

## Short Breaks Information Statement

### 1. Background/Context

Section 25 of the Children and Young People Act requires Local Authorities to provide short breaks for children. Regulations effective from 1 April 2011 requires each Local Authority to produce a short breaks service statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for these services and how the range of services will meet the needs of disabled children in the area.

In Blackpool there has been a desire to work in partnership with parents to ensure that any services delivered not only meet the needs of the children, young people and their families but are actively led by them. A joint steering group of parents, elected members and council officers drive this strategy

### 2. How the Statement is prepared

The statement has been prepared by Senior Officers within Blackpool Council in conjunction with the Healthy Lifestyles for Disabled Children Group, which is a partnership between parents, the council and commissioners.

### 3. Responsible Officers

The lead officers responsible for preparing this statement are: Merle Davies Head of Community and Early Intervention, Paula Swindlehurst Head of Children's Social Care, who report to Sue Harrison Service Director Learning, Schools and Communities and Janet Hambly Service Director Social Work and Safeguarding.

### 4. Short Breaks Services in Blackpool

4.1. Consultation with Parents and Young People through the Aiming High programme indicated that the range of short breaks provided via that service – increased access to a range of good quality short break services.

- Improved the quality and quantity of life for disabled families across the town.
- Enabled families to access activities/venues together as a family.
- Enabled families to access valuable and relevant information with regards to the seminars that are available to them.
- Enabled children/young people with complex difficulties to access activities with appropriate support in place.

4.2 Consultation also revealed that the services most valued by parents, carers and children were:

- Events – Family Activities
- Holiday Clubs
- Specialist Soft Play
- Play Schemes
- Swimming

#### 4.3 Services available to Blackpool's children and young people with Disabilities age 0-19 years.

##### Residential Services

**Hornby Road:** - This is an in-house residential respite facility for children with disabilities with a high level of need. It can accommodate 10 young people aged 5-17 years. Access to the service is through an assessment of need completed by the Children with Disabilities Social Work team.

Hornby Road also offers an outreach service incorporating group activities as an alternative to residential respite.

**Family Link:** – this is an in-house short breaks fostering service providing respite care to parents, carers and young people following assessment of need by the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team.

**Brian House Children's Hospice:** – A voluntary charitable organisation receiving no statutory funding from local authorities and relying on voluntary donations providing short break care and end of life care to children and young adults aged 0 – 25 years primarily residing in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. Brian House is a four bedded inpatient unit with a fifth emergency bed and four day care places open 24/7, 365 days a year.

Access to Brian House is by referral from any agency or parent and all referrals will be subject to assessment to ensure the children and young people fit the criteria for admission requiring medical or nursing intervention and supervision. It offers an Outreach Service to support our families at home, providing nursing care and symptom control to children and young people who are at the end of life.

##### Evening and Week End provision

Blackpool Council works in partnership with a number of key organisations to promote and develop sporting opportunities for children, young people and adults with a disability. . Many of these clubs and projects act as a gateway for people with a disability to access the wider programme of activities and opportunities offered by Leisure Services. Large numbers of people with a disability access casual leisure provision and attend for example Blackpool Sports Centre and Palatine Leisure Centre. The key clubs and projects in relation to disability sport are as follows:

##### **Blackpool Tiggers**

Blackpool Tiggers are a local parent led charity providing sport, leisure and social activities for children and adults on the autistic spectrum and their families. Support is also available to siblings of children on the autistic spectrum.

The club has a focus on trampolining but offer a range of other sporting and leisure activities as well as an extensive programme of activities during school holidays. The club meet weekly at Blackpool Sports Centre and have approx 100 members. The club also operates holiday activities. The Council through funding support from Sport England is currently working with the club to help them grow their membership, develop their financially sustainability and develop the provision and services that the club offers for the local community.

The club currently operates from a rented property on St Anne's Road opposite Palatine Leisure Centre; the club have plans to develop the property further. A project to develop a sensory room at the property is currently underway and funding has been secured. The club has accessed funding from the Council through the Aiming High initiative and previously through the Compact.

##### **Blackpool Bears**

The Blackpool Bears are based at Blackpool Sports Centre and meet each Saturday morning. They provide a range of sporting activities for children, young people and adults. The club has an average

attendance of approximately 80 people each week and the participants take part in a range of activities and trips and work with a variety of different partners. The club is currently focussed on further developing sporting partnerships with other sports clubs and organisations to ensure there are pathways in place for people with a disability to progress.

The club has recently launched 'Little Bears' for children aged 4- 11 years with a disability; the club has been a success and has 25 regular attendees with a waiting list. The club meets weekly at Woodlands School and is funded through Aiming High until July 2012.

