



Mark Green
Integrated Service Manager
Disabled Children Service
The Salt Way Centre
Pearl Road
Swindon
SN5 5TD

Date: 17 June 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Hop Skip & Jump

You will have received a previous e-mail from the Administrator for the Hop Skip and Jump (HSJ) Foundation, which outlined the challenges they were experiencing in finding a new provider for the service. Also, how this was being further compromised by the repercussions of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

As a consequence of these circumstances, Swindon Borough Council has agreed with the Administrators that we will now take sole responsibility for identifying a new provider to replace HSJ. This will involve attracting existing or new providers who will be interested in submitting bids to run the service. We will be working to a tight timeframe in that those interested will be given 3 weeks to submit bids which will be evaluated week commencing 6th July with the intention of awarding a contract week commencing 13th July 2020.

Taking into account other factors, including undertaking essential works to the existing property and the continued uncertainty regarding when the current coronavirus lockdown will be eased, we estimate that it is unlikely that any new provider will be in a position to start providing a service until the beginning of September 2020, although we will strive to achieve this earlier if this is possible.

Unfortunately, as a result of HSJ going into Administration and the steps we have had to take to maintain the service, it means that the current staff group will be made redundant. They will have been informed of this decision before you have received this letter. We fully appreciate the impact this decision will have on them and you, and the sadness you will feel on their behalf. We know that both you and your children will miss the continuity and familiarity of those staff who have been providing you and your children with a service over the recent months and years. The Administrators will continue to support the staff through this process and to ensure that they receive any financial payments to which they are entitled.

In a recent Swindon SEND Families Voice survey, you told us that the lack of short break services during the pandemic was proving very difficult and that you

were worried about what was happening to HSJ. We want to reassure you that it is still our intention to replace HSJ and to start re-introducing our existing range of short break services as soon as we are allowed.

In the intervening period, given the current exceptional circumstances, we would like to offer families some alternative support. We recognise how challenging this period has been for families and the ongoing difficulties of meeting the needs of the children for whom you are caring. The Aiming High Team are currently working to set up a one-off small grant scheme for those children who were receiving Hop Skip & Jump support via Aiming High or the Disabled Children Team prior to the lockdown (this will also apply for Aiming High Specialist Groups and Inclusion Funding). This will give you the opportunity to purchase some equipment, toys or technology such as art and craft supplies, books, sensory toys or outdoor play equipment etc. to support the development, play and stimulation of your child. This will be a one-off grant. Any payments will be deducted from your existing short breaks 'offer', from the hours you have been unable to use during the period of lockdown.

More information will be provided as soon as possible. Please do not make any purchases until you have received the full details. You will need to submit a short application form to access this grant.

If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact one of the below teams:

- If you have a Social Worker in the Disabled Children Team (DCT) please contact your Social Worker, or DCT Duty on 01793 464815.
- If your support is provided by Aiming High please email aiminghigh@swindon.gov.uk or call 01793 464080.

Please note: you do not need to contact us to receive information about the grants. Please bear with us whilst we get these arrangements in place and we will provide the information to everyone affected as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Mark Green
Integrated Service Manager, Disabled Children
Swindon Borough Council