

SHORT BREAK PANEL – DISABLED CHILDREN SPECIALIST SHORT BREAKS

Role of the panel:

The role of the panel is to make fair and consistent decisions about the level of support that should be made available to the child and family.

Who is eligible for a specialist care package?

Care packages or support packages are provided for those children and young people who are assessed as eligible under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act. In Greenwich, this is children and young people with substantial and/or complex disabilities including:

- severe learning disabilities,
- severe physical disabilities,
- severe and profound autistic spectrum disorders,
- disability arising out of serious or chronic illness
- complex health needs
- severe sight and/or hearing impairment.

These children and young people are likely to meet the criteria for the Disabled Children Social Work Team.

These children would typically be attending specialist education settings such as Willow Dene or Charlton Park Academy, or if under 5 be known to the Early Support team, but some will be attending mainstream schools, DSPs or nurseries.

Care packages or support packages are specialist support and only available for those children and young people who are not able to access universal or targeted provision without individual support, or where the support available through targeted services are not sufficient to meet the assessed needs and outcomes.

The care package is not appropriate for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties or mental health needs where support or interventions are required to support them to continue living at home. This should be considered under Section 17 by the relevant Social Work Team.

How often does the panel meet?

The panel meets fortnightly. The agenda is divided in two parts: where the child or young person has ASD and/or learning disabilities and those where the child has complex health needs and/or physical needs, including those with continuing care needs. This enables a focus on differing needs and allows attendance of a different range of expertise on the panel.

The current panel is chaired by the Head of SEND Social Care Services, and always includes a Team Leader of the Disabled Children Social Work Team and the Manager of the Short Break Service. There is representation from local special schools on each panel.

The ASD panel includes the manager of the SEND Outreach services, whilst the joint Health panel includes a representative of health commissioning team (CCG), continuing care nurse, manager of specialist health services, and other members as appropriate.

What is expected of social workers and Team Leaders before panel?

To be eligible for a specialist short break, the child or young person must first be assessed as eligible under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act, which is determined through a Section 17 social work assessment. The assessment must consider the child's needs and outcomes and should include a Carer's Assessment for the parent carers.

Once CSPDA eligibility is identified through the assessment, the next step is to determine the level of provision required. The RAS tool should be completed together with the family as part of your preparation for panel. It is not uncommon for there to be differences in opinions in relation to scores as families are experts in their own experience and likely do not have knowledge about the breadth of needs we support. It is not uncommon for families to feel their child's needs are exceptional when professional assessment may indicate a lower level of need. Your role as professionals is to seek assessment evidence to justify the score you record. It is fine to not reach agreements with families however you will want to ensure they understand your rationale and have had sight of the assessment information informing your score.

The indicative budget from the RAS score is then discussed with the family to begin to develop their indicative support plan. This must be discussed with your team leader, informing your recommendations for panel.

Whilst the panel will comment on and challenge the support plan and suggest alternative services or ways of managing the case, it is predominantly there to make decision on funding. There is an expectation that the support plan is realistic and robust and has been agreed with the relevant Team Leader, before it is presented to the panel.

This requires social workers to make professional judgements on the level of support required to meet the needs, and to ensure that they have a good understanding of the support available to the family or child from their extended family or friends or in the community. The social worker should have identified other supports available such as those already commissioned by RBG outlined in the Local Offer, which may reduce the need for a support package. It is expected in most instances families are firstly supported to access the Core Offer of the Short Breaks when looking to request a package of care.

Where this has not been sufficiently explored, the panel may request further information or clarity before making a decision, which will result in delays for the child.

In addition – the agreement to a care package does not link the case to any particular team – it is an agreement to fund the requested support. Any worker or Team Leader who is requesting this support must ensure that the process for monitoring and review will be carried out by an appropriate person.

