

**Short Breaks
Services Statement
West Berkshire Council
2017**

Short Breaks provide disabled children and young people with an opportunity to spend time away from their parents, socialising, gaining independence and having fun. They provide families with a 'break' from their caring responsibilities; they give parents a chance to relax or spend time with their other children.

Further information regarding The Local Offer which includes all services for children with disabilities can be found

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/localoffer.page?familychannel=4>

Short Breaks opportunities can be found

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/localoffer.page?familychannel=4-5>



1. Introduction

Over the past 2 years there has been significant time and energy invested to ensure that short breaks provision in West Berkshire is promoted and the district enjoys a range of opportunities and provision for disabled children and their families. The Local Authority has met regularly with short breaks providers and other key partners to maximise the delivery and provision and this seems to align with the level of reported need. The flexible and creative use of transition money has enabled the services to become more self-sufficient and robust which is positive for the future of short breaks locally.

Legal Framework

Under the Children Act 1989 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, every Local Authority shall provide services designed:-

- (a) To minimise the effect on disabled children within their area of their disabilities
- (b) To give such children the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible ; and
- (c) To assist individuals who provide care for such children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively by giving them breaks from caring.

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

The Short Breaks Regulations and guidance issued by Government also requires us to publish and keep under review a Short Breaks Statement which sets out :-

- The range of short breaks services available;
- The criteria by which eligibility for services will be assessed; and
- How the range of services is designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children within our area.

Short breaks form part of a continuum of services, which support disabled children and their families. Short breaks are provided to give:

- Children and young people with a disability enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thereby contributing to their personal and social development and reducing social isolation;
- Parents, carers and families a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities.

These breaks can include day, evening, overnight and weekend activities and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, a residential or community setting. They can last just a few hours to a few days, and occasionally longer, depending on the type of provision and the needs of the child and their family.

There is a requirement on the Local Authority to provide a 'Local Offer' which is to put in one place all information about services relating to Disabled Children. More information can be found here

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/localoffer.page?familychannel=4>

The Family Information Service is the term for information relating to children and families that the Local Authority provides including the Local Offer and services relating to disabled children.

2 Consultation, participation and co-operation

When reviewing our Short Breaks Statement, we must take into consideration carers' views and those of disabled children and young people. The views of those organisations working within the voluntary sector must also be taken account of.

A draft of our Short Breaks Statement for 2017 formed the basis for local consultation with families with disabled children and other partners. An online public consultation was held and information and a questionnaire were published on the council website. This public consultation was well publicised and the link circulated widely. The consultation started on 14th June 2017 and ran for 6 weeks. There was a limited response with 17 individuals submitting responses. This would indicate that there is general support for current provision.

As part of our 2017 consultation, we also held a series of focus groups in secondary schools, both specialist and mainstream, where parents and young people were invited to discuss SEND reforms and short breaks. We also talked with providers of short breaks services about demands, needs and gathered their general feedback.

When asked generally about the provision of short breaks services meeting the needs of disabled children, about a third of those that responded (5 individuals) said they agreed, and two thirds (12) did not. The reasons given from respondents who did not feel current provision meets needs were:-

- Not enough short breaks
- Not sufficient variety
- Breaks not long enough in duration
- Did not meet needs of those children in mainstream school or with physical disabilities and/or medical needs.

In respect of mainstream and universal services about half (8) said they did not feel anything was missing from universal services. Those that disagreed felt that it was knowledge and information about the services which was hard to access and find. As a response to this and other feedback regarding information and the Local Offer, the council has started work to improve the website and provision of information which is planned to be completed by the end of 2017.

With regard to amount of short breaks, over 40% felt this was sufficient. Those respondents that disagreed (7) felt that services had reduced alongside funding reductions and key provision such as holiday care was now not sufficient. In respect of accessibility about 70% (8) felt that services were not accessible to everyone primarily as services were not located across the district and transport presented a problem.

Respondents were asked about providers increasing fees to enable services to be more viable and only 15% (2) said they disagreed. When asked about whether services currently met needs according to age and diversity, most people (over 80%) felt services were appropriate. Over 75% of respondents felt that the provision of direct payments or personal budgets to those that are entitled, was a helpful approach. Of those that did not, feedback was that they would like more directly accessible services, they did not feel it was easy to access and families needed to top up the amount allocated and sometimes fight for this service. Clearer guidance was also felt to be needed.

A number of meetings with providers held in 2017 and in total 10 organisations attended. Their feedback was that there was a high demand for their services and families greatly valued what they provided. They were concerned about the reduction in council funding and most services had introduced charging. A few services had closed but most were continuing – some in a more reduced form. Generally providers felt that they had needed to review all their services in the light of funding. All organisations would intend to continue to provide short breaks in the future but there was concern that high cost services such as holiday play schemes may be at risk.

