**Direct Payment Panel - Terms of Reference**

**Introduction**

This protocol details how Short Breaks funded through Direct Payments for children and young people with assessed needs is coordinated across Children’s Services (Education and Social Care) and health

The Local Authority is committed to improving the consistency of its short break offer and started the journey of reviewing the nature of short break arrangements within Northumberland. Short breaks are intended to not only give parents or full time carers of young people/children a break from their caring responsibilities but they are also intended to enable disabled children to have an active social life and join in with safe, fun and interesting activities in turn supporting the child or young person to realise their full potential and help them to have the best life they can

The Direct Payment Panel is a strategic panel which will consider requests for direct payments and short breaks. This panel will provide a governance framework and consistent management oversight to Northumberland short breaks to ensure that needs are being addressed and outcomes are being delivered for our children and young people.

**Purpose of the Panel**

* To facilitate a whole service approach for children who are assessed as requiring a short break funded via Direct Payment.
* To provide an element of scrutiny, challenge and quality assurance
* To ensure that the identified unmet needs are addressed by the most suitable provision or service.
* To ensure that outcomes are set which address the needs and aspirations of the child and young person and is time bound.
* To agree the commissioning of specialist placements in the context of the Health and Social Care Act with appropriate and proportional funding made from education, health and social care budgets.
* To have oversight of the financial commitments made.
* To inform the commissioning of local services for children and young people.
* Where provision/services are agreed under this process, the panel will ensure that, in all cases a review or end date is identified, and appropriate transition arrangements are considered.
* Where there are requests for an increase in costs/staffing by providers these will be considered by the panel to provide consistency rather than sitting with individual workers.

**Cases to be presented at Panel**

* Where an assessment identifies that a child has an unmet need which could be met through a short break funded by a direct payment.
* All existing cases where a review has been set by the panel. (or in the first twelve months where a direct payment is due for review with the family)
* Where uplifts have been requested for providers.

**Process**

The panel will provide a single route for direct payment requests for children and young people.

1. The allocated social worker and/or their manager must submit the panel referral for the date specified.
2. All parts of the form must be completed. The authorised Direct Payment Referral form completed in ICS will need to be reassigned to the Direct Payment panel tray by **5 days** before the panel meeting. This is to allow for distribution in advance of the meeting taking place.
3. The allocated social worker and/or their manager must attend the panel to present their case at the time slot allocated.
4. Following the decision made at the panel admin will complete the relevant process in ICS
5. All direct payments agreed will be reviewed at least annually and workers will be asked to complete a pre review meeting report on ICS prior to review at the panel which will be assigned to them; this may be more often if it is for a time limited piece of work. As much as possible this will be linked to the dates of CIN/CP/LAC reviews.

**Meetings and Membership**

* Meetings will take place on a Wednesday morning for 90 minutes on a monthly basis virtually.
* The Head of Service will chair the Panel. When necessary, the chair will nominate an appropriate deputy to chair the panel.
* Should a panel member be unable to attend then they will identify a delegate to represent them.

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| **Membership** | **Intended Roles and Responsibilities** |
| **Head of Service, Children’s Social Care** Mary Connor | Able to approve or ratify direct payments and to ensure they are outcomes focussed. |
| **Team Manager DCT**  Lisa Anderson /Jade Neal | Will provide advice, suggestions and challenge and support in relation to direct payment requests |
| **Locality Coordinator/Manager**  Julie Leddy | To provide information about community activities and support that NCT can provide to enable young people to access universal activities |
| **Senior Head of Commissioning CCG**  Kate O’Brien | To ensure that funding packages are aligned and that health outcomes are considered |
| **Direct Payments Childrens Lead**-  Louise Duff | To ensure that the framework of direct payments is followed |
| **Senior Manager, Commissioning**  Lynn Bryden | To ensure VFM is achieved in commissioning solutions and that trends are identified to inform future commissioning strategies. |
| **Early Help SEND lead-Jean Hedley** | To consider the support which can be delivered through the range of targeted early help supports |