

Short Breaks Statement for Parents and Carers of Disabled Children and Young People in Kent July 2013



This Statement has been produced by Kent County Council Families and Social Care – Children’s Commissioning Unit. You can view it online and also give your views at:
www.kent.gov.uk/disabledchildren

Alternatively, you can contact the Children’s Commissioning Unit to give your views as follows:

Tel. 0300 333 5540 or Text Relay 18001 0300 333 5540, or you can e-mail:
Commissioningfordisabledchildren@kent.gov.uk or write to: Kent County Council, FSC
Children’s Commissioning Unit, Room 2.12 Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone,
Kent, ME14 1XQ.

1. What is this?

This Statement sets out how Kent County Council (KCC) and our partners in the National Health Service (NHS) propose to provide short breaks for disabled children and young people in Kent. It describes the range of short breaks we intend to provide, and how they are arranged to meet the needs of families. It also sets out the eligibility criteria for services – which children can have which services.

We have sought the views of families about short breaks, and taken these views into account in preparing this Statement. We will continue to ask children, young people and their parents and carers for their views, and review and update the Statement every year.

2. Introduction and Background.

Looking after children with complex disabilities can be exhausting for parents and carers, and the local authority should be a vital source of support. A short break gives parents and carers a much needed break from caring – some ‘time out’. It also gives disabled children and young people the chance to have fun and make friends – something that most children can take for granted. This can be anything from a couple of hours a week at Brownies or Cubs, to going swimming on a Saturday morning, or attending a playscheme in the school holidays, or sometimes spending the night with friends away from the family home: these are just some examples of short breaks.

Disabled children in Kent have been accessing short breaks for many years. This document is a source of information for parents and carers to refer to so they know what is on offer and how they can access short breaks.

Between April 2008 and March 2011 Kent County Council was a Short Breaks Pathfinder local authority. We were one of 21 pathfinders in the country chosen by the last government to lead the way on developing short breaks, in partnership with the NHS. As a consequence, five times more children received a short break over the year 2010-2011 when compared to 2007-2008.

‘There has been a remarkable transformation made to services for disabled children and their families over the course of the past three years. More parents are involved in local service planning and they have a greater say in how decisions are made.’ (Together for Disabled Children – final report June 2011).

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations (April 2011) require a local authority to provide ‘so far as is reasonably practicable, a range of services which is sufficient to assist carers to continue to provide care or to do so more effectively.’ Local authorities are also required to publish a statement about short breaks. This Statement is Kent County Council’s response to both of these requirements.

3. What are Short Breaks? And how can they help to improve the lives of children and their families?

You can see examples of the types of short breaks on pages 7-9.

The Regulations define a short break as:

- Day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, and
- Services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

When funding short breaks in Kent, we will aim for the following:

- Improvements in the mental health and emotional wellbeing of disabled children, young people, their siblings and parents / carers
- Promoting independence, allowing children to take risks in a safe environment, to develop their social skills and have choice
- Participation in fun, age appropriate activities within the local area
- Development of active and healthy lifestyles for children
- Enabling families to participate in activities together and strengthening family resilience
- Reduction in parental stress and family breakdown
- Reduction in the number of children who need to be looked after by the local authority
- Reduction in the number of children placed in residential care outside Kent
- Promoting community acceptance of disabled children and young people as being an equal and integral members of society
- Encouraging children and young people to volunteer in local community projects to support their development as citizens
- Building the skills of young people to prepare for future employment.

4. How will we fund Short Breaks?

Like all taxpayer funded services, Kent County Council is adjusting to increasingly challenging economic circumstances. We will therefore try to ensure that we use the money that we have available to give as many children as possible a chance to have a short break, particularly those children living with more severe and profound disability.

We have an overall pot of money for short breaks. Some families have a 'direct payment', which is an amount of money paid to them so that they can choose and pay for the short breaks that suit their child best. Some families do not want a direct payment but wish to use services that are paid for centrally by Kent County Council. This means that we have to balance the money spent on direct payments against the money that we use to fund organisations that provide services. We will ensure that there are a range of services that parents can use their direct payment to purchase.

We expect organisations to make a charge for a holiday playscheme or club in the same way as they would for a non-disabled child. We expect parents to pay this charge from their own resources.

We will procure services using competitive processes that comply both with the law and the guidance contained in the KCC document 'Spending the Council's Money.' All services will be subject to a signed contract between KCC and the service provider that will set out clearly what is expected of the service. We will manage and review how well services perform, to ensure that they give value for money.