The club receive grant aid from the council, which amounted to £7.5k in 2010/11, this mainly funds the delivery of the Bears activities. The council also supports the club by giving it free usage of the facilities at Blackpool Sports Centre. Recently the council has worked in partnership with the club to access funding through the Sport Unlimited project to run a series of cycling sessions for young people with a disability. In addition the club received a grant of £3k from the council in 2010/11 to organise additional activities for the members and the club has applied for the grant again for 2011/12.

### **Blackpool Polar Bears**

The Polar Bears are a multi Disability Swimming Club operating for members of the community with a learning or physical disability. The club aims to help people with disabilities achieve their full potential and encourage their integration in society and in particular swimming. In partnership with Blackpool Council Leisure Services, who provide qualified swimming teachers, the participants access the sessions free of charge. Sessions take place at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre on Sunday morning 9.00 – 11.30 am.

The club take part in the national Special Olympics for swimmers with a disability and have seen a number of successes over recent years and have received awards from Blackpool Community Sports Council and Quayle awards.

### **Wheels For All**

The Council has developed a very successful and hugely popular Wheels For All Cycling scheme for people with a disability. £20,000 of funding was accessed from Cycling England in 2009 to purchase a number of specially adapted cycles; the purchase of these cycles provided the spring board for the project. Regular sessions for people of all ages, disabilities and differing needs take place at Stanley Park and plans are currently well under way to provide sessions at the new cycling track at Palatine Leisure Centre.

Key project partners are British Cycling and Cycling Projects who have worked with the Council to develop the scheme and provide wider training opportunities for instructors, volunteers and participants. The scheme currently has approx 200 registered members.

In addition to sports provision the following activities are also available:

**"A" Team Youth Club:** - Currently based at Blackpool Boy & Girls Club. The "A" Team began as a collaborative project with the Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD) Service (now CLAS, Communication, Learning and Autism service) and the Youth Service but is now run in partnership with the members, youth Service and volunteers with the Co-ordinator for CLAS acting as a point of contact for families and as a specialist advisor.

The club came together to meet the needs of young people with autism who could not access other leisure pursuits and activities due to the nature of the social challenges they faced. Young people with autism age 12-25 years attend the club weekly during term time. The club focuses on providing a range of activities both inside the club and also planning social trips such as visits to the cinema, bowling etc. The young people are in charge of the club and plan many of the activities including some

residential trips. Currently the club has 20 members. The finance for these trips has previously been obtained by the members putting together bids, supported by professionals, to various agencies.

### **Children's Centres**

The Together Children's Centre operates from Woodlands school but works across all 3 special schools to develop before and after school provision as well as holiday clubs with a focus on children with additional needs. The centre will also provide support to mainstream provision.

### **Park School Youth Club**

Is based at the school and is aimed to meet the needs of young people with special needs, which may not be met by access to other leisure activities or youth groups due to the nature of the social challenges they face. This is a collaborative project with the school and is run by a combined team of youth workers, school staff, volunteers and senior members. Young people with special needs aged between 13 and 25 attend the club weekly during term time. The membership of the club is nominally made up of young people who are currently pupils or have attended the school previously. The club focuses on providing a range of activities that enhance communication, self esteem and develop skills evidenced in members running their own tuck shop, organising pool competitions and challenges. The club offers the opportunity for young people to work together with Wii and computer games, develop skills with arts and crafts, and team work with a range of outdoor games. The club is proud of the football team which has been very successful in recent years. The group averages an attendance of 22 with males being in the majority. The largest age group represented is 16, closely followed by 18 to 20 year olds.

### **Sign Hi**

Is a group for deaf children, deaf young people, their families, siblings, parents, carers and friends. It is led by parents and deaf young people from FDCS with PIP as a service provider for the Tuesday sessions.

Sign-Hi! formed in January 2009 for deaf children/young people to meet, take part in activities, socialise, give a sense of identity and simply 'be' together. The emphasis is on what deaf children **can** do and is about empowerment, them having a choice and learning to grow up into successful young deaf people with positive self esteem. It was also set up to be a comfortable place for both deaf and hearing parents to socialise in a family environment. 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents and there are many barriers in place before a deaf child born to hearing parents can experience a bilingual/bi-cultural childhood and therefore make an informed choice for themselves as they grow into adulthood. The majority are the only deaf child or young person within a mainstream local school and without a deaf peer group this can be an extremely lonely place. Equally, for hearing parents, there can be a sense of isolation and of not knowing how to assist their deaf child. Sign -Hi! is a peer group for deaf children, parents and siblings whose needs are often forgotten.

