

The London Borough of Merton

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service

Short Breaks Services Statement

2011 - 2012

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Introduction and Context

The information contained within this Short Breaks Service Statement is provided for families living within the London Borough of Merton who have a disabled child aged 0 to 18 years.

This Short Breaks Service Statement describes the process by which the London Borough of Merton's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service have prepared and published our statement of short breaks services and aims to inform families of the services that are available within the borough, how they can be accessed and how they have been designed to meet the needs of the families with disabled children living in Merton.

The current legislative framework that underpins Local Authority short breaks services for disabled children and their families is;

Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the *Children Act 1989* requires local authorities to provide a short breaks service designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children.

In addition to this duty the *Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011* came into affect on the 1st April 2011. The Regulations require each local authority to produce a short breaks services statement so that families living in their authority know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for accessing these services, and how the range of short breaks is designed to meet the local needs of families with disabled children.

The wider legislative context is clearly identified as an appendix on page 13.

Definition

Short Breaks provide disabled children and young people with an opportunity to spend time away from their parents or carers. Short breaks also provide families and carers with a valuable break from their caring responsibilities; they give parents and carers a chance to unwind, rest or spend time with other children.

The London Borough of Merton provides short breaks during the day, evening, over-nights and at weekends. These short breaks happen within the community, within the child or young person's home, within the home of an approved carer or within a residential setting. The London Borough of Merton also provides Direct Payments, which families and carers can use instead of the short break services described above to establish their own short break.

Aims

Our aim is to ensure that families with disabled children have the support they need to live 'ordinary lives' as a matter of course. Disabled children and their families have the same human rights as others, including the right to the same quality of life as those who do not live with disability.

We also recognise that all families are different, so families will need different levels of support and different types of short breaks depending on the age of their child; some families may need more support because of their family or their child's circumstances, this may be for a short period of time or it may be for longer.

It is also important to note that whilst we know that both local and national research demonstrates that short breaks are a priority for families with disabled children, we believe that they should be delivered as part of a much broader package of family support services. All recent research indicates the need for 'early intervention'; this is also being highlighted as part of the SEN and Disabilities Green Paper and as part of the recommendations from the recent Tickell report into Early Years Foundation Stage.

We therefore wish to reassure families that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service is working with all our partners to ensure that all families with disabled children have timely and regular access to services, advice, guidance and information.

In Merton we believe that all disabled Children under 5 should have access to pre-school support through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service Portage, Early Support and Targeted Inclusion Teams and our aim will therefore be, where appropriate, to allocate a Key Worker / Lead Professional to co-ordinate the input of all the professionals involved with a family.

Older children may require the support of a Lead Professional to assist them and their family within Children's Services through to the time they become an adult, thereby ensuring they have access to services and that they are supported to make the most of their opportunities.

Our aim is to ensure that families with disabled children have the support they need to 'live ordinary family lives as a matter of course'.

We are therefore committed to:

- Ensuring that we listen to all disabled children, act on their views, and provide them with choices.

- Ensuring all disabled children and their families are supported to take part in and enjoy local community life, wherever possible using local childcare facilities, leisure and recreational activities.
- Ensuring that as parents and carers you are supported to become equal partners in making decisions about service development and priorities, so we work together to 'get better'.

Our aim remains to provide you with the best possible support and to use your expert knowledge to help us develop and improve all our services.

Consultation

This statement has been drafted using information from parents and carers gathered over the course of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. In March of 2009 we asked Kids First Parents' Forum (Kids First is a forum for parents and carers of children and young people who are aged between 0 and 25 years who live in Merton or attend a Merton school and have a disability or a special need).

During that consultation the parents, carers, children and young people who Kids First consulted with said the following:

- There is an overriding need and preference for short breaks in mainstream settings with specialised support for all the groups analysed.
- Additionally, it was found that parents of Children with Complex Needs need more short breaks of a range of type and times including full days and overnight.
- Parents of Children with Challenging Behaviour need full day breaks at the weekends and holidays plus some overnight breaks. Parents want their children to be out and about and physically active. Staff training needs to be improved to successfully include these children.
- Parents of Children with Medical Needs and Sensory Impairments require specialist staff and equipment so that these families can access any type of short breaks. The increase in these short breaks will allow families to support their other children effectively.
- Parents of Children with Moderate Disabilities need short breaks to focus on normal activities in mainstream settings by ensuring properly trained staff and adequate transport is provided.
- Training and staff issues feature prominently in the list of critical items to address for all groups.