5. How we assess and meet the needs of disabled children:

Disabled children and young people in Kent may have their needs assessed under the 'Common Assessment Framework' (CAF). This is a process that ensures that children, young people and their families receive the most appropriate support from the most appropriate organisations and professionals. The majority of CAF assessments will be undertaken or arranged by professionals working in settings such as children's centres, schools and health settings. These are the places where children's and young people's needs are best identified at an early stage.

Children who have a CAF may be offered support to go to a club or activity for all children e.g. Brownies. Or they may be directed to a service just for disabled children, such as a weekend club. If a CAF assessment identifies that the service required is a more specialist service – perhaps from KCC's Specialist Children's Services ('Social Services') - then this will be explained and permission sought for a referral to be made. Specialist Children's Services has a system for measuring a child's level of need, which can range from a low level to a very high level of need. Sometimes the needs are so high that children are deemed to be 'at risk'.

KCC also has a service – the Disabled Children's Service (DCS) - for disabled children and young people who have more severe and complex needs related to their disability (see Appendix A for which children can have this service). Your child can only have some specialist services, such as overnight stays in a short breaks unit or attend a specialist playscheme, if they have had a DCS social work assessment which concludes that this is the best way to meet their need. A 'care plan' will then be written which clearly sets out the services your child will get. This plan will be kept under review and changed if there is a change in the needs of your child.

The Government is bringing in a new law in September 2014 which will improve services for disabled children and children with a special educational need, and Kent County Council was one of the council's selected to test the changes during the two years leading up to the new law. They include coordinating all the different assessments and where a child needs it, having a single plan for education, health and social care. A Key Worker will co-ordinate all the services and will be the single point of contact for the child and family.

This year has seen the opening of three new centres for disabled children in Ashford, Margate and Sittingbourne. We have brought together in one place many of the different professionals and services that disabled children use. This is because parents told us they were fed up with having to travel to different places for different services, often having to give the same information over and over to numerous people.

6. How we will plan, develop and support Short Break services:

We will look at what services already exist and where they are, with a view to trying to ensure wherever a child lives in Kent they have the same opportunity to enjoy a short break. We will plan and fund services with a focus on how they will improve the lives of children and their families.

- We will continue to involve parents, carers and children and young people in all aspects of short break planning and delivery
- We will collect information that tells us how many disabled children there are in every District e.g. the number of children with a statement of educational need, the number of children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.
- We will require the organisations that we fund to keep a record each time a child attends their service and to get the consent of parents to share this information with us. This is because, with a limited budget, we want to try and make sure that all children have a fair share of short breaks, and that the children with the highest level of need are able to have short breaks. We also want to make sure that children from the diverse range of communities in Kent are accessing short breaks.
- We will use this data, population information and feedback from parents, children and the professionals who work with them to plan what short breaks services need to be available in each area for different levels and types of need
- Encourage all the organisations that provide short breaks to work together, to share information about their services and to plan services in a co-ordinated way.
- Continue to promote choice and control by families over the services they receive through the provision for some families of a direct payment following a social work assessment
- Work closely with the professionals and organisations that plan, develop and manage services for children in order to encourage the inclusion of disabled children in those services

How we will develop services:

- Fund an e-learning service to support professionals working with children to build their knowledge, skills and confidence so that they are more able to include disabled children
- Encourage settings working with pre-school age children – nurseries, playgroups, children's centres - to increase the number of young disabled children accessing these services.
- We will introduce the Kent Card as a means of receiving a direct payment (this is a bank Visa card that can be 'loaded' with an agreed amount of money to spend on short break services)

7. How Short Breaks are structured:

Short breaks usually fall under one of five categories – mainstream/ universal, targeted, specialist by referral, multi-agency children's continuing care packages, and supporting services.

Mainstream/universal –

A key element of our short breaks planning will be to support services such as leisure centres, youth clubs, children's centres, District Council playschemes, to include disabled children. Working with young people, we have developed a Young Inspectors Programme, in which disabled young people themselves visit mainstream short breaks settings and assess how inclusive they are.

We recognise that some children may need support to access mainstream services e.g. a befriender to accompany them. This support may be temporary, until the service is confident it can successfully include a child. In some cases, where the needs of a child are more complex, support may be more long term.

As a county, Kent encompasses twelve District Council areas and has a geographical area of 1,442 square miles. To avoid the need for children to travel long distances, and to enable them to have short breaks in their own communities, as far as possible services will be planned and developed locally. We will work closely with the professionals and organisations that plan, develop and manage universal services for children in order to support the inclusion of disabled children in those services.

