

Buckinghamshire Children's Short Break Draft Strategy 2018 - 2022

March 2018



Short breaks
for Disabled
Children &
Young People

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1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council works in partnership with Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the community organisation 'Families and Carers Together in Buckinghamshire' (FACT Bucks). Together we develop Buckinghamshire's programme of short breaks to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and /or Disabilities (SEND) and their families.

The purpose of this document is to set out our outline vision for how short breaks can help support disabled children and young people to:

- Develop independence
- Learn new skills
- Make new friends
- Reduce loneliness

There are four main reasons why we need a Short Breaks Strategy.

- We do not currently have a strategy to set out our shared ambition for short breaks. We recognise that our current short breaks offer does not provide enough flexibility and choice. We want to make sure that people can access a wide range of short-breaks options close to where they live, creating more opportunities for parents and children to build networks that connect them to the communities they live in. This will help us achieve good outcomes for children and families.
- We recognise that our current short breaks offer is not sustainable. It is difficult to manage levels of demand for residential short breaks. This is not going to get easier with the financial constraints that local authorities and CCGs are facing, and expected growth in demand for services over the coming years. We want to provide services that are value for money and that meet both current and future need – and to make sure that the money we have for short breaks is spent where there is the greatest need.
- We want to make sure that people who need to use short breaks are treated fairly and consistently

The short breaks offer support those with low, medium, high, or complex needs by linking in with universal services (available to everyone), special schools and specialist short break support.

The strategy is built on current data, forecasted future data and best practice research. It has been developed collaboratively with FACT Bucks and includes the contribution of disabled children and their families.

Although this strategy applies to disabled children, it does not sit in isolation. It has been developed alongside the Adult's Short Breaks Strategy to help ensure that as children approach adulthood, a smooth transition from one service to the other can be achieved.

1.1 Background

Access to short breaks should help disabled children and young people to develop their

independence, to increase their readiness for becoming an adult and to boost their physical and emotional health, while also enabling them to have new experiences, to learn, to have fun and to meet friends.

Short breaks also support parents and carers by giving them a break from their caring responsibilities, allowing them to rest and unwind (supporting their own emotional and physical health) and to spend time with other family members, so they are able to provide sustainable support to their family.

This strategy would mean some changes to the way we currently deliver short breaks in Buckinghamshire. The strategy is not a plan to reduce services where there is an assessed need for these to be provided. However, families may see a change in the way services are offered to meet their need. In particular the strategy would help the Council and the CCG to:

- Deliver an offer which includes a stronger focus on access to universal services and helping children with disabilities use provision locally. This will help children make friends, help parents build networks of support and allow us to develop provision where children with and without disabilities can interact with each other.
- Deliver a more flexible short breaks offer so we can provide tailored support at the right time to prevent families from falling into crisis.
- Ensure our services represent value for money and that our available resources for short breaks are targeted at those who need support the most, through eligibility criteria and regular reviews.
- Move away from an offer which relies heavily on traditional 'building based' services. Over time this strategy could help us to reduce the amount of short breaks that are delivered within overnight residential settings. However, this does not mean we will be reducing services where there has been an assessed level of need. Where the need for specialist short breaks has been identified, partners in health, education and social care will work with families and providers to understand what provision will support the child and their family most effectively.

1.2 Objectives of the draft Strategy

- To support disabled children and young people to develop independence, learn new skills, make new friends and reduce loneliness
- To involve children and their families with decisions
- To ensure staff are qualified and skilled to deliver services which are safe and high quality
- To provide a choice of short breaks with a range of activities and locations at a variety of times
- To provide the right balance between universal, targeted and specialist support
- To ensure access to support is fair and priority is targeted at those who most need it
- To improve the quality of short breaks provision
- To achieve good value for money
- To enable stakeholders to try new things and be innovative

The outcomes we would want to achieve are:

Children and young people will say that:

- I have different options available to me in choosing the type, location and time of short break that I would like to do
- The short break has helped me to become more independent by teaching me skills that can help me in school, building relationships, travelling independently and using own money
- My experience of the short break is positive because my voice was listened to and I helped to influence planning and the way the service was designed
- My short breaks are helping me to reach my full potential by developing new friendships, skills, self-confidence and links to other activities
- Short breaks have focused on my strengths and what I could do rather than my difficulties or disabilities.