- Swimming, both as a fun activity and in the form of lessons, was high on the wish list of both parents and children. It must be made easily accessible for children with any disability.
- Music making and appreciation are also popular as a less physically demanding activity.
- Parents prefer mailings and newsletters delivered to their homes as the ideal method of communication about short breaks. Websites and e-mail could be added to the mix.
- It appears that there are only a small number of disabled children attending after school clubs. Transport is a major barrier and will require some creative solutions
- A break of 1-2 hours at weekends or in school holidays is not long enough.

We have used this information in the development of the current services that we have and have also used it in the recent redevelopment of Brightwell Short Breaks Centre, which has seen it move from a sole overnight short break provider to a provider that offers short breaks during the day, after school and at weekends along with the existing overnight short breaks

Throughout the 'Aiming High' programme we held a number of focus groups and attended parents forums and events at Cricket Green School, St Ann's School and Deaf Children Consultation Group, where we had the opportunity to seek the views of a wide range of parents and service users.

During 2011 we have been consulting with parents, carers and service providers. We have met with parents and carers who access Brightwell Short Breaks Centre through several coffee mornings. We have meet with families and carers who have been attending the Stay and Play and Acacia Adventure Playground, along with those families who attended the Littlehampton away day.

We want to confirm that we believe that consultation should not be a static process that is conducted as a 'one off exercise', and we want to commit to a consultation process that is ongoing, that keeps your child at the centre of our planning process and gives parents and carers the ability to shape the way we plan and commissioning short breaks for our children.

Our consultation with parents, children and young people has enabled Merton's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service in partnership with our voluntary sector colleagues to assess and plan for the needs of our local disabled children's population ensuring we have a full range of high quality short breaks.

We will continue to receive and act on your feedback so we continue develop services where your views and advice on what we should and shouldn't do is central to our relationship.

Current Short Break Provision in Merton

At the beginning of the 'Aiming High' programme in 2008 / 2009 we were providing short breaks to 194 children and young people. During 2009 / 2010 this increased to 259 and during the last statistical year 2010 / 2011 we provided short breaks to 519 children and young people.

We estimate that there are potentially 988 disabled children living in Merton who are eligible for short breaks. We have taken this information from analysis of data held by the local authority (SEN Statements, cases of disabled children open to social workers, disabled children already in receipt of a short break) along with application of nationally recognised formula for calculation of incidence of disability against the local child populations.

Short Breaks support currently available in Merton is available on page 14.

We will continue to develop short breaks for those young people with specific needs who are currently under represented and those with sensory impairments, ensuring that they too have a voice and the opportunity to influence short break delivery.

All families experience crises from time to time and may require additional short breaks to help them through the crisis. This may be due to having no extended family or network of friends nearby who they can call on to help. Our aim is to support families during particularly difficult times in whatever way is most appropriate.

Access to Short Breaks

Children and young people and their parents and carers can access a short break if they are between 0 and 18 years of age, if they live in the London Borough of Merton and have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. This may include a physical or learning disability, a hearing or visual impairment. It includes children with Autism and Aspergers Syndrome and children who may have challenging behaviour as a result of their learning disability. It also includes children who have complex needs and who may have palliative, life limiting or a life- threatening condition.

Our Short Break Service accessibility is based on the following principles:

- Promoting the health, safety and well being of disabled children and young people, ensuring they can fully participate in family and community life, enjoying themselves with friends and making decisions about their lives.
- Preventing family crises through the provision of the right level of support at the right time.
- The need to be fair, clear and equitable.

Not all children and families will need the same level of support and short breaks, some will need more than others because of the nature of their child's disability and its severity. Some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. This is why we may need to assess your child and family to ensure we provide the right level of support and short breaks at the right time.

Universal Services and Inclusion

Universal services, for example extended school and youth clubs are really important in ensuring disabled children and young people have fun and enjoy themselves with friends, just the same as other children and young people.

We will continue to develop our range of short breaks including specialist and inclusive short break services in universal settings. Genuine inclusion means services, which are designed and equipped to enable disabled children and young people to enjoy the same activities and opportunities as non-disabled children. We will of course ensure that all children and young people have access to the most appropriate short break.

