

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY K.G. PAMPLIN OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 18th JUNE 2019**

Question

Will the Minister explain what his Department is doing to assist the respite needs of families / single parents with autistic children; and will he further explain what the overall policy is for providing services and support for young people with autism?

Answer

Children with Autism and their families who meet the eligibility criteria can benefit from the provision of short break (respite) support.

Following a public consultation with parents and practitioners, a new model of short break provision has been developed.

Short breaks are now provided at three tiers:

Tier 1 - Universal: *mainstream community services that are accessible without an assessment, such as youth clubs, uniformed groups (i.e. cubs, brownies), leisure centres, nurseries, childminders and activity-based groups*

Tier 2 - Targeted: *daytime group activities designed specifically for disabled children that can be accessed without a social care assessment. Services are available through a mix of commissioned and non-commissioned providers.*

Tier 3 - Specialist: *Specialist short break services can be provided to meet a specific need following a social care assessment of the child's and carer's needs. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, needs can be met through a range of services, including:*

- *1:1 support to access community activities*
- *day time support at a Short Break Centre*
- *overnight short breaks*
- *short break foster care*

A crisis management process was put in place once officers became aware that two prominent providers were going to cease providing short breaks for children. All except one family affected by the withdrawal of the two providers have been offered alternative provision and it is anticipated that all assessed need will be fully met by the end of August.

The development of weekend targeted group activities as a result of commissioning to deliver the new model is reducing the demand for 1:1 support and freeing capacity for those children whose needs cannot be met at a targeted level.

In-house provision of specialist support from the Eden and Oakwell teams is being increased to supplement the current limited capacity of external providers. Eden House and Oakwell are Government of Jersey-run specialist residential short break providers. Eden House tends to be for children who have autism and complex communication and behavioural needs. Oakwell supports children with a range of physical and/or sensory needs where children may also have autism. They are both Tier 3 services and so are accessed via a social work assessment of the child's and their family's needs.

We continue to monitor demand but currently we anticipate that there is enough capacity to meet specialist short break needs

The current number of children waiting for targeted short breaks has reduced from 40 in March to 16 at the end of May. This is expected to reduce further once 10 children who have been earmarked for newly commissioned groups (which are due to commence in the summer) have started. Of the remaining 6 children, all have been offered a service and are considering whether they feel this will meet their needs.

Whilst not all the children accessing short breaks have Autism, the total number of children accessing the various tiers of short breaks has increased from 89 in March 2019 to 104 in May. Again this is hoped to increase further through the summer for the reasons outlined above.

Commissioners continue to support and encourage providers to join the approved provider framework for short breaks to increase the capacity and choice of short breaks available.

The withdrawal of two providers at the time that a new model of short breaks is being implemented has resulted in an understandable level of anxiety for the families affected. Officers have worked with families and providers to respond to the challenges and have ensured that families have been kept informed. They will continue to monitor new arrangements to ensure they satisfactorily meet the needs of children and their families.

Officers have met with the Parent Carer Forum to inform them of the challenges and the work being undertaken.

A media release regarding the new short break model will be made this month.

Modern services such as those provided on-island involve individualised care packages that look to assess and meet the needs of a particular child and their family. This is often built around Team Around the Child (TAC) principles that involve deciding which key professionals are needed to work alongside parents/carers as the members of an individual child's TAC. In addition to the aforementioned short breaks (respite), this could include (but wouldn't be limited to) support with a child's communication, feeding, behaviour, sensory needs, education or social inclusion. Provision in these important areas could be through working with a child and whoever is supporting them in whichever settings they access (i.e. home, nursery/school or the community). Evidence-based training programs are also provided for some parents.

The Government of Jersey launched the Children with Disabilities Register in 2017, which is voluntary. Families who sign up receive a Max Card which offers discounts with several local organisations and 3,000 UK organisations. A newsletter is also sent to families which contains information about activities and events. A Children with Disabilities Directory is available for families to download from gov.je in addition to the Jersey Online Directory. The following link can be copied and pasted into a search engine in order to access a leaflet for this service:

<https://soj/depts/HSS/Registered%20Documents/ID%20Children%20with%20Disabilities%20Register.pdf#search=children%20with%20disabilities%20register>