Parents and carers will say that:

- I am well informed about what short breaks are available and how to access them
- There is choice across the type, time and location of the short breaks available
- I receive clear communication from providers to inform my family's choices
- I feel more resilient and able to deal with caring responsibilities because my child attends a short break
- I can access support before I reach crisis point.
- My child receives a quality short break and they are being cared for by trained, professional staff in a safe environment.

Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group:

- The Local Authority is meeting its statutory duties in relation to the provision of short breaks
- Our short breaks offer provides support which is of high quality, value for money and allows us to make the best use of available resources
- We have good evidence that our short breaks offer is achieving positive outcomes for children and families.

1.3 Our vision for all children in Buckinghamshire

This strategy supports Buckinghamshire County Council's ambition for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

"Children and young people are safe, happy and healthy, feel valued and value others, are treated fairly, have lives filled with learning, thrive and are able to enjoy life and spend quality time with family and friends."

(Buckinghamshire County Council, Children and Young People's Vision, 2016-18)

This strategy also supports some of the aims set out in our local strategic plans.

- It supports two of the aims of Buckinghamshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2017-2020:
 - safeguarding our vulnerable
 - creating opportunities and building self-reliance

- It supports three of the objectives of the Council's Strategic Partnership:
 - safeguard vulnerable children and adults
 - improve outcomes for children and adults with special educational needs or disability
 - help and support those unpaid carers who give their time and energy to look after relatives and friends who cannot take care of themselves

- It supports the 'Strategic Vision for Carers in Buckinghamshire 2016 – 2019', which sets out our four point commitment to improving quality of life for carers:
 - support, value and recognise carers as equal partners in care
 - support and give carers confidence to have a life of their own outside of caring
 - involve carers in planning and shaping services
 - recognise that carers need flexible and responsive support

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2. Buckinghamshire short breaks services

Disabled children and young people in Buckinghamshire can use a wide range of short breaks, not all of which have financial assistance from the County Council or CCG. These can include:

- **Universal short breaks** are everyday community services that are accessible to everyone without an assessment. Examples of universal services include youth clubs, after school activities, uniformed groups (i.e. Cubs, Brownies), leisure centres, nurseries, childminders and activity-based groups. Wherever possible, these should be accessible to disabled children and young people and should form part of valuable experiences for children and young people as they grow up. Information about universal services is available in our local offer. (www.bucksfamilyinfo.org)
- **Targeted short breaks** are specific short break activities for disabled children to which families can self-refer. These targeted services may be provided in the evenings, weekends and school holidays. These services are for disabled children and young people, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 2010¹ who cannot access universal services without needing additional support.
- **Specialist short break** are daytime or overnight services, or a service paid for by direct payment that is designed to meet a specific need following a social care assessment (Child and Families Assessment) of an individual child and their carers.

Not all disabled children and young people would be best supported by targeted and/or specialist short breaks. Some children may be better served by accessing universal services with no or very little additional support.

The current data available from funded contracted short breaks shows that:

- At least 350 disabled children and young people regularly use universal short breaks
- 640 children and young people are accessing short breaks
 - Over 450 of these disabled children and young people regularly use targeted short breaks
 - Over 250 of these disabled children and young people regularly use specialist short breaks
(Some disabled children and young people use both targeted and specialist short breaks)

The Buckinghamshire local offer, on the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) website (www.bucksfamilyinfo.org), provides information for different types of short breaks, as well as information on access and eligibility.

3. Stakeholder engagement

As part of the development of this strategy, the Disabled Children and Young People Participation Officer carried out visits to short break services in August 2017 to seek views and feedback. This

¹ You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

involved meeting disabled children and young people with a wide range of needs, including those with profound and multiple learning disability and those whose behaviour can be challenging. The majority of the children and young people were non-verbal, so engagement was done with communications aids such as pictures and observation.

