Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee  
- 26 January 2010

Aiming High for Disabled Children and their Families
Briefing

Purpose of Report

1. Aiming High was previously reported on to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee in January 2009. The report below provides members with information on progress to date with the programme in Staffordshire.

Background

2. Aiming High is a central government funded programme aimed at ‘transforming’ services to children with disabilities and their families.

3. It requires the County Council, PCTs and other partner agencies to work together to deliver a Core Offer for Information, Participation, Feedback and Assessment and deliver a Full Service Offer for Short Breaks by 31 March 2011.

The Core Offer

4. The Core Offer aims to achieve improved standards for parents, carers and disabled children and young people around information and participation in the development of services. It also has a focus on streamlining assessment processes and reducing the need for some families to have detailed assessments in order to access services.

The Full Service Offer for Short Term Breaks

5. The Full Service Offer aims to increase the range and availability of short breaks. Short Breaks include any opportunity that is provided to give enjoyable experiences for disabled and children and young people and a break for their parents and carers.

6. Short breaks are not just about traditional ‘respite care’, they can take place during the day, in the child’s home or in the home of approved carers. They could take place in the community as part of a leisure or sporting activity, play scheme, club etc. and could take place for a few hours or a few days. Some children will use overnight break services, but many families could be supported using the day time, evening and weekend activities which many other families use.
7. The County Council has funding available until 31 March 2011 to develop a transformed short break programme across the County and enable wider access to parents often without the need for any social work assessment.

8. The vision for Staffordshire:-

‘Disabled children and young people and their families are supported to live as ordinary lives as possible, living, playing, learning and contributing alongside their peers and within their communities.’

*Staffordshire Aiming High Strategy, April 2009.*

9. The multi-agency Aiming High Project Board is developing a wide range of activity to implement the Staffordshire Aiming High Strategy and respond to the views of parents and children.

10. The Aiming High in Staffordshire Strategy is aimed at:-

**Improving access to services for parents and their disabled children – to prevent family breakdown, enable parents to support their children more effectively and to enable children to have the same enjoyable experiences as their non disabled peers.**

_Aiming High Expansion in Short Breaks: Summer Activities Programme_

11. An extensive Aiming High Summer Activities Programme for children and young people with disabilities has been delivered in nine settings (this is additional to existing grant based and other activities) Aiming High has provided an opportunity to deliver the enhanced programme of events through Staffordshire County Council’s five residential special schools and four outdoor education settings. Feedback so far has been extremely positive, with parents commenting on the confidence and self esteem it has helped create in their children. Disabled children and young people have had the opportunity to take part in taster sessions and family sessions including dance, cycling, climbing, motor boats and canoeing. Activities have provided an opportunity for children and families to take part in new experiences and a break for parents. It has also provided valuable experience for staff in opening their services to disabled children whom they may not have previously worked with.

Revenue funding is being ring fenced to these 9 settings in order to develop further opportunities throughout the
school year and to make these opportunities available to a wide range of disabled children. Capital funding will also be invested in the next financial year aimed at developing the infrastructure of some of these settings to offer short breaks to children with disabilities.

**Aiming High: Improving and simplifying access to support**

12. The *Community Activity Service* is currently being recruited to. The service will have eight members of staff working in eight districts across the County. Staff will coordinate the access of children and families to a wide range of services and support in their local community, they will develop expertise in the support available in their district and provide families with a route into services through direct access, direct payments and the Common Assessment Framework as part of the integrated service delivery programme.

13. The workers will also act as an information hub for parents on the support and activities which are available. The *Budget Holding Lead Professional Pilot* is aimed at testing out how simple packages of one off support available to families with a disabled child without the need for a social work assessment makes a difference to the outcomes for disabled children.

14. Aiming High is also expanding the availability of *outreach support* to children and families using Cannock Resource Centre and Hawthorne Crescent. This will support children with complex needs to access a wider range of activities and short break opportunities.

**Aiming High: Sport and Activities**

15. County Council staff and colleagues from Sport Across Staffordshire and the English Federation off Disability Sport recently held interviews for a new post funded through Aiming High in Staffordshire. The successful candidate joined us 4 January 2010 and will be based with Sport Across Staffordshire (SASSOT) at Stafford Borough Council.

