Dear Parents and Carers,

Joint letter from Extratime and Brighton & Hove City Council

We wanted to jointly give you an update on Extratime's Summer Holiday Schemes and the difficulties faced in recruiting staff to key positions.

We also wanted to share some information regarding funding, commissioning, the contract between the council and Extratime and the effect that has on recruitment.

Extratime and the council completely understand how vitally important it is for families who have children and young people with SEND to be supported over the summer break, and how deeply upset many families are that Extratime isn't yet able to return to the pre-Covid holiday scheme capacity as expected.

It's a regretful situation, but one that has been impacted by a number of important factors.

Recruitment

Recruitment within the whole care sector has become a major issue locally and throughout the country, post-Covid.

This is severely affecting Extratime's ability to recruit staff for its services. The council's adults, children's services and schools are also finding recruitment a major challenge.

Despite working hard to address the recruitment situation, it has not yet been possible for Extratime to recruit the required number of Play Workers and Youth Workers to provide the level of service expected.

There is also the shortage of skilled and experienced Venue Leads / Supervisor staff to run the holiday schemes. Without these critical people in post, places for children and young people cannot be increased safely.

Commissioning

By law the council must review the service provision contract to make sure it's meeting the needs of our children and families and delivering value for money.

This review of Extratime's contract should have been carried out around the start of the pandemic but was held up due to staff shortages and capacity at the council.

The council must now recommission the contract currently held by Extratime.

Due to recommissioning rules around fairness, until the tender went public, the council was unable to share the new specification details with any provider that may want to tender for the contract. This included Extratime.

The recommissioning will not affect current staff numbers as TUPE rules will apply if required. This means if the provider does change, service and staffing transition would be

managed collaboratively by the local authority and Extratime to minimise the impact on families.

Funding

Throughout the commissioning process it has been made clear that there will be no reduction in council funding, and that the council wants to maintain the offer for children and families in the city as far as possible.

Venues

Some of the usual scheme venues used by Extratime are unavailable due to building work, which has meant relocating schemes to a temporary alternative space.

Extratime hopes this situation will be resolved once building works are completed.

Going forward

The key issue on staffing is about recruitment and retention which is a local and national issue throughout social care.

Extratime has already begun a recruitment process which is proving successful, and it is hoped Extratime will be able to increase its staffing levels over the coming months.

We are also working on this together and are looking at ways we can share resources to improve staffing levels.

As you will see from the above, this is a very challenging situation, and we appreciate how difficult it is for families.

Please be reassured both the council and Extratime are doing everything possible to provide the best service we can for you and your family.

We hope this information brings you up to date with the current situation, but for any feedback please contact Sam Price at Extratime on sam.price@extratimebrighton.org.uk

Best wishes,

Georgina Clarke-Green.

Assistant Director.

Health, Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

Families, Children and Learning.