

Devon's Short Breaks Statement for children with additional needs

September 2011



This Statement has been prepared by the Children with Additional Needs Group in partnership with Parent Carer Voice, young people and professionals from social care, health, education and the voluntary sector for families in Devon who have a child with a disability.

The lead officer for this work and the person responsible for preparing this Statement is the Physical Sensory Learning Disabilities and Difficulties Programme Manager who reports to the Head of Outcomes for Children with Additional Needs; the strategic leader in this area of work.

We want as many families as possible to have an opportunity to comment on this Statement. Wider consultation led by our Parent Carer Forums, and all-inclusive conversation events for parents and carers, will take place in September. We will work with children and young people through our Young Commissioners Group and our special school networks to gather their views as well. The draft Statement will then be amended as appropriate and presented to our Leadership Team People and Joint Commissioning Board for final endorsement.

Introduction

Purpose of the Statement

This Statement will form the basis of our commissioning plans for short break services for the year 2012/13 and beyond. It will set out the principles in which we work; putting personalisation and individual plans at the heart of how we support families in Devon as part of our short breaks offer. This includes the breaks that families value and need to maintain 'normal lives'.

Publishing and reviewing the Statement

We will publish this Statement on the Children with Additional Needs pages of the Devon County Council website and ensure that it is available on our parent carers website. We will ensure that families have access to copies through our Parent Carer Forums and our Information Co-ordinators. We will also send a copy to all of Devon's special schools and to Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in all of our mainstream schools.

We will ensure that this statement is reviewed on an annual basis in partnership with our parent carer forums and through the wider 'conversation events'. We will also work with children and young people through special school settings, Young Devon Young Inspectors Group and wider activity events for families.

We will use this ongoing consultation to make changes and improvements to ensure that short breaks continue to reflect the needs of all the different families living in Devon who have a child with an additional need.

This will link to ambitions in the Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education needs and disability* to have a local offer for all services for children and young people with disabilities and special education needs.

Background

This section describes the process agreed by Devon's Commissioners for disabled children's services to prepare and publish our statement of short breaks services.

Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 in *The Children Act 1989* requires local authorities to provide a short breaks 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 1 April 2011. The regulations require each local authority to produce a short breaks services statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for these services and how the range of short breaks is designed to meet the local needs of families with disabled children.

Short breaks should provide a positive activity for disabled children and young people while giving their parents the benefit of a 'break' from their caring responsibilities. These breaks will allow parents and carers to have the time to rest, take care of other children or do something they wouldn't be able to do otherwise.

Short breaks can be for an hour or two, a whole day or sometimes a longer period. Families in Devon recognise that sometimes short breaks allow them to do something positive with their child in an environment where they are well supported, so don't always have to be provided as something separate from each other. Personal choice within reason is what works best for families and we hope our approach to short breaks budgets for families reflects this.

It is our vision that families of disabled children are supported to live ordinary lives with access to universal services and the same rights as other families.

We will work with each family to:

- recognise their individual issues
- identify the level of support they have for short breaks
- identify the services that best meet their needs.

We will take into consideration the age of the child and the impact they have on their families' lives.

We recognise that some families may need a higher level of support due to the complexity of their needs and the impact of caring. Some families will need to have services above the eligible level of short breaks – this could include shared care arrangements which support the maximum inclusion for a child within their own family environment, with the level of support required to maintain this. This may be for a limited period of time to overcome a short term difficulty or for a longer period depending on the individual circumstances. These services are provided under Part III of *The Children Act 1989*.

Short breaks should be offered as part of a package for a family, and not in isolation. Families tell us that the key elements enabling them to manage the impact of having a disabled child are:

- early intervention
- early assessment
- relevant information, advice and guidance
- a lead professional they can link with.

We will work with Devon Integrated Children's Services Teams, specialist child assessment centres, mainstream schools, special schools and Devon's specialist information services to ensure that the support offered to families is where they need it, when they need it.

