

**Strategy to develop
Short Breaks for Disabled Children, Young People and their Families
2009 – 2011**

Executive Summary

This is a joint strategy between Birmingham City Council and the three PCTs in Birmingham. The full version of the strategy outlines the areas for investment and development to deliver our vision and the statutory Full Service Offer for Short Breaks by 2011. This executive summary highlights the key messages in the delivery strategy.

Vision

Our aim is for disabled children and young people to have positive experiences that promote their personal and social development whilst providing their parents/carers & families with a break from caring. Short breaks will include day, weekend and overnight activities, ranging from a couple of hours to a few days long, based in the child's home, the home of a carer, residential or community settings. These breaks will be delivered locally and in everyday provision where possible and appropriate, because we believe that this approach promotes good outcomes for children and young people. We will publicise and promote the range of provision, enabling families to make informed choices.

This strategy supports the City's Brighter Futures Strategy for improving outcomes for all children and children in need. It adopts the logic model approach to service design.

To transform short break services for disabled children Birmingham City Council has received a major financial investment from Government, in the form of a ring fenced grant, of £5,806,000 revenue and £2,311,700 capital spread over a two year period beginning April 2009. Additional resources of a similar size have been recently announced in the base budgets of the PCTs.

Consultation and discussion with parents and young people form the cornerstone of this Delivery Strategy. Key messages about preferences include the need for:

- A flexible range of residential short breaks
- Activities covering all the school holidays, including half terms
- Saturday clubs and weekend activities
- After school and evening activities
- Supported day trips
- Outdoor play space
- A range of social and physical activities for all disabled children
- Support through outreach workers or befrienders to enable disabled young people to access social activities.
- Family-based provision allowing parents and siblings to take part in activities as a family with their disabled child such as supported day trips, weekend breaks, holidays

This strategy is linked to other plans and strategies that will complement our approach to short breaks such the Play, Extended Services, SEN Strategy, Integrated Youth Support, Palliative Care, Transition and adult short breaks. Consultation has also taken place with other stakeholders and the key messages to emerge were ideas about developing short breaks including:

- A community equipment loan service
- Better co-ordination of services at the local level e.g. play, extended provision, children's centres and youth provision.
- A directory of what's available in each area for parents and professionals
- Increasing parental confidence - parents need reassurance their child will be safe, well cared for and have their needs met, appropriate to their disability and age.
- A Staff Bank pool of skilled carers/ support workers to work across agencies and with parents
- Volunteer schemes
- Flexible models of transport

Commissioning objectives

1. To develop a more dynamic model of residential short breaks which reflect patterns of family life
2. To develop a range of family-based models of care, overnight and daytime, using home support, child minders & foster carers
3. To develop "buddying", outreach and befriending services to assist disabled young people to access social and recreational opportunities
4. To increase school holidays, weekend and evening activities
5. To increase access to leisure services, recreational and play settings
6. To increase short breaks within Children's Centres and early years settings
7. To establish robust infrastructure and management capabilities to deliver short breaks services.

Objective 1: Residential short breaks: To develop a more dynamic model of residential short breaks which reflect patterns of family life

There are no plans to disinvest in existing residential provision in Birmingham. An increase in capacity is being sought through the more flexible use of residential provision and greater use of residential provision in the special schools. There are many children in residential homes with health and medical needs and there is a need to expand palliative care and "hospice at home" services.

Investment in short breaks is an opportunity to expand the range of residential short breaks by developing:

- Emergency short breaks
- Outreach services
- Day, evening and weekend activities in residential settings
- Outreach support to families in the community

The Children's Home based service is being reviewed to identify ways to increase the capacity and flexibility of the extant homes. This will go some way to meeting parental concerns about availability – other avenues are the Contract Foster Care Scheme and increased Family to Family placements.