Feedback on the Short Breaks Services Statement was that two thirds of respondents felt it was useful and informative but needed to be easier to understand and shorter. Overall, the responses and feedback has been analysed and statement updated.

3 Range of service delivery

It is important to note that families who receive short breaks provision as part of a statutory service will continue to do so. For details of how to see if you are eligible please see at [c] below: specialist services.

The total number of disabled children receiving short breaks between 2014 and 2016 was approximately 350-400.

In West Berkshire, we try and offer a wide range of provision through voluntary, independent and voluntary sector providers to meet the different needs of disabled children, young people and their families. As a result of reduced funding, some services have been stopped but most providers have continued to deliver directly accessible short breaks. In order to develop more sustainable short break services, some providers are also reviewing their charging policies and exploring alternative sources of income.

Eligibility for services and short breaks 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 crisis through the provision of the right level of support at the right time
- The need to be fair, clear and equitable.
- Those at greatest need receive help. Some will require assessment and services provided by the council's specialist Children's Disability team.

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 and severity of their child's disability. Some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. This is why the Local Authority may need to assess your child and family to ensure the right amount of support and short breaks are provided at the right time.

The Short Break Services in West Berkshire and how these are provided and available to families can be categorised as follows:-

(a) Universal or mainstream services

Community and youth based activities such as youth clubs, uniformed groups (i.e. cubs, brownies), sports clubs, leisure centres and groups and cinemas. These take place outside of the school day and at weekends. They are directly accessible with no assessment necessary and whether a disabled child can attend will depend on capacity of the organisation and needs of the child/young person. Many universal services will advertise in the local community. There are also universal school holiday activities, which are located either in schools or directly via independent providers/ schools. West Berkshire's Family Information Service offer a free telephone and on-line directory service, dedicated to providing up to date information for parents, parents to be, carers and professionals to help support children up to their 20th birthday or 25th birthday if a child has a disability. Further details can be found here

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/home.page>

Further information can also be found on the Council's Local Offer website which details short breaks in the local area.

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/localoffer.page?familychannel=4>

(b) Supported services.

These are specific services for disabled children which are also directly accessible. They include those services provided by the voluntary sector such as Crossroads, Mencap, Dingley Promise, Swings and Smiles, National Autistic Society, PALS and Home-start. Access will depend upon capacity of the short break service and the remit of the group. For example, the National Autistic Society only provides short breaks for those children on the autistic spectrum. Supported services also include short breaks provided by Brookfields and Castle special schools. Most providers allocate on a first come, first served basis.

Support services includes giving you information, advice and guidance, training, help for brothers and sisters, and the allocation of a named professional or key worker, who will help co-ordinate the support your family needs. The Local Authority can support you through transition from children's to adult's services. We can tell you about other local services and facilities and ensure you have the right equipment and adaptations to your home, which make life easier.

Further information can be found on the Council's Local Offer website which details short breaks in the local area.

<http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/localoffer.page?familychannel=4-5>

(c) Specialist Services

These are provided via an assessment by a social care or health professional. Following an individual assessment of need by a social worker, short breaks that the Local Authority provide are allocated at a multi agency panel (MARF) chaired by a Service Manager from West Berkshire Council. The council's short break services include direct payments, overnight or day care with a foster carer, and overnight and day care at Castle Gate, a residential short break unit. Further information about direct payments can be found here

http://fis.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/fsd/service.page?id=LxS_kfgUu8k&familychannel=0

Short breaks provided by the health services are agreed at the Continuing Care Panel following an assessment by a specialist nurse and include support from the continuing care nursing team and overnight or day care at Ryeish Green residential unit.

It is important that those families who have the highest levels of need have access to these specialist services. The eligibility criteria for an assessment of need by social care can be found on the West Berkshire website.


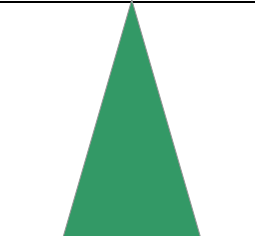
http://www.proceduresonline.com/westberks/cs/files/threshold_criteria.pdf

With additional information with regards to Disabled Children's Team.

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/westberks/enterprise/files/dct_eligibility_criteria_2015.pdf

The following table sets out the Council's early help strategy:-

Children's Services in West Berkshire – levels of need

Level/Type of needs	Activity	Level of Need/ risk to child	Proportion of children receiving service
4 Most serious/ acute	Intensive and multi-professional care, protection or control		
3 Complex and Specialist	Statutory and/or Multi-professional intervention		
2 Additional	Early Intervention		

needs or Vulnerable			
1 Within normal range - Progressive universalism	Indicated (Health term = Tertiary Prevention)		
	Targeted (Health term = Secondary Prevention)		
	Universal (Health term = Primary Prevention)		