Support for families

We aim to provide access to a Lead Professional to all families with children who require it. The Lead Professional will help support their child and access the relevant services, including universal services such as a pre-school for younger children and relevant universal services for older children and young people.

We will support older children and young people through the transitions process into young adulthood by supporting a clear pathway to any services to support them when they are 18 and older.

Devon's aim is to support all families with a Personal Plan which allows them to access the support they need to enjoy life as any ordinary family by having the impact of disability taken into account.

We are committed to:

- continuing to listen to disabled children and act on their views about services they use by providing them with choices which suit their individual needs
- ensuring all disabled children and their families are supported to take part in, and enjoy, local community life wherever possible so that they feel part of their communities using local services such as local childcare, leisure centres and other community services open to all
- continuing to work in partnership with parents and carers, including them in aspects of our work including decision-making. We will work together to ensure that all improvements in service delivery make a real difference to children and young peoples lives.

We also offer all families our DISCplus specialist information service for children with additional needs. This service is available during core working hours to provide a comprehensive contact point for families through email and a telephone helpdesk.

This service includes information about access to short break providers, special educational needs services and Integrated Children's Services including therapy services. Information is also available about voluntary organisations which can support families, including details of grant providers families can apply to. The service also supports families to refer to our Quids for Special Kids benefits check service run by Devon Welfare Rights.

DISCplus local information co-ordinators

Helpline number **0845 155 1013** or email discplus@devon.gov.uk

Quids for Special Kids

Free advice to make sure families are getting all the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to. The advisers will visit families at home and can help fill in Disability Living Allowance (DLA) forms. Call **01392 274869** Monday–Friday 10am–1pm. Devon Welfare Rights Unit is part of Citizen's Advice www.dwru.org

All of the above will help to ensure that we meet the requirements of *The Equality Act 2011*.

A key principle for us will be that we put families at the centre of what we do. We currently have over 2252 (1.4% of the child population) children in Devon who receive short breaks services. We have over 1,200 families who are supported by Fair Access to Short Breaks and another 1,200 children who receive short breaks services through our small grants scheme, or our local offer.

Consultation with parents and young people

Our recent **consultation events with parents** tell us that in relation to planning short breaks services in Devon they would like us to consider the following points.

Parents cited that the most **important** short breaks were those that:

- ensured their children did fun activities
- enabled their children to develop social skills
- allowed their child to be in the community
- were easily accessible due to transport restrictions
- were reasonably priced
- gave their child the opportunity to meet others with the same condition.

Parents told us that they **value**:

- Portage
- individual budgets
- opportunities to use specialist activities, such as The Calvert Trust

“As a family we feel inspired by others.”

- opportunities for families supporting specific conditions to come together, for example visual impairment, deaf and hard of hearing
- Enabling Services
- short break overnight units and family-based overnight care
- Direct Payments.

Parents told us they would like to see **more**:

- speech therapy services
- sporting activities for disabled children
- pre-school groups
- mainstream clubs which are inclusive
- information services to identify activities for their children and young people
- breaks for the whole family
- parent support in the localities.

With regards to families' individual budgets, parents felt that the flexibility of spend was good. They were not concerned about keeping within the budget when planning services for their children themselves, as long as they knew their budget from the start.



Our recent **family fun days with children and young people** allowed us to find out what they thought about their short breaks.

Children and young people told us the activities they mainly take part in are:

- sports
- holiday clubs
- after school clubs
- youth clubs
- Saturday clubs
- Uniformed groups, such as Scouts and Brownies
- Sunday school
- breakfast clubs.

“ There were really fun activities and I could do most of them ”



Children and young people told us they would like to also take part in:

- horse riding
- family days out
- sporting activities
- swimming
- dancing
- cycling
- surfing
- going to the cinema
- ice skating.

We asked about the barriers which prevent children and young people from accessing these activities. They, along with their parents, said these were:

- lack of money - some activities for disabled children are expensive
- lack of qualified staff
- enablers are too expensive
- transport
- tiredness
- lack of confidence and social difficulties
- lack of information
- exclusion from mainstream clubs.