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

Disabled children and their families need the active involvement of trained staff to really benefit from their short break experience. We want to ensure that they have the skills to support all disabled children and young people.

We have already developed and delivered specialist child protection training that is focussed on disability to some of our special schools and to some of our service providers. We will continue to develop and deliver this training for both our own staff as well as the staff in our special schools and other service providers.

An additional aim of this training is to enable those staff working with your children and young people to develop their confidence in their ability to meet the additional needs of disabled children and young people ensuring that all of our partners also meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The Local Offer – a minimum level of short break support that we are calling ‘The Merton Offer’

We believe that some short break services for children and young people should be available to children, young people and their families without them having to be assessed. If families request an assessment, then we will complete one, however some families have told us that they don't understand why an assessment is always necessary.

Many parents have told us that the school holiday period is the time when they would benefit most from a short break.

The Merton Offer will ensure that every school age child who is eligible for short breaks will have access to a holiday play scheme, either through the schemes we operate or a one off direct payment that will give you the opportunity to pay for a scheme directly. Our Inclusion co-ordinator will advise you of the most appropriate scheme to meet your child's needs.

The Merton Offer will be 10 days over the academic year, which will equate to £300 as a direct payment, which will be paid via direct payments as a one off grant.

We know that there will be some young people who may not want group activities so we will discuss with you how we can support you through another short break.

Additional Specialist Short Breaks

Some families are likely to require additional specialist short breaks. We want to make sure that those families with the highest levels of need have access to other levels of service and that services are available irrespective of age, race, religion, gender, or nature of impairment.

To receive additional specialist services you will ask that you have an assessment through either the Common Assessment Framework or through a social work assessment, which will address your child's needs as well as your needs as a carer and those of your family.

We will provide you with the short breaks and services which are part of the Merton Offer and in addition you may also benefit from one of the following short breaks: supported day care or overnight short breaks. The range of short breaks available in Merton is listed on page 17.

The Merton Well-being model on page 18, identifies how the complexity of need is mapped alongside the application of the Local Offer and the decision to undertake a Common Assessment Framework assessment or a Social Work Assessment in order to access a short break.

In the course of these assessments there are many things we will discuss with you to assess the support your need. Here are some of them:

- The severity of your child's disability, how it impacts on their life and your family life
- If you have more than one disabled child
- The number of other children or caring responsibilities you may have
- If you or a partner have a disability
- If you have limited support within your social/family network
- If a child is 'cared for' by the Local Authority or adopted.
- If there are concerns about a child or young person's safety

Choice

Although we have agreed a Local Offer (The Merton Offer), this has to have a level of flexibility.

Families will be offered a choice of short breaks to ensure that their child's needs and those of their family are met. Families will be offered the opportunity to have a direct payment in place of a direct service and will be offered a full package of support to ensure that they can confidently use and benefit from Direct Payments.

All families can of course request an assessment or re-assessment at any time.

Our aim remains to provide you with the best possible support at the right time and to use your expert knowledge to help us develop and improve all of our services.

We know that the most effective services are designed with the inclusion of parents, carers, children and young people. We feel confident that with your help we can continue to improve the lives of disabled children and their families living in the London Borough of Merton.

The statement will form the basis of our commissioning plans for short break services for the year 2012/13 and beyond. In other words it will ensure that we provide the range of short breaks that families value and need. Parents, disabled children and young people will of course continue to be fully involved in this process.

Parents and young people will help us monitor the quality of all of our short breaks and help decide what we change and what we keep and help us to select who those new providers may be.

We will ensure our Short Breaks Service Statement is published on the Merton website. In addition it will be available in all of our Children's Centres, Special Schools, in our Additionally Resourced Bases in mainstream schools and a copy will also be given to the SENCOs in all of Merton's schools.

In partnership with our parent and carers and with our children and young people the statement will be reviewed annually to make sure that it incorporates the views and experiences of local families. We will use the on-going consultation to make changes and improvements and to ensure our short breaks continue to reflect the needs of all the different families living in Merton who have disabled children.

Transport

We know that transport is needed by many families in order for their children to get to their short break. We also know that transport is expensive and time consuming, children can often be on buses for longer than an hour. We will therefore be working with our parent forums to ensure that we provide transport fairly but not unnecessarily. We will be looking at how we can reduce the costs without preventing any child from enjoying their break.