Targeted –

These services are aimed at disabled children whose needs are less complex than those of children who require a more specialist service. Children may choose to be with their disabled peers for some activities, as opposed to being included in a mainstream setting.

For example, short breaks in this category include playschemes or weekend/evening clubs that are specifically for disabled children and young people. Targeted short breaks tend to be run by voluntary organisations or groups of parents, and families can approach them directly without having to go through a social worker or health professional.

Specialist –

These services are aimed at children with a severe and complex level of disability whose needs are over and above what can be met by universal or targeted provision. Access to these services is usually by referral from a specialist social worker from Kent County Council's Disabled Children's Service, or a key health professional. The eligibility criteria for the specialist social work service are attached as **Appendix A**.

For example, services in this category include daytime or overnight breaks in a KCC/NHS short breaks unit, short breaks with a KCC approved foster carer, or the provision of a direct payment to purchase a service that meets a child's needs, following a 1989 Children Act assessment by a social worker.

Multi-agency children's continuing care packages –

There will be a need for a small group of disabled children who have highly complex health, social care and education needs to receive a children's continuing care package. The National Framework for Children's Continuing Care requires the NHS to work together with the local authority to jointly commission children's continuing care packages. A children's continuing care package is provided for disabled children and young people whose complex needs cannot be met by universal, targeted and specialist services alone. In this case a Health Assessor will undertake a holistic assessment of the child's and family's needs, working closely with the child's social worker, teacher and other professionals working with the family. The case will then be presented to a multi-agency

panel. The panel will determine whether the child meets the eligibility criteria for a children's continuing care package and the size of the package that will be offered.

Supporting services –

We recognise that some children may need support to access mainstream services e.g. a befriender accompanying them. This support may be temporary, until the service is confident it can successfully include a child. In some cases, where the needs of a child are more complex, support may be more long term.

8. Examples of types of Short Breaks

Mainstream/Universal

Emma is a nine year old who has Down's syndrome and a moderate learning disability. She attends a mainstream school with support from a learning support assistant. She has no difficulty with her personal care needs, such as going to the toilet, but sometimes needs to be reminded. Emma has a communication book which explains that she finds it easier to understand instructions in picture format.

Emma's local council run a summer playscheme for 5-11 year olds every year, and Emma wanted to attend. Before the playscheme started, all the play workers attended a training course about how to include disabled children. Because the organiser knew that Emma wanted to come, the training course specifically covered Down's syndrome.

On the first morning Emma was a bit anxious about going, but as soon as she arrived a play worker welcomed her and introduced her to the other children, and her dad left. Emma made friends with another girl who goes to Emma's school, and when her dad picked her up in the afternoon she told him about all the things she had done in the day and that she wanted to go again tomorrow.

Mainstream/Universal with Support

Andrew is a nine year old who has a visual impairment. He loves attending his local leisure centre for their trampolining sessions, but he needs support from an adult to assist him and to keep him safe.

Andrew was assessed by the children's social services Sensory Team as needing extra support and his mum chose to receive direct payments so that she could employ a personal assistant to accompany Andrew to his club. This also gives mum time to spend with her other children doing their chosen activities.

Targeted

1. Jack is a 14 year old with a moderate learning disability. He attends a special school. He uses a communication system called Makaton. He can attend to his personal care needs but needs supervision. Jack has been bowling a couple of times with his family and loved it, but wants to go with his friends from school and without his parents being there. Jack goes to a teenage club once a week run by a national charity for people with a learning disability. He told the organiser of the club that he wanted to go bowling, and they contacted the local bowling alley and agreed that two lanes would be set aside one evening a fortnight for the club. Jack now goes bowling with his school friends – but without his mum and dad.
2. Kylie is an eight year old on the autism spectrum. Although she appears to have

good social communication skills, she doesn't like crowds or loud noises, and has a limited awareness of when she is in a dangerous situation. She attends a mainstream school, but finds it difficult to make friends. Kylie lives with her mum, and she has a six year old brother, Daniel. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) at Kylie's school talked with Kylie and her mum about what Kylie can do outside of school, particularly as the summer holidays were approaching. The SENCO told them about a playscheme in her local area run by a voluntary organisation which children with autism could attend. Kylie's mum looked on the internet and found a website for the playscheme. She sent an e-mail, and the result was that Kylie spent two weeks of the holiday at a playscheme.