Objective 2: To develop a range of family based short break models of care, overnight and daytime, using home support, child minders & foster carers

Overnight short breaks are provided by an approved carer either in the home of the carer, or in the child's own home. A gap in provision is for a Contract Care Service. We intend to commission a Contract Care service during 2009 to extend the range of overnight stays available to families. Parents have identified that the Family-to-Family Service could be improved if the Child-minders were able to meet the individual needs of children. The Family-to-Family scheme will be commissioned to provide this service.

The Outdoor Learning Centres will offer new opportunities from adventure activities to farm visits. We will extend the range of overnight short breaks to offer family groups, including siblings, time away from home in a safe environment where new skills and activities can be enjoyed.

Home support is regulated by the Domiciliary Care Standards and is a service provided in a child's own home. Some schemes also take children out to activities. The services provide an extra pair of hands; sitting for social occasions; evening sessions; support to parents newly diagnosed and support at times of crisis.

Objective 3: To develop "buddying", outreach and befriending services to assist disabled young people to access social and recreational opportunities

We will commission a befriending or buddying scheme(s) to meet the needs of some of the young people at the older end of the age range. The schemes will also underpin the work of the Short breaks Inclusion Team.

Objective 4: To increase school holidays, weekend and evening activities

School holiday activities, weekend and evening activities were the top priorities for parents. We will ensure better co-ordination of the holiday and play schemes from 2009. Written information will be sent to parents through schools to let them know what is available. Parent identified their wish and capacity to deliver short breaks services – to that end a budget for developing parent led projects will be established.

Objective 5: To increase access to leisure services, recreational and play setting

We will develop an Inclusion Team – Short breaks, to create access to the vast range of leisure and cultural opportunities in the City. Creating a service that is able to respond in a practical way to support individuals and parent led voluntary groups to get out and about and enjoy a range of activities. The team will have access to the equipment service, transport and the pool of trained staff and befriending schemes. The key to success would be in their "can-do" attitude and willingness to work in partnership with parents. Their primary goal will be to create interesting and fun things for disabled children to do.

We identified a need for a Saturday Club for children with severe Autism and will be developing this provision in partnership with the Play Service and a provider with a track record of delivery in this area.

Objective 6: To increase short breaks within Children's Centres and early years settings

Birmingham's childcare sufficiency assessment highlights a distinctive gap in childcare provision for parents of children with disabilities - 25% of disabled children access childcare compared to 28% of all children. Additionally fewer disabled children receive care at out-of-school clubs compared to all children. Ideas from parents include drop-in centres which provide care at set hours, access to provision that is flexible and available on demand, longer opening hours for settings and varied timings of activities, weekend clubs, holiday clubs and carers coming into the child's home, after school hours.

Priorities for investment will include:

- Working with providers to ensure there is publicity and promotion of services to parents of disabled children
- Providing targeted information to families of disabled children
- Offering "chats and taster" sessions and outreach support to assist families in using children centres and early years providers and to raise parental confidence in the quality of the care that's offered.
- Commissioning community groups to provide activities during weekends, after school and holiday periods
- Offering some subsidised childcare places

We will work collaboratively with the Family Information Service to ensure that:

- Parents of disabled children who wish to return to work are given information
- Families receive information about the range of short breaks
- Opportunities are available for child minders to act as carers to increase the short break for families

Objective 7: To establish robust infrastructure and management capabilities to deliver short breaks services.

We will be investing in capacity and infrastructure to manage short breaks provision including

- A central point of access to information alongside efficient methods of managing and co-ordinating information provision, tailored to the needs of individual families
- An approved list of providers offering short breaks services and inclusive activities
- A pool of trained carers which can be accessed by parents (i.e. through Direct Payments) and providers of short breaks services or inclusive settings wishing to purchase additional support
- An Equipment bank with modular equipment and aids to be available on loan to short breaks providers and inclusive settings
- A Joint Commissioning Manager plus support.
- Consultation mechanisms for disabled children and their families.
- Models of transport to support short breaks

This will be a dynamic process that engages disabled children and their families at every stage with the opportunity change plans in response to a better understanding of needs and preferences.