16. This post will be working across the county to develop enhanced opportunities for disabled children and young people to access sport and activities across the county. The post will work with district and borough councils and a range of other partners to develop a strategy for access to disability sport and activities as part of the short break transformation process.

**Aiming High: Commissioning Activity**

17. We have now commenced with the tender process to commission approximately £800,000 of services for Aiming High in 2010/2011. All commissioning intentions have been influenced by feedback from parents and children and young people.

18. There are four main areas for commissioning:-

* Activities eg cultural, arts, sporting and leisure activities, family fun days taking place in holiday periods, weekends and evenings.*
• **Support Services** eg domiciliary care personal assistants, befriending, peer mentoring, sitting services, emergency support.

• Training and development this includes **Workforce development with the community based workforce** and support and development opportunities for parents and carers.

• **Participation and Engagement Service** for Children and young people.

• **Participation and Engagement Service** for Parents and Carers – to include an Aiming High Parent/Carer Shadow Board and an e-forum.

### Aiming High Family Fun Days

19. A series of Family Fun Days will be taking place in February Half Term and March 2010. Last February the Aiming High Programme undertook some formal consultation events with parents which gave us a wealth of information and which significantly influenced the development of the Staffordshire Aiming High Strategy and the implementation of the programme. In 2010 a different approach is being developed where parents will be able to come to an event with their children, take part in some fun activities but also have the opportunity to feedback their views on Aiming High in Staffordshire.

### Aiming High Capital Grant Programme

20. An opportunity to enable greater access to, or expansion in provision to Staffordshire community based short break services will be provided through the Aiming High Capital Grant Programme. The Aiming High Board will be offering organisations the opportunity to bid for capital funding in order to purchase equipment, adaptations or assistive technology which will support greater access for disabled children and young people to short breaks e.g. specially adapted sports equipment, communication aids. A total fund of £200,000 will be available for organisations to bid for.

### Aiming High: Parent Involvement

21. In addition to the parent engagement service referred to in the commissioning section above, parents who have children with a disability aged 0-18 are to be offered further opportunities to get involved in shaping Aiming High in Staffordshire. Including:

- interviewing potential staff,
- helping to develop how we communicate and share information – **how about saying** - advising on communication to parents/carers
- planning family events
- getting involved in panels to discuss which new services should be funded
• Providing expertise in decisions about the services we arrange and provide.

Aiming High: Playbuilder

22. Aiming High has linked with the Playbuilder Programme to make additional funding available for developing flagship inclusive outdoor play in the County.

23. The Aiming High bids have now been assessed and an announcement regarding the successful bids will be made shortly.

National Indicator 54 and Vital Signs Indicator 33: Parental Experiences of Services provided to Disabled Children.

24. The results of the above national indicator were published nationally for the first time in late December 2009.

25. The indicator results are arrived at via a parental survey undertaken through a research organisation working on behalf of the DCSF. The framework for the survey is the Aiming High for Disabled Children core offer standards on information, transparency, assessment, participation and feedback.

26. The survey provides an overall national score on parental experience (between 0 and 100) across a range of services for disabled children for 2009-10. The national overall score for 2009-2010 is 61 points.

27. The survey provides figures for 145 local authorities and 150 Primary Care Trusts. The overall scores ranged from 55 to 68 points across LAs and from 55 to 68 points across PCTs.

28. For the overall Indicator Staffordshire County Council scored 62 against a national average score of 61. Within the West Midlands the highest score was 64 (Wolverhampton) and the lowest 57 (Birmingham).

29. Further work will be taking place to analyse Staffordshire’s performance against the 15 sub indicators which make up the overall score.

Plans for Aiming High in 2010/2011

30. The next 15 months will include a focus on continued implementation of the areas referred to above, responding to parent consultation and continuing to review options for workforce development and partnership working. Consideration of sustainability is a key priority as central government funding for Aiming High is currently only guaranteed up to 31 March 2011.

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Appendices/Background papers

Staffordshire Aiming High Strategy 2009-2011