“ It's encouraging to see that there are lots of other special needs kids out there. It's nice to 'fit in'. ”

Responding to the views of families

We have extended the criteria for our short breaks local offer which will give funding to more families to support them to access a wider range of short breaks.

We have used our small grant scheme to fund sporting activities for children across Devon. This includes some specialist funding for taster sessions for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties where self-esteem is a major issue. We have included in this one of our leisure centres as a pilot where we work with them to enable wider inclusion at a reasonable cost for families of a child with additional needs.

Small grants have also been used to fund additional workforce development in parent-led voluntary groups and organisations which support disabled young people to build up their skills and knowledge and to be able to offer a more confident service to a wider group of children. Our small grant scheme is part of our workforce and provider development programme.

Parents of disabled children told us that they wanted to be able to organise and arrange some of their own services at a local level responding to local need. Often these groups are run by parent-led committees and part-time paid workers who have other roles, such as teaching assistants in schools. Parents however felt that they needed an opportunity to be able to have some financial support to set up and run these groups as they had no infrastructure to manage financial risk. Often groups would run term to term, depending on fundraising and donations, but were not sustainable in the long-term and families couldn't rely on planning breaks until the last minute depending on funding levels.

Devon has a very diverse geography that makes a 'one size fits all' approach impossible to offer even if that was desirable. Our locally-run groups, either generic or specialist, provide the mainstay of many short break opportunities for families, particularly in rural areas. We will continue to respond positively to local need and work with groups in this way.



Short Breaks: The Devon Offer

Our work with families in Devon has led us to work in a personalised way as parents, carers, children and young people tell us that what works in one area won't always work somewhere else.

We have developed an individual budget framework which allows families to have choice in what services they use or purchase to support them and their children.

We have developed a market place in Devon of services which includes:

- enabling services with different providers across Devon
- holiday activities
- Saturday clubs
- out of school activities, both inclusive and specialist, during the week and at weekends
- family fun days
- access to local attractions, such as leisure parks
- sports activities
- specialist holiday opportunities for families like The Calvert Trust
- family-based overnight care hosted by Action for Children
- residential overnight care in a number of specialist units across Devon.

We have supported the development of short breaks for young people with specific needs and difficulties to spend time together. This has included family groups for families who have children with sensory difficulties to get together, providing opportunities to support networking and friendships for young people and their parents.

One young person told us: "It was funny to meet other children with hearing aids – I thought it was only me and old people who had to use them – I have lots of friends now who wear hearing aids like mine."

We also support a network of activities for families of children with Aspergers and significant sensory difficulties where siblings and families can support each other.

We have specialist services for overnight care, including family-based care with foster carers hosted by Action for Children, or residential short breaks in a number of settings across Devon. These services can be accessed through our Integrated Children's Services Team where an assessment of need has shown this level of specialist support is best placed as part of a wider plan to meet a child and family's needs.

The local offer

For families of children, regardless of their disability, who have a child on our Joint Agency Record as significant or profound, or where the child is in receipt of disability living allowance at the middle rate for care or higher rate for mobility we will offer up to £200 for families to purchase their own support for short breaks.

The access to this for families is through a Lead Professional and a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Action Plan.

Families will be given the money to spend on agreed services which they have decided will best meet the needs of their child or family. Carers will also be offered a benefits check and may also be able to apply for a flexible breaks grant for carers in their own right. The CAF Plan will look at all resources available to a family and any service plan will reflect this.

Fair Access to Short Breaks

For children whose short break needs cannot be met within the Local Offer we have a resource allocation process which determines an individual budget for families to purchase their short breaks from. The allocations are from a few hundred pounds up to a maximum of £10,000 per child.

Families can use this funding to meet the identified needs and outcomes of their child's Care Plan. Families will be supported by a Lead Professional if they need someone to organise the services for them, or by Direct Payments support workers if they choose to take their allocation as a Direct Payment and organise services for themselves.

