

## Life Stages Service Short Breaks Statement

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### What is a Short Break Statement?

Darlington Borough Council has a statutory duty set by the Government to support disabled children and young adults, and their parents/carers, through the provision of short break support.

Councils must also write a statement about this and explain:

- What is available.
- Who is eligible for the service; and
- How services are accessed.

This duty is set out in The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

### What are short breaks?

A short break is any service that allows a disabled child to have an enjoyable break away from their parent and gives their parent a break from their caring responsibilities.

They are offered for different reasons:

- You feel that you are struggling to care for your child and really need a break.
- You feel that sometimes a short break helps you to recharge your batteries. This maybe especially true if your child does not sleep through the night and needs your attention.
- You find it hard to get out socially or attend adult education because your child needs a lot of support.
- You feel that other members of your family are 'left out' because of your caring duties.

Short Breaks also enable disabled children to have social opportunities and join in with fun and interesting activities without their parent. A short break is not the same as childcare which is for parents to work or attend work related training. How is a referral made for an assessment?

Referrals can be made by professionals or by parents/carers. Referral to the Team can be made through the Children's Front Door for Darlington Borough Council. The Front Door can be contacted on the following number (01325) 406222.

When making a referral, professionals should give as much information as possible through the **Life Stages Referral Form**. Parents/carers will not be required to fill in this referral form, as the relevant details will be taken by the Front Door Worker.

## **How are assessments undertaken?**

The Disabled Children and Young Adults Team is a part of The Life Stages Service within Darlington Borough Council. Whilst the Team works with people aged from 0 to 25, the Short Break Statement is specifically aimed towards disabled children and young adults aged 4 – 17 years. When a young person reaches age 18, they will be assessed using the Adult Care and Support Needs Assessment and services will be provided (if eligible) through Adult Social Care.

When a referral to the Team is received, a Social Worker will be allocated to undertake a Child and Families Assessment which includes a specific Disabled Children's Assessment.

The Child and Families Assessment/Disabled Children Assessment are split in to 2 age groups, as follows:

- 5 –10
- 11 –17

These age groups broadly follow the different age groups within the educational system and will link in with the Education, Health and Care Plan, which is a single plan for disabled children and young adults, encompassing the support to be offered through social care, health and education. The assessment aims to give children, young adults and their families an idea of how much funding will be available to allow them to plan their support over the next 12 months.

## **Children aged 0 – 4**

It is generally expected that children aged 0 – 4 will not require any paid services to meet their needs, as all children of this age would need a high level of input from their parents or

carers. Only in exceptional circumstances will paid services for children of this age be considered.

## **Carers' Assessment**

Each assessment questionnaire also includes a Carers Assessment; designed to capture the specific needs of the child or young adult's carer(s). Carers Assessment is optional, and therefore a parent/carer has a choice as to whether this will be completed.

However, Darlington Borough Council has decided to allow the needs identified in the Carers' Assessment to be met by a small amount of funding specifically for the carer. This means that this portion of the budget can be used creatively by parents/carers to allow the needs that they and the rest of the family have (as a result of caring for the disabled child or young adult) to be met through paid services.

The Carers' Assessment can be completed for children aged 0 – 4, even if those children are not receiving any paid services in their own right.

## **The Assessment Process**

There are some general points which apply to all the assessments:

- The Social Worker from the Disabled Children and Young Adults Team will be allocated.
- The Social Worker will complete the assessment with the child or young adult, and their parent/carer.
- The assessment is designed to capture outstanding support needs. If the needs of a child or young adult are being (or can be) fully met by other support networks (e.g. parent/carer, wider family, other agencies, universal services) then we will consider those needs met and the result will be a low score within that section.
- The impact on the parent/carer of meeting these needs should be fully recognised within the Carers Assessment.
- The Social Worker will, with the permission of the parent/carer, liaise with other involved professionals to get a thorough overview of the outstanding support needs within each section.
- The assessment should be completed whilst always having regard for what would usually be expected for a child of that age.
- The points will be added up to result in an indicative budget as outlined in the Resource Allocation tables. The final budget may be less or may be more, dependent on the specific needs and the outcomes identified in the Support Plan. However, Darlington Borough Council would generally expect that the identified needs and outcomes can be met within the indicative budget.
- The final budget is agreed with the Social Worker through the validation process.