We will work with our providers and our colleagues to ensure that where possible and where appropriate young people are supported to become independent in travelling to access their short breaks.

Transition

We want transition from children's to adult's services to be an exciting and optimistic time for young people. We want to support them as they become young adults and take their place in the world.

We will work to developing positive activities for young people, allowing them to take part in local community activities that will be linked to our transition programme. We want to ensure that short breaks address the 'transition' needs of young people moving from children's to adult's services, we will therefore work with the specialist schools within the borough to continue to develop short break support that reflects the needs of teenagers and young adults.

Measuring Impact

We will ensure that our short break services focus on improving the life chances of disabled children and their families through continuing to develop our strategy alongside parents and young people. We know that the views of parents, carers, children and young people are essential for future success. We will therefore ensure that our consultation with parent's and children is supported and developed.

We will ensure that all the short breaks we provide make a positive difference to our children and young people. We will ask ourselves the 'what if' question

Question - 'what if' we provide disabled children with an activity club at the weekend what differences will that make?'

Answer - 'it will provide the children with an opportunity to meet and play with their friends, to have fun and to become more independent. It will provide their mums and dads or carers with a chance to spend time with their other children, to do the shopping or simply to have a break!'

We will continue to measure children's satisfaction; parental satisfaction and staff confidence and skill in meeting the needs of disabled children in a variety of short break settings.

We will continue to monitor and record the views of children, parents and staff so everybody feels involved and supported and to ensure we develop a process of continual improvement.

We will publicise any changes we make in response, thereby ensuring children, young people, parents and carers know that we are listening and acting on their views.

We will identify further venues, children's centres, youth and extended schools to maximise the opportunities for inclusive activities throughout the borough, to reduce the need for transport and ensure delivery of more 'local' provision.

More detailed information about both the Merton Offer and additional specialist short breaks is available from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service, The Polyclinic, 4 Birches Close, Cricket Green, Mitcham, CR4 4LQ or on 020 8545 4200

Information is also available on the London Borough of Merton website:-

<http://www.merton.gov.uk>

When young people are 18 years old they transfer to Adult's services. Information about support and services for disabled young people going through transition is also available on the website.

Keith Martin

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Short Breaks Manager

SEN and Disabilities Integrated Service

The Polyclinic, 4 Birches Close,

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Current legislation

Short Break Services for Disabled Children and Young People.

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011

The Secretary of State for Education makes the following Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by paragraph 6(2) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989(1). In accordance with section 104(3A) of that Act, a draft of these Regulations was laid before Parliament and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

1. Citation and commencement

These Regulations may be cited as the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2010 and come into force on 1st April 2011.

2. Interpretation

In these Regulations—

“the 1989 Act” means the Children Act 1989;

“carer” means a person who provides care for a disabled child and who is—

- (a) the child’s parent, or
- (b) a person who is not the child’s parent but who has parental responsibility for that child; and “disabled” has the meaning given in section 17(11) of the 1989 Act(2).

3. Duty to make provision

In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act(3), a local authority must—

- (a) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks from caring were given to them; and
- (b) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from caring were given to them to allow them to—
 - (i) undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity,
 - (ii) meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or
 - (iii) carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

4. Types of services which must be provided

(1) In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act, a local authority must 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.

(2) In particular, the local authority must provide, as appropriate, a range of—

(a) day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere,

(b) overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere,

(c) educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, and

(d) services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

5. Short breaks services statement

(1) A local authority must, by 1st October 2011, prepare a statement for carers in their area (a short break services statement) setting out details of-

(a) the range of services provided in accordance with regulation 4,

(b) any criteria by which eligibility for those services will be assessed, and

(c) how the range of services is designed to meet the needs of carers in their area.

(2) The local authority must publish their short breaks service statement, including placing a copy of the statement on their website.

(3) The local authority must keep their short breaks service statement under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement.

(4) In preparing and revising their statement, the local authority must have regard to the views of the carers in their area.

