

# Short Breaks Statement

June 2011



# **1. Background**

Durham County Council in partnership with the Making Changes Together parents/carers group, the eXtreme group from Investing in Children & key partners have produced this short break statement.

The Children's Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide a short break service designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children. This duty and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The regulations require each local authority to produce a short breaks service statement so that families know what is available and how to access these breaks/activities.

## **2. Overview & context**

### **Overview of Disabled Children in County Durham**

- Total number of Children & Young People (C&YP) in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – 3,360
- Aged 0-5 = 380
- Aged 5-11 = 1,170
- Aged 11-16 = 1,350
- Aged 16 plus= 460
- Open cases for the Team for Disabled Children and their Families – 390

In County Durham we have a wide and varied population of children & young people with additional needs.

While we acknowledge the DLA numbers for County Durham we are aware that this does not reflect all of the C&YP whom have an additional need.

This statement is therefore for all C&YP with an additional need.

We aim to take a family approach to delivering services in communities and to reflect the change in the population of C&YP with additional needs.

## **3. Short breaks**

The definition for what is a short break was developed by children, young people with additional needs and parents/carers and may include;

- A short break may include day, evening, overnight or weekend activities and could take place at home, at an approved carers home, or in a residential or community setting
- Children and young people having enjoyable experiences away from their main parent or carer, and giving parents and families a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities
- Short breaks often involve activities with other family members such as siblings, friends and will be safe, fun and challenging where appropriate.

It is our intention that children and young people with additional needs will be able to access the same provision and activities as their non disabled peers, should they wish to do so.

We are committed to changing attitudes and promoting equality including accessibility of universal services.

## 4. Principles of the statement

Within this context the following key principles will need to be delivered to enable cultural & systemic change in short break provision and build on the success of Aiming High for Disabled Children.

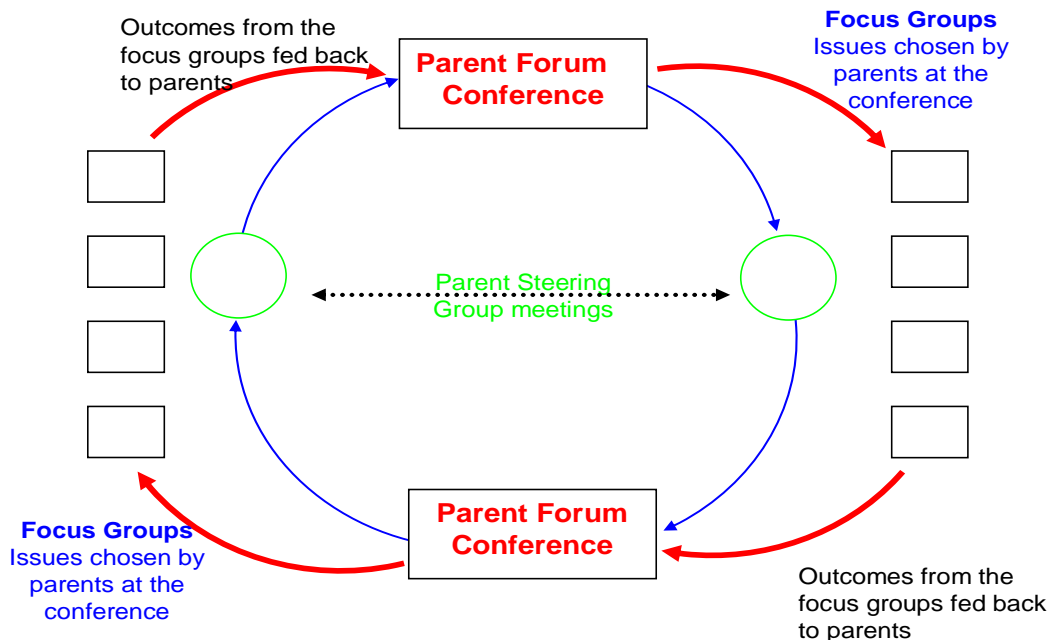
1. **INCLUSION** of children and young people with additional needs in mainstream activities and services should always be our aim. This will mean that wherever possible, children and young people with additional needs should not be excluded from the kinds of opportunities that other children enjoy, such as access to leisure facilities, and educational and social events. Our services within the Local Authority (LA) area should reflect this commitment, and the training and workforce development of staff and volunteers working in these areas should demonstrate this. Young people themselves have fed back this wish for mainstream access in the participation exercises. Parents too have repeatedly underlined this request.
2. Our Short Breaks provision will show evidence of **INCREASING CAPACITY** In practice, this will mean that the services offered at existing locations need to be more flexible and demonstrate greater capacity in both volume and quality. Our aim will be that where a need is identified, the service provision will be grown in order to meet that need. It may also be that new services are developed to meet local demand.
3. Our existing and future service provision, whether delivered by the public, private or voluntary sector, and at whatever level, should show evidence of **IMPROVING QUALITY**. This will require some performance management frameworks to be in place that will include service user feedback to assist in driving up standards. Our workforce should be safely recruited, be increasingly flexible, have the skills and training necessary to meet demand, and be in touch with the individual needs of the children and young people with whom they are in contact.
4. Parents, carers, children and young people should have easy access to high-quality and comprehensive **INFORMATION** about the services on offer.