Examples of Universal public services for all children by age band		
Pre-birth	0- 5	5-18
Midwifery		
	Health & Wellbeing Hubs	
	Health Visiting	
	Nursery	
		School
		GP services
		Accident and Emergency services
		Leisure services
		Libraries

Examples of early intervention for additional needs	
Education	
Peer mentor programmes in primary and secondary schools	
Emotional Health Academy linked to schools	
Family School Support Workers	
Parent to Parent/P2P Service	
Health services	
The Edge service for young people	
Obesity advice and services	
Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC)	
The Healthy schools Programme	
Speech and language therapy	
Chlamydia screening	
Crime and communities	
Education Support Service, part of the Youth Offending Team	
Targeted Intervention Work	
Early Years	
Special Needs Advice Counselling Service (SNACS)	
Family Wellbeing Hubs and Education entitlement for 2-3 year olds	
Home Start volunteer support for parents	
Mencap Bubble Club	
Training and employment	
Jobcentre Plus partnership supporting families into work	
Parenting and family support	
Short Breaks for disabled Children	
Family Group Conferencing	
Young carers project	

Time to Talk Counselling Service	
Parenting Programmes such as Triple P, STOP	

4 Measuring outcomes and impacts of our Short Breaks provision

The local short breaks services are much valued by parents and, children and young people. The following parents made these comments about Crossroads short breaks which is typical of many parents' experiences:-

We have been blessed to be able to get some respite during holidays from Crossroads. Our son enjoyed his second trip to Butlins last year which happened to coincide with our 10th wedding anniversary. It meant that we had nearly three days to relax, have a meal together and spend time as a couple. For our son it meant 'the best macaroni cheese in the world' made by his carer who is tremendous and nearly three days of fun with his friend. We don't have family support and we rarely have the time to ourselves, I can't stress how important their services are to us.

'Crossroads has been a lifeline for our family, its peace of mind to know she is being cared for by competent staff. My daughter is very physically disabled and this is the only social opportunity she has and the only break for my family.

'My son has severe autism and has been with Crossroads and Mencap for many years, it is the only social life he has. He has no friends.'

'I have 3 boys with autism and a husband with mental health problems. Somebody giving me a break, just once during school holidays, to give me the space to think and recharge has made the difference to facing school holidays with dread and finishing them with exhaustion and illness to having the strength to enjoy and have fun with the children.'

Accessibility

The Local Offer and Family Information Service is currently being upgraded so it will link with adult services and can be downloaded to mobile devices and be more interactive. This is planned for summer 2017 and will make information about short break services more easily and widely accessible.

The Local Offer Website provides comprehensive information and signposting to SEND services. West Berkshire's Family Information Service also offers a free telephone and on-line directory service providing information for parents, parents to be, carers and professionals to help support children up to their 20th birthday or 25th birthday if a child has a disability.

Feedback from the consultation was that services were concentrated in the Newbury area so for those living to the east of the district, accessibility could be difficult if without a car. Transport generally was felt to be a problem and hindrance to using services.

The Local Authority will continue to work closely with providers to try and support their services to become more accessible.

Transition funding and future provision

Transition Funding to support providers of Short Breaks is due to end April 2018.

Those families currently receiving short breaks provision within a package of care from West Berkshire Council and those eligible for specialist services will not be affected and their care package will not be reduced.

It is likely the end of transition funding will impact on the provision of short breaks although the 2 years of funding has given local providers the time to continue with their services whilst planning for how these can be sustained on the longer term. We are working with providers to minimise the adverse impact for our residents.

Most providers state that they will continue to provide services but that they are likely to be increasing charges. Brookfields school for example have increased their charges for both their youth and after school care so that they are self financing. Charging full costs for some services such as holiday play schemes can be prohibitive. Many providers have also sought grant funding elsewhere which helps to either subsidise the service or enable them to provide those in greatest financial need a minimal charge.

West Berkshire Mencap have said they might have to close some services (e.g. after school provision) if alternative funding cannot be found. The Saturday club closed in 2016. Mencap will continue with their youth club but may need to reduce the days of their holiday play scheme.

There are also some new providers of short breaks since 2016 such as Swings and Smiles and ASD family help. We are keen to hear of any other organisations of whatever size, which may also be able to offer support.

In addition, a SEND providers Forum was established in 2016 with the aim of ensuring that providers are working close together to sustain and improve services within our area. The forum is already working well; providers are now sharing costs, for example with training and learning resources. The Local Authority meets regularly with providers and has feedback the results of the consultation in particular the need for more choice to meet varying needs.

The Forum is also an opportunity for providers to pro-actively share opportunities with each other, such as available grant funding and additional forms of income streams. As a result of the SEND forum being set up, Short Breaks providers co-ordinated the summer activity provision in 2017 to establish a single timetable which minimised duplication and provided families with all the information in one place. This was of enormous benefit to children and their families who welcomed this approach. It is planned to build on this work.