

Buckinghamshire Children's Short Break Strategy 2018 - 2022

October 2018



Short breaks
for Disabled
Children &
Young People

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1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council works with Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and 'Families and Carers Together in Buckinghamshire' (FACT Bucks). Our short breaks help children and young people with Special Educational Needs and /or Disabilities (SEND) and their families.

This document tells you how we want short breaks to help disabled children and young people. It also tells you how short breaks can support parents/carers and families.

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

- We did not have a strategy to set out our shared vision for short breaks
- Our current short breaks offer does not have enough flexibility and choice. We want people to have a choice of short-breaks. These should be close to where they live. They should help parents and children build networks that connect them to their community. This will help us achieve good outcomes for children and families.
- We cannot afford to keep things the same. It is difficult to manage the demand for residential short breaks. This is not going to get easier with the financial constraints that local authorities and CCGs are facing. We expect more people to want these services in coming years and we must meet current and future need. We want to provide services that are value for money. The money we have for short breaks must be spent where there is the greatest need.
- We want to make sure that people who use short breaks are treated fairly and consistently.

The short breaks offer helps people with low, medium, high, or complex needs. It does this by linking with services that are available to everyone (these are known as universal services), special schools and specialist short breaks support.

We have used data on current service usage to write our strategy. We have looked at what might be needed in the future. Looking at what works well elsewhere has also helped us.

The strategy has been written with FACT Bucks. Disabled children and their families have also helped.

This strategy applies to disabled children but has been written alongside the Adult's Short Breaks Strategy. This will help children move smoothly from children's services to adult social care.

1.1 Background

Short breaks help disabled children and young people to:

- develop their independence
- increase their readiness for becoming an adult
- help their physical and emotional health
- reduce loneliness
- have new experiences, learn, have fun and meet friends.

Short breaks help parents and carers to:

- take a break from their caring responsibilities
- rest and unwind
- spend time with other family members
- provide the right support at the right time
- build their family resilience

This strategy will mean some changes to the way we deliver short breaks. It is not a plan to reduce services where there is an assessed need. However, families may see a change in the way services are offered.

The strategy will help the Council and the CCG to:

- Deliver an offer which includes a focus on using universal services. It will help children with disabilities to use local activities. This will help children make friends. It will help parents build networks of support. It will allow children with and without disabilities to mix with each other.
- Deliver a more flexible short breaks offer. This will help us to give the right support at the right time to prevent families from falling into crisis.
- Make sure our services give value for money. We will use our money and people to help those who need support the most. This will be done through eligibility criteria and regular reviews.
- Move away from traditional services based in buildings. This could help reduce the amount of short breaks that are in overnight residential settings. This does not mean we will be reducing services if there is 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 will support the child and their family most effectively.

1.2 Objectives of our Strategy

- To support disabled children and young people to develop independence, learn new skills, make new friends and reduce loneliness.
- To support carers with their caring responsibilities.
- To involve children and their families with decisions.
- To ensure staff are qualified and skilled to deliver safe and high quality services.
- To provide a range of short breaks to support the needs of carers and disabled children and young people.
- To provide the right mix of universal, targeted and specialist support.

- To ensure access to short breaks is fair. Priority will be for those who need it most.
- To improve the quality of short breaks and make sure they are good value for money.
- To help organisations try new things. This will support good outcomes for children, young people and their families.

These are the outcomes we want to achieve:

Children and young people will say:

- I have different options available to me. I can choose the type, location and time of my short break.
- My short breaks have helped me to become more independent. Short breaks have taught me skills that help me in school, help me build relationships, travel on my own and use my own money.
- My experience of short breaks is positive because I was listened to. I helped plan and design my short breaks.
- My short breaks are helping me to reach my full potential. I am making new friends and learning new skills. I am more confident.
- Short breaks have focused on my strengths and what I can do rather than my difficulties or disabilities.

Parents and carers will say:

- I know what short breaks are available and how to access them.
- There is choice across the type, time and location of short breaks.
- Clear communication from professionals helps my family make choices.
- I feel more resilient and able to deal with my caring responsibilities because my child attends a short break.
- I can access support before I reach crisis point.
- My child receives high quality short breaks. They are 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 short breaks
- Short breaks are high quality and value for money. They allow us to make the best use of resources
- We have evidence that short breaks help achieve good 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.

“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 the aims of our local strategic plans.

- It supports two of the aims of the 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'. This sets out a commitment to improve the 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

2. Buckinghamshire short breaks services

Disabled children and young people in Buckinghamshire can use a wide range of short breaks. Not all of these are funded by the County Council or CCG. The three categories of short breaks are listed below.