## 5. Parent participation

### The Durham Model

The Durham model is at the centre of all developments in County Durham for children & young people with additional needs. The model is nationally recognised as good practice brings key operational and strategic leads together with parents & young people to make positive changes together. This model provides a framework that enables all stakeholders to participate in the development of services for children & young people with additional needs. This model provides direction and governance in the development of services.

# The Durham Model



This model has a number of focus groups that are linked and report to the County Durham Parents Steering Group and the Disability Implementation Group. The process is supported by the Disability Joint Commissioning Group.

One focus group has concentrated on the development of short breaks through the County.

The short breaks focus group have commissioned services for children & young people with additional needs and also overseen a grant programme for equipment.

Parents have decommissioned some services and have access to all financial information to enable them to make informed decisions.

The short break focus group have worked with the Local Authority (LA) & partners to improve the range of activities and breaks that are available and they continue to be crucial to all the developments.

For further information about the short break focus group or if you would like to join please contact Making Changes Together;

[steeringgroup@mctdurham.co.uk](mailto:steeringgroup@mctdurham.co.uk)

## 6. C&YP participation

The eXtreme Group and their involvement in helping shape the changes to short breaks in County Durham - Since the summer of 2009 the eXtreme group, supported by Investing in Children have worked to gather the views and ideas of children and young people with additional needs across County Durham in relation to a wide range of issue which affect them.

As part of this work the group looked at the short breaks provision that was in place, how this met children, young people's and families needs and what could be done to make it better. The work they undertook was varied and included holding events where they gathered other people's views as well as putting forward their own views & ideas and 'mystery' shopping, giving feedback on the provision that was already available.

The group has continued to develop and as the existing group have gained confidence, developed skills and grown older they are now taking on mentor roles, developing new groups across the County and supporting them in doing similar work. The work looking at short breaks and leisure provision for young people with additional needs continues as it continues to be an issue that the young people feel is very important.

For further information about the eXtreme group and if you would like to get involved please contact Investing in Children on [iic@durham.gov.uk](mailto:iic@durham.gov.uk) or 0191 386 7485

## 7. Provision

### Universal

Universal services are services that all children & young people can access across the County. These services & buildings include leisure services, children's centres and public spaces. These services are bound by statute to be accessible to children, young people, parents & carers with additional needs.

This statement is committed to ensuring that accessible is not just about opening the door to buildings, but about opening the door of opportunities for children & young people with additional needs through improved staff training, disability awareness and an embracing culture that promotes inclusion.

In County Durham this will mean that universal services are:

- Welcoming to all
- Universal services will be accessible for all children & young people with additional needs at the times when children & young people need and want to access services
- Universal services will have a fully trained workforce who are trained and use skills in every day practice in disability awareness
- Universal settings will be inclusive & will have not only have the equipment required for children & young people with additional needs to access provision, but have staff who are trained so that it can be put to use when requested

## **Universal Plus**

Universal Plus services are services that provide some level of additional support to enable children & young people with additional needs to access short breaks & activities.

These activities in County Durham will be promoted in the Children's Network and will be available on a self referral basis. These short breaks have proved immensely popular with families and range from mobile cinema events to action packed days at Beamish.