We are deaf and hearing parents who offer informal support /information sign posting and work with Blackpool and Lancashire Authorities to improve services for deaf children/young people. This is on a voluntary basis and Sign-Hi! is led by a committee of parents, young deaf people and professionals. Sign Hi! runs on alternate term time Tuesday evenings from 6—8 pm at Highfield Humanities College. When we meet, children and young people can take part in a range of activities including arts & crafts run by PIP, sports sessions with the YMCA coach and activities facilitated by the deaf youth worker from Deafway. There is a WII, pool table etc and we have the use of the sports hall and field. Parents (deaf and hearing) and carers have a coffee or join in the activities. We have a range of NDCS publications available for families and offer informal parent to parent support as well as peer group for all deaf children and young people whatever communication used; oral or BSL. Free BSL classes for all the family are run on a regular basis with a crèche and a Sign Activity Club for children under 10. Extra workshops are available on differing topics depending on the needs of families.

Children/young people's ages are from birth to the end of full time education and under 12's need to be accompanied by parents/carers. Older young deaf adults are welcome to join in as deaf role models on a volunteer basis. The Blackpool Head of Sensory Service and the NDCS Family Officer both come once a month and meet families. Activities are also arranged in the holidays. Sign-Hi! is a Play Inclusion Project Club managed by a committee of parents, deaf young people and professionals (who support Sign-Hi! on a voluntary basis).

### Playschemes

The Local Authority has commissioned STARS and PIP to deliver playschemes for children with additional needs over the Easter, May half term and summer holidays. STARS provide a wide range of activities including music, sports, dance, and arts and crafts for children and young people with a disability who are aged between 4 – 18 years over 4 weeks of the school summer holidays. The play scheme runs at Woodlands Schools and offers a wide range of activities and is supported by qualified, well trained staff and was voted the 'Outstanding Short Break Provision 2010/11' by parents. STARS is run in partnership between Blackpool Council and Blackpool FC Community Trust. PIP Starts will run sessions at Unity, Palatine and St Cuthbert's for ages 2-8 years over six weeks of the summer holidays.

### Childminding

#### **Specialist Childminders**

The Specialist Childminding Network has a number of childminders who have had additional training and support to offer short break placements for children (aged birth to 8) with additional needs. The initial referral to the Network is made by the Social Worker from the Children with Disabilities Team as a result of a visit and initial assessment. The commissioned number of hours is agreed and a Specialist Childminder Referral form, including the Initial Assessment, is completed. A visit to the family is then made by the Childminding Development Worker to discuss in more detail the child's needs and a suitable Childminder placement is found.

The Children with Additional Needs Team offer on-going support and training to the Childminders and also provide some individual support to the child.

### Support for Parents

**Aiming Higher Forum:-** The Aiming Higher Parent Forum has been established in Blackpool since the inception of the government funded Aiming High project. It consists of a strong steering group and monthly meetings are held with parents/carers consulting with service providers and the Local Authority and discussing pertinent matters. The forum's remit is to increase parent participation and involve parents more in decisions that directly affect them and their families.

During the past three years the forum has worked closely with Blackpool Council's Aiming High team and helped raise awareness of the short break services available as well as providing valuable input when requested. The forum has developed a community style website which provides information about activities, services, links to other relevant sites and other features.

The Aiming High project has impacted so much on the lives of families caring for disabled children that some parents have formed a charity, the aim of which is to try to continue with support and inclusive activities for disabled children/young people and their families.

4.4 **Transport:** - We acknowledge that transport is needed by some families to enable their children to access short breaks. We also acknowledge the importance of enabling/encouraging young people to develop independence skills initiating independent travel. However, transport can be expensive and time consuming. We will be working with families, carers and providers to ensure that transport is provided fairly, cost effectively and only when necessary to ensure that young people can access provision.

We will continue to work with carers, young people, schools, providers and other colleagues to support independence skills.

- 4.5 **Transition:** - Transition through different life stages and associated services can be a stressful time for young people and their families. We want to ensure that stages for transition are positive and supportive in enabling young people to develop as individuals engaged in their local community. We will review transition arrangements from children to adult services and develop a comprehensive transition strategy.
- 4.6 **Personalisation:** - We will utilise learning from colleagues in adult services to develop personalisation of services for children and young people and build upon current direct payments arrangements. Wherever possible and desired we will work towards families identifying and managing their package of care.
- 4.7 In moving forward, the Local Authority aims to give parents greater autonomy in deciding how funding for playschemes will be used. To enable this to happen it is intended to widen the membership and scope of the 'Healthy Lifestyles for Disabled Children Group' group and to enable them to make more informed choices on the allocation of resources for play schemes and activities for children with additional needs from September 2011 onwards. It is also hoped that, as a community and voluntary sector group, they will be in a position to attract external funding.
- 4.8 Wherever possible we want to ensure that services in Blackpool are inclusive and that children/young people with disabilities are involved in universal services. Through the Healthy Lifestyles for Disabled Children Group we will strive to ensure that all young people can access facilities to meet their needs supported by trained and well experienced volunteers and staff.
- 4.9 As an authority we aim to ensure that those young people and carers with the highest level of need have access to specialist facilities but recognise the diversity of need within our community.