Four parent and carer engagement sessions took place across the county during September 2017 and we received additional responses in writing. Full details about the engagement work carried out to inform this strategy can be found in Appendices in section 1.4.

We will involve disabled children, young people, their families and other stakeholders in the formative stage of developing future short breaks service models.

3.1 Engagement feedback summary

What works well and what else could we try?

- Familiarity of staff is key factor for enjoyment for children and young people attending services
- Families generally want more support, not less
- Youth club provision works well as it is young person led and young people want to try and access more universal activities
- Children and young people enjoy activities where the staff member is able to use their 'talents' e.g. drama, magic
- Short breaks residential homes have a safe and warm homely environment
- Parents would like more use of special schools as venues and more support during summer holidays
- Parents are generally willing to pay more for activities
- There is a lack of availability of other childminding, clubs, sports activities etc. suitable for children and young people with greater special needs

What impact do short breaks services have for families?

- There are positive and improved outcomes for children and young people attending short break services
- Both children and young people and their families rely on these services
- Parents and carers really value the time they get from short breaks
- Parents and carers feel that short breaks have a positive impact on their own health
- Parents and carers fed back that opportunities offered through short breaks allow their child to try new activities, improve confidence, self-esteem, self-help skills and make friends

What are families worried or unsure about?

- Potential cuts to services and fears about being able to cope
- Specifically in relation to residential short breaks, parents and carers expressed concern that they were in crisis before they got this support
- There was a lack of understanding of eligibility criteria for short breaks
- There is still lack of knowledge about short breaks and about the local offer
- Fear that alternative short breaks would not be available to purchase with a Direct Payment
- Transport is an issue for many so can restrict choice of activities

4. Delivering our vision for disabled children and young people

The data we collected during our engagement work set out in section 3 has been used to inform the following points that make up our vision for disabled children and young people.

4.1 An outcome based approach where we focus on each child

We want our short breaks to deliver the best outcomes for disabled children and young people and their carers. These should be outcomes agreed between children, their carers and the providers. We focus on the strengths and abilities of each disabled child and young person, building on what they can do, as well as what matters to them. By focusing on each child we can develop their skills and promote informal learning.

Another way we will do this is by developing a wider, more inclusive offer of activities for children with a disability. This will help us develop tailored support plans to meet individual need.

4.2 Reviewing each child's need

To ensure the best use of resources, to gain the best outcomes for children and to target those most in need of support, we will regularly review each child's needs to ensure that the child is attending the right short breaks. A review might show that there has been an increase in need and that more support is required; or that needs have decreased and that a different type of short break would be appropriate. Wherever possible, opportunities will be sought to link the child or young person with universal services. Children and their carers will be involved in these reviews.

4.3 Providing sustainable models of support

In order to make the best use of resources and to ensure that services can be sustained into the future, we will work with partners to:

- Ensure the short breaks offered are allocated in a fair and open way
- Improve access to universal services offered to **all** children and young people so those with disabilities can also take part by identifying each providers training and support needs
- Have services that are flexible to respond to changing levels of demand and resources available
- Share knowledge and expertise amongst professionals of what is available and what works when supporting disabled children and their families
- Signpost families to networks of support that provide practical help
- Use local community buildings so families do not have to travel far

4.4 Contributions towards activity costs

Charging for short breaks

Local authorities have the power to charge for services provided under section 17 of the Children

Act², which would include assessed short breaks. Buckinghamshire County Council asks for contributions towards the costs of the activities but does not currently charge for staffing support costs linked to short breaks and has no plans to start.

Activity fees

We will continue to charge for activities for the following reasons:

- It helps provision to be sustainable
- Families expect to pay a similar amount for activities provided for all children
- The charge supports the activity and is not linked to the higher staffing ratios
- It allows the provider to offer more short breaks activities for children and young people
- It supports the renewal and maintenance of games, toys and play equipment
- It reduces the number of children who do not turn up

4.5 Improving the transition to adult services

We recognise that as a child approaches the transition to adult services, it is an anxious time for both the child and their family.