Specialist

1. Charlotte is a 14 year old with a severe learning disability. She also has epilepsy. Charlotte has very little verbal communication. She also has behaviours that are challenging. She attends a special school. She needs active support with all her personal care needs such as going to the toilet and feeding herself. She also has difficulty sleeping more than two hours at a time which can be exhausting for parents.

Charlotte has a younger sister Jane. Her mum provides all her care and sometimes feels guilty that Jane doesn't get as much attention as she needs because of the demands of looking after Charlotte at home.

Charlotte's teacher told her mum about a special resource centre run by the council where children can stay overnight for a couple of days to give their parents a break. Her mum phoned the council and a referral was made to children's social services. A social worker from the council's specialist service for disabled children came to see Charlotte and her family to assess her needs. It was arranged for Charlotte to spend a weekend every other month from Friday after school to Monday morning at the resource centre. Charlotte has her own room and the other five young people staying that weekend are all teenagers like her. Her sister Jane now has some special time with her Mum while Charlotte is there.

2. Stacey is an eight year old with cerebral palsy and a learning disability, and is on the autism spectrum. She lives at home with her mum and dad and two brothers, one of whom has Asperger's syndrome. Stacey goes to a special school. Her parents made a referral to children's social services because they felt they needed help. A social worker from the council's specialist service for disabled children came to see Stacey and assessed the family's needs. It was agreed that Stacey would best have her needs met by overnight stays in a specialist foster home where she stays for two nights a month. Once a month at weekends, Stacey also goes to a specialist fun club with other disabled children.

Continuing Care

1. Stuart is a three year old child who has Chondrodysplasia punctata, a hereditary condition that affects infants and young children. It is a skeletal abnormality, and Stuart's symptoms include restricted growth, shortening of limbs, cataracts, dry and scaly skin. Stuart has a tracheostomy and requires 24 hour artificial ventilation via his tracheostomy to help him to breathe. Stuart also has to be fed via a gastrostomy tube into his stomach and has various medications which are also administered via

his gastrostomy. Stuart's mother is a single parent and also has a nine month old baby. Stuart requires 24 hour care which means that he needs a one to one carer to look after his health needs. The carer also takes Stuart to nursery school and stays with him in order to keep his airway safe and to administer his medications. During the day Stuart's mother is able to provide the majority of this care, although she does receive some day support in order to maintain her family life with her other child and other routine tasks at home. Stuart receives overnight care 7 days a week, which allows her mother to sleep in order to safely care for him during the day.

2. Jessica is a 10 year old child who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy which is a muscular degenerative condition. She has restrictive lung disease and cannot breathe properly and her sleeping pattern is disturbed. She also has severe curvature of the spine, and requires overnight facial ventilation via a mask to help her breathing. Jessica is a wheelchair user. Jessica lives with her parents and is the oldest of three children. She attends a mainstream school and receives a joint package of care between Health and Social Services.

Jessica requires overnight care to monitor her breathing, and this is provided by a carer three nights a week, in order to allow her parents to rest and then provide safe care to Jessica during the day. Jessica also receives some care in the mornings in order to help her mother get her ready for school and again at the end of the day after school.

Support Services

Charlie is a 15 year old who has a mild learning disability and epilepsy, for which he takes medication. He needs to be reminded often to take his medicine. He has difficulty understanding some social situations and making friends with young people his own age.

Charlie goes to a mainstream school but often gets left out of activities out of school that his classmates enjoy. His mum got in touch with a parent charity in the area and they told them about a service that helps to include disabled young people in youth clubs and similar activities. They provided a young person around Charlie's age to be a mentor for Charlie and to help him to be included. Charlie now takes part in a range of activities with young people his own age.

9. How families can find out about Short Breaks:

Kent is a large county and so that information is available locally we have funded five organisations to provide the main source of information about short breaks for different parts of the county. These organisations are:

Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley: The Parents Consortium

Telephone: 01322-668-501

E-Mail: admin@parentsconsortium.co.uk

Website: www.parentsconsortium.co.uk

Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks: SPACE

Telephone: 01732 758130/07770 847118

E-mail: info@spacecharity.org

Website: www.spacecharity.org

Maidstone: M4S

Telephone: 01622 764566

E-mail: info@m4s.org.uk

Website: www.m4s.org.uk

Canterbury, Thanet and Swale: 4Us2

Telephone: 01227 741748/07519 716186

E-mail: info@4us2.org

Website: www.4us2.org

Ashford, Shepway and Dover: Includes Us 2

Telephone: 01233 898792

E-Mail: info@includesus2.org.uk

Website: www.includesus2.co.uk

We will also publicise short break services through:

Kent County Council's website at www.kent.gov.uk/disabledchildren

Professionals and organisations working with disabled children and families

Kent Children and Families Information Service (Tel. Free phone 08000 32 32 30).