To access these breaks and a wide range of useful information as well as discounts to a number of attractions please join the Children's Network at [childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk](mailto:childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk)

## **Targeted**

Targeted services are for those children and young people who need more additional support.

In County Durham a range of targeted short breaks are available. These breaks and activities include youth & leisure groups and specific activities in the counties Special Schools.

In County Durham a vibrant local community of providers exists delivering a range of breaks and activities. These activities range from Arts and Crafts to Fishing & Camping and are commissioned in partnership with children, young people, parents & carers with additional needs.

County Durham is unique in continuing to support Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) for 0-5 year olds and this can be accessed through a families lead professional or a professional involved with the family.

Leisure Services have also developed a programme of activities that are specifically targeted to the needs of children & young people with additional needs. These activities include Boccia and New Age Kurling as well as working with existing organisations to provide training and coaching. In 2012 County Durham will host Paralympics events that disabled children & young people will be able to participate into celebrate the 2012 London Paralympics.

These targeted breaks will be available or advertised through the Children's Network & the One Point Integrated Teams.

For specific queries relating to leisure services please contact 0191 372 9176

## **Specialist**

In County Durham around 400 severely disabled children & young people access specialist social care services through the Team for Disabled Children and their Families.

These children & young people have care plans based on a statutory child in need assessment under the Children's Act 1989. Part of these plans is the provision of short breaks through the year & direct payments.

These specialist breaks are designed to meet the very complex needs that this small group of children have and offers additional support to parents & carers.

These breaks range from specialist autistic support short breaks to breaks for severely physically and learning disabled children & young people.

## **Sensory Support Short Breaks**

Responding to the voice of parents we will be improving the range of short breaks that are available for children and young people with sensory loss in County Durham.

With a population of around 530 children & young people the need to make sure provision and activities are available for children & young people with sensory loss is imperative.

It is our aim to make communication communities across the County and ensuring we have appropriate short breaks is part of this process.

The Sensory Support Service is playing an integral role in this process. From teaching front line staff in leisure services how to effectively sign to meeting with families to ask them what short breaks they would like commissioned.

The Sensory Support Service received 50% more funding for equipment in 2011/12 than they did previously.

The Disability Joint Commissioning Group agreed that a proportion of the short breaks budget be directly controlled by the Sensory Support Service.

Information about a range of activities, including sign language classes can be found on the Children's Network Web pages at [www.durham.gov.uk/childrensnetwork](http://www.durham.gov.uk/childrensnetwork)

## **8. Access & Information**

The vast percentage of short breaks, activities & information can be accessed either through;

- The Children's Network
- Universal Services- Schools, Leisure Services, Sure start
- Special Schools
- One Point Integrated Teams

For more specialist short breaks these can be accessed through following an statutory child in need assessment under the Children's Act 1989 or through a referral to the Sensory Support Service;

- Sensory Support Service
- Team for Disabled Children and their Families

## **9. Evaluation & Improvements**

Through Aiming High for Disabled Children County Durham delivered a wide range of nationally acclaimed short breaks.

The aim of this statement and the commissioning work that underpins it is to look for continuous improvement, gap analysis and family feedback.

Working with Making Changes Together & the eXtreme Group from Investing in Children, County Durham and partners will constantly strive to improve our short break provision and welcome feedback both positive and negative.

Through our participation process and feedback from children, young people & families we will evaluate the services provided continually.

Delivering successful short breaks in County Durham requires the commitment and dedication of a wide range of professionals, volunteers working in partnership with children, young people, parents & carers with additional needs.

If you have any suggestions or ideas please contact;

[childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk](mailto:childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk)

[steeringgroup@mctdurham.co.uk](mailto:steeringgroup@mctdurham.co.uk)

## **10. Signatories**

This short break statement is a shared vision between children, young people, families with additional needs, the Local Authority & providers.

The delivery of short breaks has proved successful because of a shared purpose and determination to improve what is available and enable children, young people & families with additional needs to live ordinary lives.

By signing this statement we are committing to delivering a range of short breaks in County Durham inline with the principles outlined in this statement.

By signing this statement we and the services/organisations we represent are committing to Making Changes Together and working in partnership with children, young people, parents & carers with additional needs as well as professionals and voluntary organisations.

By signing this statement we commit to working to change the perception of people with additional needs and will positively promote equality and inclusion in County Durham.