

Consultation on the Introduction of an Equipment Offer for Children and Young People in Hertfordshire

Introduction:

Hertfordshire County Council (“the County Council”) is committed to ensuring that every Hertfordshire child has the opportunity to achieve the following outcomes

- Be Happy
- Be Healthy
- Be Safe
- Be Resilient
- Be Ambitious
- Be Independent

Supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to achieve these outcomes means helping them to live at home and helping them to access their place of education. One of the ways in which the County Council do this is by providing community equipment.

The community equipment which the County Council provide to children and young people with SEND includes: specialist chairs (excluding wheel chairs), specialist beds, hoists, standing supports, bathing and showering aids and toileting supports. An Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist will carry out an assessment to identify what sort of equipment a child or young person needs and then the equipment will be delivered by Hertfordshire Equipment Service (HES).

The County Council want to introduce a Children’s Equipment Offer, which explains to families what equipment support is available to them. The Offer will be a set of guidelines which will indicate the types of equipment families can get and describe how these can be obtained.

The families of children and young people who need community equipment should know and understand how they can get this. Families should feel that they have been treated fairly, so that as many families as possible can benefit from community equipment support.

The County Council want to be clear that neither this consultation nor the Children’s Equipment Offer is meant to reduce the amount of money which is spent on community equipment.

It is important to note that equipment which is provided as part of Continuing Healthcare is not part of the Children’s Equipment Offer or this consultation. Continuing Healthcare equipment is funded by the NHS not the County Council.

Background to this consultation:

The County Council has a legal duty to provide community equipment to children and young people in its area.

The County Council have drafted a proposed Children's Equipment Offer and your views on the proposals are being sought.

It is very important that we hear your views. You might agree with what we are suggesting or you might have alternative views.

We will not take any decisions about the future Children's Equipment Offer until we have considered your views.

What is Herts Equipment Service (HES)?

Hertfordshire Equipment Service (HES) is the organisation which provides equipment on behalf of the County Council. HES will be responsible for delivering the Children's Equipment Offer.

HES is part of the County Council. HES buy equipment to be delivered to children and young people who have been assessed by an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. These are qualified professionals who are trained to prescribe equipment.

HES deliver equipment to family homes, as well as schools and other educational settings.

Some of the equipment which HES provides is bought in large volumes; this is called '**standard stock**' equipment, and it is stored in a warehouse ready for delivery. Simple functional chairs are an example of standard stock.

Sometimes a child or young person will need an item of equipment specifically designed to meet their individual needs; this is called '**non-standard stock**' equipment, and it has to be specially bought in. Complex chairs are an example of non-standard stock.

HES do not carry out adaptations to buildings or premises, for example HES does not install permanent ramps or wet rooms.

Why are we consulting with you?

Introducing the Children's Equipment Offer might mean that your experience of the equipment service could change. This means it is important that we consider your views before any decision is taken.

The Children's Equipment Offer we are proposing for children and young people in Hertfordshire

In this section we will outline what we propose that the future equipment offer should say. These proposals will be our general position, but we recognise that there will be times when we need to be flexible and will look at the individual assessed need of each case. The County Council's proposals are:

1. Children's Services will fund equipment for all children and young people up to the age of 18.

This would mean:

- When a young person turns 18, they will be supported by the Council's Adult Care Services department.
- There is a separate equipment policy for people aged over 18. A young person's equipment needs after they turn 18 would be met through this other policy.

2. When a child or young person has equipment needs identified, they can get one set of equipment to meet those needs for home, and one set to meet those needs at school.

This would mean:

- A 'set' of equipment, is the equipment which an OT prescribes in order to meet a child or young person's needs. There might be more than one piece of equipment in one set.
- This will reduce the number of children and young people who receive the same piece of equipment at multiple locations.
- If a child or young person had parents or guardians who live in different addresses, then only the house in which they usually live would receive equipment.
- A child or young person could only receive one set of equipment to support their needs at school.

3. That all equipment needs which require 'non-standard stock' equipment worth more than £500, must be authorised to by a panel of specialists.

This would mean:

- That all orders for expensive items of equipment will be reviewed so that we know they are needed to meet a child or young person's specific needs.
- That all children and young people will be treated equally when decisions are made, and that decisions will be based on need.
- That there will be a fair decision making process about providing expensive equipment.

4. Equipment which is required to help a young person at school will be funded through the current arrangements, which will be clearly stated in the Equipment Offer. This would mean:

- We continue to apply our current guidelines for mainstream and special schools
- That mainstream schools will access equipment through HES.
- That special schools will source equipment themselves and fund this through their top-up payments.

We want to know what you think about the above proposals. You can let us know your views by completing the online questionnaire.

Further information about the current arrangements for the Equipment Provision to Schools:

Some children and young people need equipment at their place of education; this equipment helps them to keep them safe and makes their attendance possible. For the purposes of Community Equipment there are deemed to be two different types of schools; mainstream schools and special schools (this includes both state funded special schools as well as independent and non-maintained special schools). These two types of schools have different arrangements for getting equipment.

At the moment, mainstream schools get equipment through HES. A child or young person will be assessed and equipment prescribed following an assessment.

Special schools have a different arrangement. Special schools are expected to support children and young people with more complex needs, and they need additional resource and money to do this. This additional money is called '**top-up**'. Special schools use this additional money to buy equipment.

We are proposing that for special and mainstream schools that the Children's Equipment Offer will state:

Special schools:

- Are expected to **fund equipment needs of the children in the school through their top-up.**
- This means equipment **is not delivered by HES, special schools must source equipment themselves.**
- Should a school be required to take a child with exceptional specialist equipment needs they will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Mainstream schools:

- Children and young people attending mainstream schools will be able **to get equipment through HES.**
- Mainstream schools will **not fund the equipment themselves.**
- Equipment for mainstream schools will be prescribed by an OT or physiotherapist, and delivered by HES.
- The **guidelines in the equipment offer noted above will also apply.**

Excluded from the Equipment Offer are 'reasonable adjustments' to schools buildings or premises, and equipment covered by the 'Policy on the Provision of Specialist Equipment for Pupils with a Physical and/or Sensory Impairment'.

How and where we will conduct the consultation:

This consultation will be open from: **12th March to 1st June 2018**

If you would like to take part, you can complete the online survey by clicking on the link here: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/equipmentconsultation

If you would like an electronic or paper copy, please email:

ConsultationonEquipmentSupport@hertfordshire.gov.uk

You can return your completed questionnaire to the email address above or post to:

Hertfordshire County Council
Children's Commissioning
Robertson House, Postal Point SFAR204
Six Hills Way, Stevenage
Herts SG1 2FQ

How and when a decision will be made

Once the consultation has closed, a report with detail of the feedback received during the consultation will be presented to elected members of the county council and a decision be made whether to amend the proposals, accept them in their entirety or maintain the current position.

Proposed Timescales & Implementation

Milestone	Timeline
Twelve week consultation	March 2018 – June 2018
Place before members the consultation outcome	June 2018
Decision on the proposed Children's Equipment Offer	Late Summer 2018
Implementation of new Equipment Offer	September 2018