevant registration for all school age children.??? the registration for each provider for all age groups.
Overall Risk/Complexity Level				[High

Tiering Assessment						Outcome			
Result of the Risk and Complexity									
A	[High]	B	[High]	C	[High]	D	[High]	E	[Medium]

Overall level of risk and complexity (<i>highest level overall</i>)	[<i>High</i>]
Comments	[<i>The overall risk rating for this contract is high due to reputational damage to the Council as the provision is reliant on an unstable employment market and the implications of a service not going ahead could have a negative impact on families of children with additional support needs. In addition there are significant risks attached to trying to manage a non statutory provision through an already resource challenge statutory service.</i>]
Result of the Contract Classification Matrix	
Annual Contract Value	[<i>£900,000</i>]
Tiering	[<i>Tier 2</i>]
Comments	[<i>Although the overall risk rating is high due to contract value there is no requirement to have the highest level of contract management.</i>]

Discussion points and associated actions/points of note, agreed by parents and carers contributing to the Working Group from September to November 2024.

It is important to note that this may not be the conclusive, representative views of parents, as appropriate challenge was emerging from within the parent group.

These action notes were not the agreed position of CEC , but reflect the voices of parents in attendance and will contribute to discussions going forward.

Criteria / Assessed eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that the distinction between special schools/mainstream is irrelevant and inequitable • Agreement that assessment is required to make sure that those in most need have access to support. Noted that assessment is an element of a statutory service, HH is a non-statutory service. • General agreement that parents/carers would not like to assess their child’s needs. It would be better if a professional/external person does this in a way that is fair for everyone. • Query raised later around the assessment of children who are not attending school –this wider question should form part of the HH review
Increased demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although it is fairer to communicate through Education staff about holiday hubs, the support currently offered is through social work and is not statutory so cannot be expanded, or continued, further than it has already. Notes the commitment to find where the Holiday Hubs fit within the support structure. • Agreement to fix the current provision first, then have a wider conversation about demand. • Agreement that the central CEC staff could co-ordinate with Education staff to collate information about specific child’s needs, to inform allocation of provision. Additional note that this would constitute formal assessment and holiday hubs is a non-statutory service • If demand continues to increase, it may become impossible to meet it within the current budget. In fact, it is not possible to meet it now due to the resource allocated.
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that first come first served does not work and is not fair. • Agreement that families who do not necessarily need the full 4-week allocation of holiday hubs <i>could</i> accept fewer weeks, in order that those who are in greater need, may have a higher allocation. Acknowledgement of difficulty of managing in practice without formal assessment and whether this is, in itself, fair. A future question would include discerning other types of support that are in place for a particular family.

Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that high level figures provided are not helpful, however these are the only ones currently available in the public domain and no others can be released into the public domain at this time. • Agreement that some families may be able to contribute more, however work needed to quantify it. • Questions arise around the ability of parents/carers to claim monies back if the Council registered with the Care Commission. The Council do not provide the service, the providers do and are registered. CEC is committed to investigate all opportunities to provide parents with the most cost effective provision. • Have all funding pots been exhausted, e.g. national lottery? No, resource would be needed to do that. The central CEC staff (if approved at Committee) could pick this up. • Agreement that CEC will create a draft financial model for discussion which considers (1) reducing the number of weeks allocated and (2) increasing weekly costs and circulate for feedback. This is to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The possibility of paying more for additional weeks to be offered, ○ Cutting/reducing of October and/or February weeks provision • Transport is a requirement for some and there was agreement that, although it is not part of the holiday hubs budget/contract, funding could be available for it, e.g. through SDS. [Note from KH: if this requires eligibility criteria then this becomes costly – can be included in the substantive review]
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central CEC staff to manage hubs has been agreed to be put forward to Committee • Agreement that resource to manage assessment criteria / eligibility also has to come from the budget (discussed above) • Agreement that involving SDS is an option for the future • Mention that creating a bank of staff is too unreliable for such an important service, and that reliable contracts are needed. This requires further discussion. • Providers are also having problems with staff but cannot attend these meetings. • Ratios of staff to children was mentioned however it is not clear whether this would be useful in providing more support to those children in highest need. • Having lower provision on periods that are particularly difficult to staff (e.g. single weeks in February and October) was discussed and generally agreed for consideration