The Transitions Team in adult services work with children's social care to identify which young people (from the age of 14 years old) could be eligible for either adult social care or continuing health care services at 18 and those who will get support through universal services; and will work with the young people and their carers to ensure a smooth transition.

Providing young people and their families with easy to read information is vital and will be provided through the Local Offer on the website (www.bucksfamilyinfo.org) including:

- Developing independence
- Life skills
- Accessing further education
- Accessing volunteering opportunities
- Housing and transport

4.6 Working together

We want to expand and improve on points in this draft strategy, through co-production and consultation with parents and carers. Their views and knowledge of what support would deliver the outcomes they would want for their children will be essential to working up our approach.

We also aim to work with other providers and key stakeholders, in particular by:

- Co-production during the implementation of new contracted services
- Continuing the Parent Advisory Group (PAG) for short breaks for parents and carers to give us feedback on the service and highlight possible changes
- Co-production in service and contract reviews

5. National context and legislation

² See section 29 of the 1989 Act.

Our short breaks strategy and local offer needs to take account of relevant legislation. A more detailed review of the legal framework in relation to short breaks is set out in the appendices. The key pieces of legislation are set out below.

The Children Act 1989³ sets out that every Local Authority shall provide services which are designed to:

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

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 set out the duty to make provision. In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act(1), 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 – this means the local authority must be able to provide breaks for carers at crisis point
- 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.

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. This must include:

- 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.

This strategy also takes account of advice issued by the Department for Education⁴ which states that:

- Short breaks can build on and be offered by universal service providers
- Formal assessment of families' needs should lead to a tailored package of services for them
- Any eligibility criteria should not be applied mechanistically without consideration of a particular family's needs

Buckinghamshire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group will evidence that these legislative requirements have been met through the Short Breaks Services Statement. This sets out the local 'short breaks offer', which will be revised in line with this strategy.

https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/4510586/short_breaks_services_statement_2018.pdf

³ Schedule 2, paragraph 6 (1)

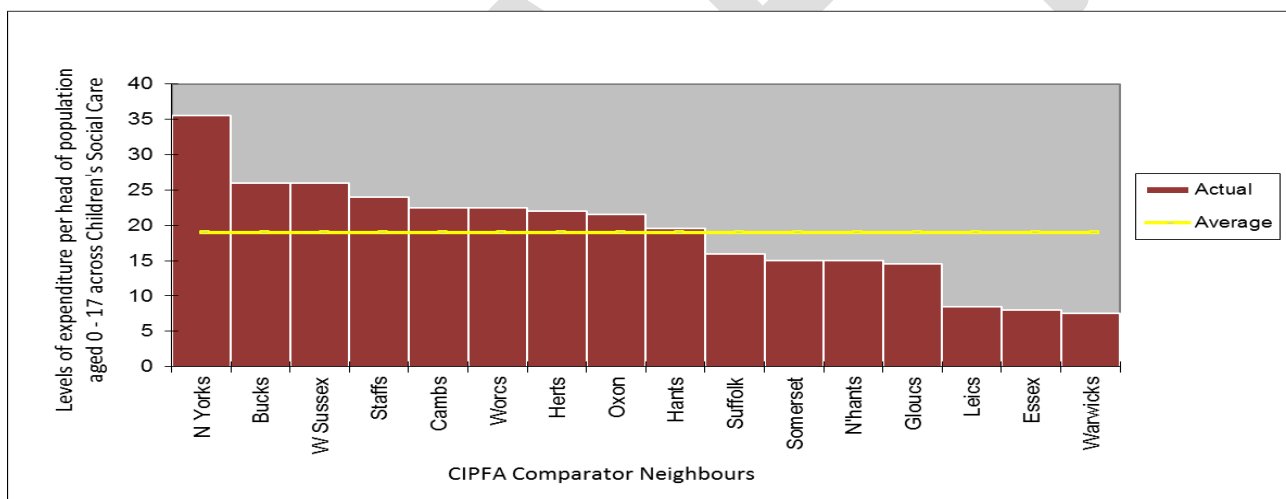
⁴ Short breaks for carers of disabled children Departmental advice for local authorities (2011)