- **Universal short breaks:** These are everyday community services that can be used by everyone without an assessment. For example youth clubs, after school activities, Cubs, Brownies, leisure centres and childminders. Wherever possible, these should be accessible to disabled children and young people. They should form part of the valuable experiences for children and young people as they grow up. Information about universal services is available on our Local Offer. (www.bucksfamilyinfo.org)
- **Targeted short breaks:** These are specific short breaks for disabled children to which families can self-refer. These 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 breaks:** These are daytime or overnight services, or services paid for by direct payment. They are designed to meet the needs of an individual child and their carers after a social care assessment (Child and Families Assessment).

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

Data 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 Local Offer provides information on different types of short breaks. It also provides information on eligibility criteria. Please visit www.bucksfamilyinfo.org

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.

3. Consultation

We worked with children, young people and families to write this strategy.

We will work with disabled children, young people, their families and other stakeholders to develop future short breaks services.

3.1 Pre-engagement

Before we wrote our strategy we asked children, young people, parents and carers for their views. The Council's Participation Officer visited short breaks services to meet disabled children and young people. This included children with profound and multiple learning disabilities and children with challenging behaviour. Most 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. We also received feedback from parents and carers in writing. The key messages from this activity are given below.

What works well and what else could we try?

- It is important that the staff providing short breaks do not keep changing.
- Families generally want more support not less.
- Youth clubs works well because they are young person led.
- 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. For example drama or magic.
- Residential short breaks have a safe, warm and homely environment.
- Parents would like more use of special schools as venues. They would like more support in the summer holidays.
- Parents are generally willing to pay more for activities.
- There are not enough childminders, sports activities or clubs that are suitable for children and young people with greater special needs.

What impact do short breaks have for families?

- Short breaks achieve good outcomes for children and young people.
- Children, young people and their families rely on short breaks.
- 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 health.
- Short breaks allow children to try new activities, improve confidence and self-esteem.
- Short breaks help children to make friends.

What are families worried or unsure about?

- Cuts to services
- Not being able to cope
- Parents and carers felt they were in crisis before they could get residential short breaks
- Not everyone understood the eligibility criteria for short breaks.
- Not everyone knew what short breaks are available.

- Not everyone knew about the Local Offer.
- Parents and carers were worried short breaks would not be available to purchase with a Direct Payment.
- Transport can be difficult. This can restrict the choice of activities for families.

3.2 Strategy consultation

A six week consultation on the principles in the draft strategy took place between June and August 2018. People who responded were broadly supportive of all the principles in the strategy. The two most highly supported principles were:

- Support carers with their caring responsibilities
- Provide a range of short breaks in line with the varying needs of carers and children

A range of additional comments were provided. These were also broadly supportive of the principles in the strategy. Some comments gave feedback on current service provision, or provision that should be offered.

Feedback from the consultation was used to develop the final version of this strategy. It will also be used to inform future service development and policy.

3.3 Engagement with disabled children and young people

Engagement work took place with 56 disabled children and young people during July and August 2018

Questions were asked about the approaches set out in the Short Breaks Strategy. Participants were asked to rank the following four outcomes in order of importance:

1. Independence
2. Learning new skills
3. Making new friends
4. Trying new things

Making new friends was most important for the majority of the young people. Next was learning new skills and trying new things. Independence was the least important. The children and young people who took part said they wanted to benefit from all these outcomes.

4. Delivering our vision for disabled children and young people

Our engagement work helped us develop the following points. These make up our vision for disabled children and young people.

4.1 An outcomes based approach

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

We will develop a wider, more inclusive offer of activities for children with a disability. This will help us develop support plans to meet individual need.

4.2 Reviewing need

We will regularly review each child's needs. This will ensure each child is attending the right short breaks. It will help us achieve the best outcomes for children and young people. It will also ensure we make the best use of resources. A review might show that there has been an increase in need and that more support is required. Alternatively a review might show that needs have decreased and that a different type of short break would be appropriate. Children and their carers will be involved in these reviews.

4.3 Providing sustainable support

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 short breaks are allocated in a fair and open way.
- Improve access to universal services for those with disabilities. We will do this by identifying training and support needs within universal services.
- Ensure services are flexible. This will help us respond to changing levels of demand and resources.
- Ensure professionals know what short breaks are 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 Activity fees

Local authorities can charge for services provided under section 17 of the Children Act². This includes assessed short breaks. The Council asks for a contribution towards the costs of activities. However, the Council does not charge for staffing support costs linked to short breaks and has no plans to start.

² See section 29 of the 1989 Act.

Activity fees

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

- Families expect to pay a similar amount for activities provided for all children
- It supports the activity and is not linked to staffing costs
- It helps us offer more activities for children and young people
- It supports the 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

The transition to adult services can be an anxious time for both the child and their family.

The Transitions Team works with Children's Social Care to support children age 14 years and over. They identify which young people could be eligible for either adult social care or continuing health care services at 18 and those who will get support through universal services. They 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. This will be provided through the Local Offer (www.bucksfamilyinfo.org). This information will include:

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

4.6 Working together

We want to work with children, young people, parents and carers to develop and review our short breaks offer.