Allocations and support above short breaks funding

We know that there will always be some families require a higher level of support due to their child's needs or their own family circumstances. For these families we will still offer Short Breaks assessments, but may allocate additional resources which will be determined on an individual basis by the local manager. Children in this category may become looked-after children. We will always work with families to identify the level of support that we consider a child needs.

When we undertake assessment of need we will discuss:

- the severity of the child's disability and how it impacts on their life and the family
- the number of other children or caring responsibilities there may be
- if any other member of the family has a disability
- the amount of support available within the social and family network

- if the child is in Devon County Council care or is adopted
- whether there are concerns about a child or young person's safety.

Information about Devon's Local offer for children and young people aged 0–18yrs is on our website at www.devon.gov.uk/cwan or from our DISCplus local information co-ordinators by calling **0845 155 1013** or emailing discplus@devon.gov.uk

Travel

Devon is a large county and transport is an issue for many families regardless of having a disabled child. However we know that for some families transport is a barrier to accessing short breaks. We also know that transport is expensive to pay for and can be very time-consuming to use.

We will work with our parent forums to make sure that any support for transport given to families is fair and is arranged in a way that minimises the cost. Transport cost will be considered as part of the short breaks funding and in discussion with managers some families may use part of their funding to pay for proportionate transport cost.



Case study 1

J is a young girl with some significant sensory difficulties. She had just started at a mainstream school and was enjoying being 'busy' all day. Her mum was worried that during the long school holidays she would struggle to manage both J and her younger sister. She also identified that she didn't want J to lose all contact with her new friends.

The school undertook a CAF for her and identified some outcomes to make sure that J had opportunities to expand her social network and keep in touch with her new friends, mum had some time to have a break from childcare, and both children had opportunities to enjoy each other's company.

The plan identified activities that J could take part in during the school holidays. These included a weekly session of messy play at the local library which both children could enjoy, a holiday play scheme which other children from the school attended and a family season ticket to a local activity centre which all the family could enjoy and where sometimes dad could take the children alone to give mum a break.

The family applied for the local offer to support the plan which paid for one session a week at the holiday play scheme and the activity ticket.

The family review showed that the family had benefited a lot over the holiday with this support. J has continued to make friends and mum is getting to know their parents and discussing some play times at home. Her sister had a positive summer and there were fewer arguments.

Case study 2

When we moved to a personal budget arrangement some families reconsidered how much funding they spent on transport.

A family whose child accessed a Saturday club decided that the cost of transport both ways was too expensive and decided that to take their child to the club wouldn't impact too much on the time they had with siblings. However they chose to use transport to bring him home as the family valued the time at the end of the day in which they could stay at home and not interrupt what everyone was doing by getting in the car.

This arrangement reduced their travel cost by 50% and gave them more funding for other services.

We will also continue to look at independent travel for young people as they get older, working with our Rehabilitation Officers for Visually Impaired Children (ROVICs), enabling services, schools and other providers to make sure that where possible independent travel is considered as an active part of planning for a young person in transition.

Transition

We will work with families and young people as they get ready to enter the adult world.

Young people have told us that they want to be able to do what other young people do, for example go to youth clubs, the cinema and have fun with their friends. We will work with providers and families to identify short breaks and activities which reflect the needs of mainstream young people.

We will look at:

- independent living skills
- developing social interaction skills

- learning how to travel independently
- learning to manage their own money – or have a say on what budgets are spent on
- opportunities to try out new activities and skills that will develop skills for adulthood.

Universal Services

Many families with disabled children will not need any extra help because they are sufficiently supported using Devon's universal services.

Universal services are those which benefit all children and families, for example extended schools activities or leisure activities provided through local community groups and organisations. These services are designed and equipped to enable disabled children and young people to enjoy the same activities and opportunities as able-bodied children.

Many young people will have a mixture of specialist and inclusive short breaks.



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