5.1 Buckinghamshire disabled children’s data

Approximately 118,900 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Buckinghamshire (22.8% of the total population) and of these;

- 3,608 or 3.1% Buckinghamshire children have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), compared to 2.8% nationally (*SEN data summary Spring Term 2017, Buckinghamshire County Council*)
- There are 2,905 children aged 0 - 16 years in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (*Department for Work & Pensions, 2017*)
- Children’s Social Care data (*Children and Young People’s Information Team, Buckinghamshire County Council 30.06.2017*)
 - 594 disabled children and young people being supported by the Children with Disabilities Children’s Social Care Team
 - 1097 children on a Child in Need Plan, of whom 351 or 32% have a disability
 - 575 children on a Child Protection Plan, of whom 52 or 9% have a disability
 - 453 children in our care, of whom 45 or 10% have a disability

Diagram 1: Levels of Children’s Social Care expenditure on short breaks / respite 2016/17



The graph above shows the level of expenditure per head of population aged 0-17 for short breaks/respite for disabled children (including looked after disabled children) compared with our statistical neighbour Counties.

Buckinghamshire County Council spend is higher than the average expenditure (£19 per head, per annum) and second top amongst its comparator neighbours.

5.2 Short breaks research

Research shows that quality short breaks can improve life chances for disabled children and young people by helping them and their families to achieve the following:

- Better established peer groups and friendships
- Increased enjoyment and achievement

- New and improved skills and abilities that support transition into adulthood
- Improved connections with local community
- Improved physical health
- Improved emotional health and well-being
- More sustainable caring arrangements
- Improved communication, confidence and self-esteem
- Increased knowledge about where to access advice and support when they need it most
- Improved quality of family life
- Increased co-production, choice and control

Research into short breaks supports the positive impact that is made:

The social and economic value of short breaks (NEF Consulting, 2009)

This report found an overwhelmingly positive impact of short breaks on outcomes for disabled children and their families. It further estimated that the resulting cost saving for England would be up to £174 million annually, if short breaks were effectively delivered to all those eligible to receive them. This saving is based on:

1. Decreased cost of long-term residential care: £135 million
2. Decreased cost to health services from reduction in parents', families' and carers' stress: £18 million
3. Decreased cost to schools of educating siblings with behavioural and emotional difficulties: £21 million

(<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/social-and-economic-value-short-breaks>)

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) Short Breaks in 2015: An Uncertain Future

This report found that

- 76% of parent carers experience stress or depression and 72% suffer from lack of sleep.
- 80% of parent carers of children with learning disabilities say they have reached or are close to reaching 'breaking point'; a moment of emotional, psychological or mental crisis where they feel they can no longer cope with their caring responsibilities.
- There is a direct relationship between the level and range of short breaks **and** 'lower levels of psychological distress, higher levels of life satisfaction and better health' **and**
- Short breaks have a direct positive impact on the disabled children and young people that benefit from them, leading to improved confidence and independence.

(<http://www.thelocaloffer.co.uk/files/files/short-breaks-in-2015-an-uncertain-future-final.pdf>)

6.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

This strategy will be overseen by Buckinghamshire County Council and the CCG as the two organisations which commission funded short breaks provision in Buckinghamshire. The strategy will run from 2018-2022, but will be reviewed annually by a multi-agency short breaks strategy group.

Delivery of this strategy would be monitored through both the County Council and CCG. This will be done by reviewing whether we have been able to achieve the objectives and outcomes set out in this strategy. We use information from different sources to measure this including feedback from children and their families, information from our partners and information gathered as part of contract monitoring.

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