10. The Short Breaks Offer

The 'Short Breaks Offer' is set out in the table below. All children and all families are unique, and their particular circumstances will sometimes need to be assessed to ensure that the appropriate service can be offered.

| Which Children? | Which type of Service? |
|--|--|
| <p>Children aged 0 - 4 who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are ordinarily resident in Kent and who are not yet at school and• Have been assessed as requiring specialist services through the Early Support process at a core level and/or• Require additional support to access a mainstream pre-school provision. <p>The above includes children with complex health needs. The nature and level of the service offered will be determined by individual assessment of a child's circumstances.</p> | <p>Day-time or overnight care in the family home or elsewhere.</p> <p>A direct payment may be provided in lieu of an arranged service.</p> <p>Targeted whole family activities</p> |

| Which children | Which type of service |
|--|---|
| <p>Children aged 5-18 who:</p> <p>Are ordinarily resident in Kent and at school (in or out of county), or are entitled to be at school, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who attend a special or mainstream school, maintained or non-maintained, and are disabled or • Are educated at home or currently not attending school and are disabled • The above includes children with complex health needs. The nature and level of the service offered will be determined by individual assessment of a child's circumstances. <p>Children aged 5-18 who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ordinarily resident in Kent and are at school, or entitled to be at school, and • Have requested and been assessed as requiring specialist short breaks. <p>The above includes children with complex health needs. The nature and level of the service offered will be determined by individual assessment of a child's circumstances.</p> | <p>Mainstream/universal short break services. Support will be offered if it is required.</p> <p>Targeted short breaks where available.</p> <p>Specialist short breaks, which may include daytime or overnight breaks in the home or elsewhere. A direct payment may be provided in lieu of an arranged service.</p> |

Please see overleaf for a list of the kinds of services, and whether they are mainstream/universal (including support services), targeted services, or specialist services.

| Universal/Mainstream: Inclusive services and support to access | Targeted | Specialist |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After school clubs Playschemes • Sports/leisure activities e.g. swimming • Youth clubs • Brownies, Scouts Guides etc. • Pre-school provision • Befriending/buddying support: this is a carer going with a child to support the child to be included in an activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family fun events/days out e.g. coach trips to the zoo • Targeted Playschemes • Targeted Fun clubs • After school clubs (some special schools) • Youth clubs (special sessions) • Sports/leisure activities (special sessions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overnight and daytime breaks in a residential facility, including for children with complex health needs • Foster care overnight and daytime breaks • Referral only playschemes and fun clubs • Direct payments following a social work assessment • Day-time care in the family home or elsewhere, including for children with complex health needs • Overnight care in the family home, including for children with complex health needs • Pre-school provision for children with profound, severe, complex needs. This includes children with complex health needs |

How we will sustain and develop short breaks:

| Mainstream | Targeted | Specialist |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop local inclusive provision in mainstream services that offer activities for children - e.g. leisure centres, holiday playschemes, after school clubs, youth clubs, children's centres. • Support the children's workforce to get the skills, knowledge and confidence to include disabled children. • Promote volunteering opportunities. • Use specialist services including schools to remove barriers to inclusion of disabled children and young people in mainstream services. • Roll out and develop the Young Inspectors programme to a wide range of services. • Raise awareness of the financial and practical resources available to promote inclusive access to leisure and sporting activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align short break funding opportunities with other local small grant schemes. • Develop an agreement to set up a pooled budget for targeted and specialist short break services between KCC and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in Kent. • Support the children's workforce to get the skills, knowledge and confidence to include disabled children. • Establish a community chest fund to which organisations can bid for grants of up to £15K to finance short break activities. • Promote volunteering opportunities. • Use specialist services including schools to remove barriers to inclusion of disabled children and young people in targeted services. • Support the development and growth of parent advice services, providing coverage across Kent, encouraging them to play an increasingly influential role in the needs analysis and evaluation aspects of the commissioning cycle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a Kent multi-agency overnight residential short break service model. • Support the continued development of short break foster care. • Continue to commission and procure highly specialist day and evening short breaks on a competitive basis. • Continue to promote the use of direct payments for families where a Children Act assessment has established the need for services, as an alternative to traditional, centralised methods of procurement and service provision. |

| Mainstream, Targeted and Specialist services |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work together with schools and colleges to support access for disabled children to activities outside the curriculum • Continue to jointly commission high quality, evidence based and value for money short breaks • Ensure that as many parents and children as possible know about services available • Ensure that no child is unable to access a service, and that services are shared equally between families. We will record the volume of service received on a child by child basis. |