Current Short Break Provision in Merton

A wide range of short breaks are available in Merton, not every short break will be available to every child as access is determined by recommendation by the Inclusion Co-ordinator (Local Offer provision) or through Common Assessment Framework or social work assessment. Full details on available short breaks can be found at <http://fsd.merton.gov.uk>

- **School Holiday Activities** – both inclusive and specialist

Acacia Adventure Playground Specialist sessions provides support during school holidays for 8 to 16 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex needs and autism. Specialist Inclusion support is provided in partnership with Play Association Hammersmith and Fulham (PAHF)

All Starz provides support for 14 – 24 year olds with complex needs, severe learning disabilities and Autism.

Brightwell Short Break Centre provides school holiday day care support for 5 – 18 year olds with complex needs, severe learning disabilities and Autism.

Mainstream school holiday play schemes and nursery provision provide a wide range of services within various inclusive environments throughout the borough for 4 to 12 year old children and young people. We provide training and support to these providers and where needed enhanced staffing.

Merton Mencap – Buddies provides community based support during the school holidays for children with moderate to severe learning disabilities and autism

Merton Mencap Holiday Schemes provide a school holiday scheme for 4 to 14 year olds with complex needs severe learning disabilities and autism.

Stay and Play provides inclusive and specialist day-time sessions within a Children's Centre environment for 0 – 12 year olds during school holidays.

Uptown Youth Club provides a summer holiday scheme for 12 – 18 year olds with moderate learning disabilities, autism and physical disabilities

- **After School and Day Care Short Breaks** – both inclusive and specialist – during the week and at weekends.

Acacia Adventure Playground provides support on Tuesdays (girls only), Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (Stay and Play) for 8 to 16 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex needs and autism. Specialist Inclusion support is provided in partnership with Play Association Hammersmith and Fulham (PAHF)

Crossroads provide individual domiciliary carers for 0 – 18 year olds with wider ranging needs. This support is designed to assist within the community and/or within the child's home.

Crossroads After School Club provides specialist after school club at Cricket Green School for 5 – 16 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex needs and autism.

Crossroads Saturday Club (Friends) provides specialist club on alternate Saturdays at Cricket Green School for 5 – 10 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex needs and autism.

Crossroads Saturday Club (Alice Powell) provides specialist club on alternate Saturdays at Cricket Green School in co-ordination with Friends Club for 10 – 16 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex needs and autism.

Deaf Arts Group provision for deaf young people who use British Sign Language as their first language which operates on a Saturday (participants are then supported to attend Acacia Adventure playground in the afternoon).

Friday Night Youth Club provides specialist youth provision for 12 – 18 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities and autism.

Magic Youth Club provides specialist youth provision on Saturdays for 12 – 24 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities and autism.

Merton Mencap – Out and About provides specialist community based provision for 12 –24 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities and autism

Merton Mencap - St Ann's After School Club provides a specialist after school club for 8 – 18 year olds on a Thursday.

Merton Mencap - St Ann's Saturday Club provides a specialist club for 4 – 18 year olds.

Squad Youth Club provides specialist youth provision on Thursday evenings for 14 – 24 year olds with moderate to severe learning disabilities, autism and physical disabilities.

Uptown Step up Club provides youth provision for 12 to 18 year olds on Saturdays.

Uptown Youth Club provides inclusive youth provision for 12 – 18 year olds with moderate learning disabilities, autism and physical disabilities.

- **Overnight Short Breaks**

Barnado's Home Based Short Breaks provides overnight short breaks with specialist foster carers within the carers home for 0 – 18 year olds with severe learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism. Children and young people must have a social work assessed need for overnight home based short breaks to access this short break

Brightwell Short Breaks Centre provides specialist overnight Short Breaks for 5 – 18 year olds with severe learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism. Children and young people must have a social work assessed need for overnight residential short breaks to access this short break

Family Based Short Breaks provides overnight short breaks with specialist foster carers within the carers home for 0 – 18 year olds with severe learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism. Children and young people must have a social work assessed need for overnight family based short breaks to access this short break.

- **Direct Payments**

Direct payments are an alternative means of providing families with short breaks. Direct payments provide families with money instead of direct services. This means that a family can buy their own short breaks, for example a family may employ their own carer. Some families may have a mixture of direct payments and direct services and some families may just have direct payments.

(Two-thirds cyp approx have needs addressed by Universal Services and/or in-

Approx proportions of children and young people at MWBM Levels of additional needs below

Merton Child & Young Person Well-Being Model (MWBM) Continuum of Additional Needs and Responses