Some of the ways we will do this are:

- Co-production during the implementation of new contracted services
- Continuing the Parent Advisory Group (PAG) for short breaks. This gives parents and carers an opportunity to give feedback on services
- Co-production in service and contract reviews.

5. National context and legislation

Our short breaks strategy and Local Offer need to take account of the law. The key pieces of legislation are set out below.

The Children Act 1989³ says 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. 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.

A local authority must also 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
- 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.

The Council and the CCG will show that they have met these requirements through the Short Breaks Service Statement. This is published on the Local Offer. It gives information on short breaks and how to access them. The Service Statement will be revised in line with this strategy.

³ Schedule 2, paragraph 6 (1)

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

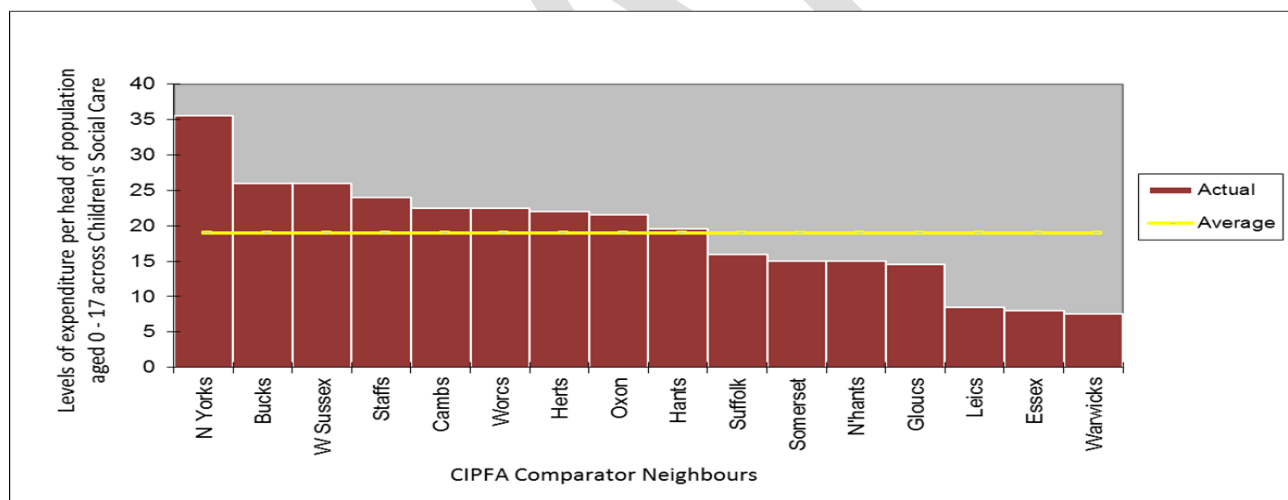
5.1 Disabled children in Buckinghamshire

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

- 3,608 or 3.1% 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 receiving Disability Living Allowance (*Department for Work & Pensions, 2017*)
- Within Children's Social Care
 - 594 disabled children and young people are being supported by the Children with Disabilities Team
 - There are 1097 children on a Child in Need Plan. 351 or 32% have a disability
 - There are 575 children on a Child Protection Plan. 52 or 9% have a disability
 - There are 453 children in care. 45 or 10% have a disability

(*Children and Young People's Information Team, Buckinghamshire County Council 30.06.2017*)

Diagram 1: Expenditure on short breaks 2016/17



This graph shows the level of expenditure per head of population aged 0-17 for short breaks for disabled children compared with our statistical neighbour counties.

Our spend is higher than the average expenditure (£19 per head, per annum) and second top amongst our comparator neighbours.

5.2 Short breaks research

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

- Better peer groups and friendships
- Increased enjoyment and achievement

- New and improved skills and abilities that support transition into adulthood
- Improved connections with the 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. Some examples are given below.

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

This report found that short breaks had a positive impact on outcomes for disabled children and their families. It estimated that there would be savings for England of up to £174 million per year 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 a reduction in stress for parents, families and carers: £18 million
3. Decreased cost to schools of educating siblings with behavioural and emotional difficulties: £21 million

The report can be accessed at: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/social-and-economic-value-short-breaks>

Short Breaks in 2015: An Uncertain Future

This report found that

- 76% of parent carers experience stress or depression. 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'. This is 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.
- Short breaks have a direct positive impact on the disabled children and young people that benefit from them. This leads to improved confidence and independence.

The report can be accessed at: <http://www.thelocaloffer.co.uk/files/files/short-breaks-in-2015-an-uncertain-future-final.pdf>

6.0 Implementation, monitoring and review

Delivery of this strategy would be monitored by the County Council and CCG. These two organisations commission funded short breaks in Buckinghamshire This will be done by checking if we have been able to achieve the objectives and outcomes set out in this strategy.

We will use information from different sources to measure this. This will include feedback from children and their families, information from our partners and information gathered as part of contract monitoring.

The strategy will be reviewed every year by a multi-agency group.

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