PANEL PROCESS

Listing a case for panel:

1. Where an assessment identifies that the child or young person is eligible for support under CSDPA and suggests that provision of support in the form of short breaks or personal care is appropriate, the Disabled Child Support Plan-should identify the outcomes to be met by the provision of a care package.
2. The plan must be approved by the relevant Team Leader before being submitted for panel.
3. The family should have sight of all documents being submitted to panel, including Assessment, Disabled Child Support Plan and the RAS and should have the opportunity to provide comment to the worker before panel. Families should be given the 'Decisions about Specialist Short Breaks' information sheet.
4. The allocated worker should upload the panel documents to the shared drive at least one week before the panel date. This should include the front sheet, an up-to-date assessment or Short Break Review Summary document (if being presented by Short Break Officer), RAS and the proposed DCSP plan. The worker should also add the case information to the Short Break Panel agenda.
5. The documents will be checked first by the Head of SEND Social Care services (The Chair) or whoever is deputising, before the inclusion on the agenda will be agreed.
6. Where further information is required or the plan is not sufficient, the Chair will request further information. This may cause delay and puts responsibility on the allocated worker and team leader to ensure that the documentation meets requirements before being submitted.
7. Once agreed, the documents will be forwarded to the panel members, by the Disabled Children Social Work Team coordinator, to ensure that they are able to check their own agency records and be prepared for the panel.

Panel Presentations:

8. The referring worker or their Team Leader will be required to attend the panel to talk to their plan and answer any questions.
9. The panel currently uses a RAS tool as a guide to provide some consistency, but will focus on the amount of support required to meet the needs and outcomes to be met, and consider the support already available to them from the extended family, as well as any provision already available in the community that might meet the needs.

This means at times the allocated funding may be higher or lower than the indicative budget.

10. The panel will make recommendations about reviews of any support agreed, including if the case should be returned to the panel.
11. Decisions will be recorded on the panel front sheet by the panel Chair and will be recorded on Mosaic as soon as possible following panel. If the Head of SEND Social Care Services did not chair panel, decisions will be ratified by them before being recorded on child's file.

Following Panel Decisions:

12. Where a care package is agreed, the allocated worker will be responsible for arranging the service. If that is to be a Direct Payment, the procedures and guidance for Direct Payments must be followed. The presenting worker is responsible for ensuring the necessary referrals for DP or any agreed service are made.
13. The allocated worker should update the DCSP in line with the support agreed by the panel and let the family know of the decision as soon as possible following panel. This should include details on review.
14. The social worker should draft a letter to the family outlining the decision of the panel. A final copy of the support plan with panel decisions should be posted to the family. This should outline when the package is expected to be next reviewed.
15. Packages will be reviewed by the service when a change in provision is required or at key points in a child's life, e.g. when they start part-time or full-time education, or when they move into residential school.
16. Short Break tracker should be updated by Team Co-ordinator following panel to ensure clear record of agreement and financial implications.

Key Action	Responsible	Timescale
Proposed DCSP approved in advance of listing for panel	TL	Before case is listed
Panel documentation shared with family in advance of listing for panel	SW	Before case is listed
Assessment, RAS and DCSP saved on shared drive	TL/SW	Minimum 1 week before panel date
Panel agenda approved	HoS	6 days before panel
Panel papers and agenda sent to panel members	Team coordinator	5 days before panel
Care package approved at panel, decisions recorded	HoS/Chair	Immediately
Care package decisions upload to Mosaic	Team coordinator	Within 1 week.
DCSP is updated with panel outcome and RAS uploaded to documents and recorded in casenote.	Social worker	As soon as approved by relevant manager
Letter to parent/carer with copies of assessment and plan.	SW	Monday after panel
Service set up- including referrals to DP or other service and necessary purchase orders	Social worker/Team coordinator	Within 1 month
3 month review booked (new cases or those with complex, changing needs)	Social worker/duty worker	Set up at beginning of plan
Update tracker to include review date	Team support coordinator, Team Leader	Once plan agreed