11. How you can give your views about this statement:

We will seek your views on this Statement again via an e-questionnaire on the main KCC website www.kent.gov.uk

We will consult with the Kent Joint Children's Commissioning Board.

We will ask practitioners in social work, occupational therapy, and community nursing services to talk with children and their families about short breaks, and encourage them to give their views.

Some of the things children have told us about short breaks:

'Adults who run clubs need training on disabilities like autism because it's not obvious as a physical disability.'

'If you run a club equally you need to support everyone. Each person needs the right amount of support.'

'We don't want special clubs; we want to get supported and have a good time.'

Some of the things parents have told us:

Ensure that children who can access mainstream activities with some support / additional training of mainstream staff (and perhaps parents) get that opportunity, so that specialist provision is provided specifically for children with complex / severe needs.

'I am concerned that for people in my position, with disabled children with a high level of need who cannot be accommodated by any usual means of childcare provision, there does not seem to be any reliable provision for school holidays particularly the 6-7 week summer break.'

I would welcome the opportunity to purchase the short breaks of my choice if I were given a payment to do this because I could then chose what my child wants to do, not what someone else thinks he wants.

The Direct payment helps, but we still struggle to find things that my son can enjoy / do since he has severe learning disability and complex needs. He is in danger of missing out on activities with his peers who have similar disabilities.

Give funding to the small groups that put on events and activities for our kids, they work damn hard and don't get paid, and the funding you give to larger charities and organisations goes on overheads and staff before the kids.

It is nice to do activities where you don't have to watch your child like a hawk all the time. You can chat with other carers, make friends and know that if your child 'kicks off' people understand and won't criticise or have a go at you!

You can improve short breaks by running them at county level and not hand them over to charities who may have the best intention are not meeting the needs of everyone

There is huge demand, especially for help and activities during school holidays. Some of the demand can be met through better equipped and trained mainstream provision, and some by educating families / supporting families to use mainstream facilities with their disabled child. But there is still a huge gap.

More to be aimed at different disabilities and abilities, those with more functioning children may not be used to being around those who are very low functioning and can make those with low functioning children, even teens, less likely to attend! Needs to be more for low functioning teens who need a high level of care etc.

Appendix A

Eligibility criteria for Kent County Council's disabled children's service

Access Criteria

Referral to the Disabled Children's Social Services may be made for any disabled child or young person from birth up until their 18th birthday who is resident within Kent County Council boundaries and whose disability is permanent or long term and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- A severe and profound learning, physical or sensory disability
- Complex medical needs or severe and profound long term condition expected to disable the child for more than one year
- Life limiting or threatening illness
- Severe communication disabilities or severe behavioural difficulties related to the child's disability (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder)
- Severe global developmental delay
- In addition, the Deaf Children's Team will accept referrals from deaf adults who have hearing children.

The criteria do not include children with:

- A disability or disabilities that is not severe
- Behavioural problems due to social/environmental factors (i.e. not associated to a disability)
- A diagnosis of ADHD or ADD unless in conjunction with a severe learning, physical or communication disability
- Mental health needs alone
- A diagnosis of specific learning difficulty alone, e.g. Dyslexia
- Where the primary need is assessed as being related to social factors, e.g. parenting difficulties, difficulties with siblings
- In cases where it is not clear whether or not a child/young person meets the above eligibility criteria there may be a joint initial assessment with the Children and Families Referral Team
- Children who do not meet the eligibility criteria for a service from the Disabled Children Service may, nevertheless, be entitled to services as Children in Need.

Where the young person is 17½ or over, it is expected that consultation would take place between Children and Adult Social Services and, it may be agreed that a joint assessment would be appropriate in such circumstances.

This publication is available in other formats and languages.

Please contact us for further information on 0300 333 5540 or Text Relay 18001 0300 333 5540, or you can e-mail: Commissioningfordisabledchildren@kent.gov.uk or write to: Kent County Council, FSC Children's Commissioning Unit, Room 2.12 Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ.