



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

CABINET

Subject Heading:

10 December 2025

Proposal to procure an Open Flexible Framework and interim arrangements for Havering's Children's with Disabilities Statutory Short Breaks.

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Oscar Ford – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

SLT Lead:

Tara Geere – Director of Starting Well - Statutory Director of Children's Services

Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

This proposal is aligned with the Havering Council's Integrated Children's Plan 'Happy, Healthy Lives' (HHL) agenda linked to the Corporate Plan. HHL is structured around our WISH, for children and young people to be **Well**, **Inspired**, **Safe**, **Heard** and treated fairly. The Council has a Statutory Duty under the Children Act 1989 to provide Short Breaks for Children and young people aged 0-18 with disabilities and their parent/carers.

Financial summary:

To extend two existing 12-month contracts, by a further 6 months, from April 2026-September 2026 at an estimated cost of £0.192m

To adopt a Short Breaks framework for the period October 2026-September 2031, with an annual budget of £2.627m and a total of £13.136m over the 5-year life of the Framework.

Is this a Key Decision?

The grounds for this decision being Key is:
Expenditure of £500,000 or more

When should this matter be reviewed?

Quarterly contract monitoring once contract is awarded.

Reviewing OSC:

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents X

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy.

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval to:

1. Establish a Short Breaks open framework from 01/10/2026 to 30/09/2031, extend existing provision for a period of 6 months pending go live of the new framework.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Starting Well to make the decision to award and manage the Framework contract.
3. It is proposed the framework will be open to other North East London Commissioning Partnership boroughs (NEL CP). This is reflective of the general agreement for co-operation between NEL CP boroughs which will support economic of scale and improve partnership working.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Agree to procure a Havering Short Breaks open framework commencing on 01 October 2026 for a term of five-years at an estimated value to the Council of £13.136m, noting the price: quality evaluation ratio to be used of 30:70.

2. Agree to extend the current two Havering Short Breaks contracts with Family Information Group (FIG) and Disablement Association of Barking & Dagenham (DABD) for six months from 01 April 2026 until 30 September 2026 to support the interim arrangements.
3. Agree to extend the arrangements for provision of Short Breaks via Individual Placement Agreements (IPAs) with existing providers and if required with new providers until the commencement of the new Short Breaks' framework on 30 September 2026.
4. Delegate authority to the Director of Starting Well to:
 - a. enter all arrangements and documentation necessary to give effect to 2 and 3 above
 - b. establish the Short Breaks Framework and award initial framework contracts; and open the framework and award framework contracts as required throughout the term of the framework.
 - c. set the fee for access to the Short Breaks Framework and enter into access agreements as required
5. Note that call off contracts throughout the term of the framework will be awarded in line with the Council's financial scheme of delegation

REPORT DETAIL

1. The children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) population in Havering continues to grow, with the largest groups being children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Speech, Language and Communication Needs. A comprehensive internal review and options appraisal of the Short Breaks offer for children and young people with SEND has been carried out to inform recommendation in this decision paper. See Annex A below.
2. Key findings of a review of these services have highlighted that, while the current Short Breaks offer supports many families, there are some gaps and inconsistencies within the service offer in relation to accessibility, suitable variety to meet need, and communication. Parents and carers have expressed, through a survey, and through feedback to the Parents Voice, ongoing concern around limited activity options, difficulties in understanding the Havering offer and accessing the services, as well as a lack of overnight respite provision.
3. This feedback has led to Havering Council to review its Short Breaks Statement offer as part of the ongoing reshaping and restructuring of social care teams. The teams are reviewing their processes and procedures to ensure that we continue to deliver to our published statement offer, which

assists parents and carers with accessing statutory Short Breaks provision in Havering.

4. As part of the review process, we also undertook a benchmarking exercise to look at how our neighbouring boroughs deliver their Short Breaks provision. Access to Short Breaks varies by borough, depending on each council's criteria. Most local authorities use a tiered threshold approach, the same as the one proposed in this paper for Havering, under Universal, Targeted, and Specialist criteria.
5. Parents who gain access to Targeted and Specialist Short Breaks will have the opportunity to undergo a Children's Social Care assessment. Implementing this approach will provide an enhanced, more equitable, and flexible offer to parents/carers for essential services, while streamlining processes and ensuring effective oversight is in place.
6. Financial analysis has highlighted significant budget pressures, primarily due to a shortage of providers in the local market alongside the individual 'spot purchasing' approach, rather than the use of an established framework. The recommendations set out in this report will enable the borough to procure services that are value for money, ensuring parents, carers, and children and young people are getting better choices from future Short Breaks services.
7. The review of Havering's Short Breaks provision for children with SEND found gaps in accessibility, activity options, and overnight respite. In response, the Council proposes a tiered framework approach to improve equity, flexibility, and service oversight. This strategy, alongside a new procurement model, aims to address budget pressures and ensure better value and choice for families.
8. Using an open framework allows the Council to re-open the framework for admission of new providers periodically throughout the term of the framework contract. This mitigates against loss of provision if providers close or there is lack of capacity. Opening the framework to more providers will also ensure a competitive offer as new providers entering the marketplace will be able to join the framework and compete for opportunities.
9. Once awarded, the contract will provide an improved range of statutory Short Breaks options to parents/carers of children with disabilities, whilst offering value for money on Short Breaks costs. It will also reduce the degree of 'spot purchasing' in operation and enable Havering Council to remain consistent with current procurement rules.
10. It is proposed the framework will be open to other NEL CP boroughs. This is reflective of a general agreement for co-operation between NEL CP

boroughs, leading to greater partnership working and achieving greater economic of scale during the framework contract period.

11. The contract will also enhance equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) through diverse co-production and enhanced social value provisions, ensuring that services are accessible and responsive to the needs of the children and their families.
12. We are suggesting that existing short breaks providers on spot purchase arrangement adopt an IPA agreement for individual child placements as this would enhance both oversight and quality.
13. This report proposes that the Council creates a structured Short Breaks offer, enabling eligible children to access a range of activities covering evenings, weekends, holidays, overnight stays, and one-off events. The offer will be based on the two levels of need, Targeted, and Specialist thresholds, with providers delivering activities and opportunities aligned to the five lots proposed below to children with disabilities.

Thresholds of Needs	
Targeted For all children with additional needs who have a confirmed diagnosis, qualify for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)	Specialist For children who have a severe to profound level of disability and meet the criteria for Children with Disabilities (CWD) support

Lots
Lot 1 - Provision of Day Care Activities Lot 2 - Provision of School Holiday Schemes Lot 3 - Provision of Approaching Post 16 Lot 4 - Provision of In the Home & Community Care Lot 5 - Provision of Residential Overnight Stays

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Procurement Options Appraisal:

1. In conducting the procurement options appraisal, the tender process has been organised into five distinct 'Lots' of provision. This structure is designed to foster engagement across a wider provider market, ensuring that both Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary Sector

Organisations have increased opportunities to participate and submit applications.

Options

- Option 1: Do Nothing - continue with two contracted providers and individual 'spot purchasing' arrangements.
- Option 2: Develop a Havering Children's Short Breaks open framework that has access arrangements for other local authorities built in.
- Option 3: Develop a Pseudo children's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Short Breaks

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1: Do Nothing (continue with two contracted providers and spot purchasing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoids additional costs in terms of procurement and commissioning resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not meet legal and regulatory requirements or best practice.• High-cost Short Breaks contribute adversely to the local authority's financial position.• Risk of poor oversight of provision and budget. Shortage of local providers in the current spot purchasing system.• Poor relationships with the provider market. Not value for money.
Option 2: Develop a Havering Children's Short Breaks Open Framework that includes vetting and quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficiency – framework contracts streamline the procurement process by pre-negotiating terms and conditions, reducing administrative burden, and saving time.• Customisation – the ability to tailor Universal, Targeted, and Specialist options to meet the needs of Havering's children with disabilities.• Greater control over specifications, selection criteria, quality standards, and pricing mechanisms.• Greater flexibility to adapt and modify the Short Breaks offer as needed within the contract terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will require upfront and ongoing time, effort, and resource to develop and maintain.• Reduced competition – could limit access to new or alternative providers in the market, which may hinder better prices or terms.• Limited flexibility – may restrict the ability to adapt to changing needs or circumstances and explore new or improved ways of delivering services.

	<p>via contract variation without external constraints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economies of scale will enable and leverage bulk discounts and fix prices, resulting in overall savings. • Risk management –establishing terms and conditions provides more certainty and the ability to reduce potential risks and uncertainties. • Long-term relationships – enables the fostering of trusted collaborations with suppliers, encouraging knowledge sharing and innovation. • Children's Services will continue to centrally manage the resourcing of Short Breaks with Brokerage and the quality team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are spread across the council in relation to Brokerage, quality assurance of provision and social care teams and will require robust communication and monitoring
<p>Option 3: Development of a Pseudo Children's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) (light touch regime) for Short Breaks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – allows new providers to join at any set time, ensuring a continuous influx of potential new providers. • Improves competition as the open nature of the DPS encourages ongoing competition and can lead to better quality and price. • Efficiencies can be achieved as it streamlines procurement processes by reducing the need for repeated tendering, thus saving time and administrative costs. Children's brokerage is in line with procurement regulations • Value for money, quality, and community contribution are realised. • Optimist system will link to Fusion, which supports financial processing and accuracy. • Greater oversight of financial and resource implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity – managing a DPS can be more labour intensive and challenging due to the continuous on-boarding of new providers at set periods for the duration of the DPS. • Resource intensive – ongoing management and evaluation of providers can require significant resources and effort. Specification challenges – will require precise specifications for each element of the DPS service. • Mobilisation and implementation plan and training will be required.

Reasons for choosing option 2:

1. The rationale for recommending option two is grounded in parental preference and the value for money it offers to the local authority.
2. This approach will encourage providers to collaborate closely with Havering Council to further develop current provision, whilst also inviting new innovations to complement and broaden the variety of Short Breaks on offer.
3. This option will enable children with disabilities and their families to access Short Breaks easily and with maximum flexibility. Furthermore, it will allow Havering to offer access to the Framework to other local authorities.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

Comments from Finance:

Short Breaks Framework Agreement

1. This report proposes the development of a Short Breaks Framework to replace the current procurement arrangements that are mainly reliant on "Spot Purchases". The Framework will commence on 01 October 2026 and run for a maximum of 5 years (3 years plus 2 extension)
2. The full year budget for Short Breaks is £2.627m, which equates to £13.136m over the 5-year life of the contract. Expenditure is dependent upon demand, but the expectation is that it will be contained within the annual budget envelope. If this is not possible, additional funding will need to be identified from within the overall budget for Starting Well. The total spend in 2024/25 was £2.7m, which is £73,000 more than the current budget.
3. The creation of the Framework and its ongoing maintenance will be managed within existing resources, and there is potential to generate additional income if other local Authorities require access to the LBH Framework.

Extension of existing contracts

1. In addition to spot purchases, there are currently 2 contracts in place to deliver Short Breaks. The estimated cost of these contracts in 2025/26 is £383,000.
2. As both contracts expire at the end of March 2026, a 6-month extension to 30th September 2026 is proposed as an interim arrangement until the new Framework comes into effect at the start of October 2026.

3. The estimated cost of the contract extension is £192,000.
4. Short Breaks provision was purchased from the thirty-six providers during 2024/2025 resulting in expenditure being reported at the end of the year at £2,703,822, which subsequently resulted in an overspend of £1,126,562.

Proposed full contract value for new Short Breaks Service 2026/2031

	Using 2025/2026 budget allocation figure	Duration of proposed framework	Forecast full contract value
Short Breaks (A33900)	£2,627,260	5 years (3+2 extensions) Opening year 3 and on demand if required.	£13,136,300

Legal implications and risks: Legal.procurement@onesource.co.uk

Comments from Legal:

The Council power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The Council also has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. None of the constraints on the Council's s.1 power are engaged by the recommendations in this report.

The Short Breaks services are light touch services for the purposes of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23). The estimated value of the framework is above the relevant threshold, and the procurement is caught by the full light touch regime, The open framework proposed is permissible under the PA23.

The existing contracts appear to be contracts which were procured under Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). An extension must fall within one of the safe harbours set out in PCR 2015 Regulation 72. It is arguable the proposal to extend them by 6 months may be viewed as non-substantial for the purposes of Regulation 72(1)(e) in particular as the extension does not extend the scope of the contracts considerably and does not alter the economic balance of the contracts in favour of the operator

Any award of "new" spot contracts during the 6 months before the framework is established should be compliant with the Council's scheme of financial delegation and contract procedure rules.

The Council is a Best Value authority. As set out in this report officers consider the recommended approach to offer best value

For the reasons set out above the decisions may be made.

Human Resources implications and risks:

Comments from HR

There are no HR implications arising from this procurement decision. No changes to staffing structures, terms and conditions, or workforce planning are anticipated.

Equalities implications and risks:

Comments from READI

The Cabinet Report demonstrates a positive EDI direction, reflecting an intent to improve equity and access for children and young people with disabilities.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

This proposal decision aims to contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of children and young people and their parent/carers. It will enable children and young people by supporting.

- An individual's behaviour and lifestyle such as smoking, diet, exercise, alcohol consumption, or self-care,
- Mental health and wellbeing,
- Access to and quality of education or other training opportunities,
- Employment, income, opportunities for economic development,
- Access to green space, sports facilities, and opportunities to be active,
- Quality availability and affordability of homes and housing,
- Opportunities to interact socially with other people, reduce social isolation, improve community support networks and be enable them to live independently.
- Ability to access health and social care services.
- Transport, and connections to places within or between the boroughs.

Comments from Public Health:

Having Council is committed to promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the report recommendations relating to the chosen procurement approach for Short Breaks provision. However, by supporting Council to offer a more robust, flexible Short Breaks provision, implementation of the framework will potentially deliver important health and wellbeing benefits both for the children or young people, and for their parents/carers/families. For children and young people with SEND, access to and engagement with Short Breaks offers an important opportunity to take part in activities that support social connection, skills development, creativity, and general enjoyment – all of which can contribute to improved wellbeing. For parents/carers and families, Short Breaks offer an opportunity for a break from caring responsibilities, which can support improved carer resilience and provide

Environmental and climate change implications and risks

The risks to climate change would be considered as low with regards to Short Breaks

as they do not involve any industrial or large-scale pollution or emission increasing activities. As part of the provider approval and quality assurance process, considerations will be prompted and information gathered around some of the elements illustrated below.

Some indicative matters to be considered include:

- The impact on carbon emissions.
- Offsetting carbon emissions.
- Improving nature and biodiversity.
- Preparing for the impacts of climate change through adaptation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Short Breaks Review Executive Summary
Appendix B – Stakeholder Engagement