## **The Care Plan and the Indicative Budget**

The budget should only be used to meet the needs identified within the assessment and the outcomes specified in the Care Plan. Whilst Darlington Borough Council encourages Social Workers, children/young adults, and their parents/carers to be creative in meeting needs, we do need to ensure that the money given is meeting the identified need and is contributing to the specified outcome.

The budget allocated through the Carers Assessment may be used more flexibly to allow the parents/carers to identify the services that they feel would most assist them in their caring role.

## **Who is eligible for short break services?**

The final part of each assessment enables the Social Worker to explain whether the child or young adult meets the eligibility criteria for support from the Disabled Children and Young Adult's Team. These criteria are openly available, and the Social Worker will always share these with the child or young adult and their parents/carers.

If the eligibility criteria are not met, any needs identified within the assessment will not be met through paid services. The Social Worker will assist the child or young adult, and their parent/carer, in trying to find other available services to meet these needs.

To be eligible for a service from the Disabled Children and Young Adults Team, children and young adults must meet the following criteria:

1. Be aged between 0 and 17 and be ordinarily resident in Darlington.
  2. Have complex needs (in addition to any behavioural problems that may be present) or have a serious or life-threatening illness.
  3. There must be evidence that the child or young adult's additional needs impact significantly on their ability to enjoy ordinary day to day activities.
  4. The child or young adult must require a much greater level of day to day care to meet their needs than would usually be required for a person of that age.
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1. They must require a high level of support in at least three of the following areas:
    - a) Personal care and supervision
    - b) Education or employment
    - c) Access to social activities
    - d) Communication
    - e) The physical environment
    - f) Condition management
  2. The child or young adult's condition is life limiting or expected to last 6 months or more.

## **How will services be provided?**

If eligibility criteria are met, and an indicative budget established, there will generally be

several options for support to meet identified needs.

The needs may be met through universal services or through extended family support networks. Universal services are things such as local youth clubs and other services available to the general public.

Many families currently in receipt of paid services prefer to receive these through a Direct Payment, monies paid by the Local Authority directly to families so that they can organise and pay for support themselves. Alternatively, families may prefer to use a provider already identified by the Local Authority as suitable to provide particular types of support through the Community Short Breaks Framework.

## **What range of short breaks is available?**

Short breaks can be for a short period of time, or longer periods such as overnight. If a family chooses to receive a Direct Payment, they will take control over identifying the provider of the short break and will organise their support directly with this provider. The provider may be a family friend or an extended family member or could be an agency or other private provider.

A support service is offered to all families in receipt of a direct payment and can assist with things such as recruitment, employer's responsibilities, payroll and financial returns. This means that many families who may otherwise not have been able to manage a direct payment can actually do so very well

If a family does not feel that a direct payment is suitable to meet their needs, they may choose to access the Community Based Short Breaks Framework which is broken down into five 'lots', as follows:

- Lot 1 – Sport, Art/Craft, Drama, Recreational and Personal Development Activities
- Lot 2 – Holiday Play Schemes and Holiday Opportunities
- Lot 3 – After School Clubs
- Lot 4 – Promotion of Independence Skills, Befriending and Mentoring Services
- Lot 5 – Individual packages of support in the community

The providers on the Framework for each lot have been through a rigorous suitability so families can be sure that they will provide a high quality service Families do not need to use exclusively direct payments or exclusively the Framework, and may choose to use a combination of both. If a framework provider is unable to provide the required support to meet assessed needs, sourcing officers from the council will undertake explorations with alternative support providers.

Parents and carers are normally expected to provide transport to and from short breaks unless they choose to use the budget identified through the Carer's Assessment to pay for this transport.

## **How can young people and families get involved?**

We are always seeking ways to improve support to disabled children, young people and their families. Engagement activity in relation to community short breaks will take place through a number of avenues, existing providers voice of the child and family feedback, through schools

and direct family engagement.

There is an established independent parent carer forum in Darlington – Together for better  
<https://darlingtonpcf.co.uk/>

*“Together for better are parent/carers of children and young people with additional needs (0-25 years) who are passionate about improving our children and young people’s lives”*

Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) provides Inclusion, Participation and Leadership opportunities for disabled young people through its Young Leaders Project. The intention is that young disabled people gain skills and experience in order to influence DAD and other services. Young Leaders is a user led group and aims to achieve the following:

- Improve accessibility of services
- Widen public attitudes with regards disability and change negative attitudes
- Develop leadership skills in members

DAD can be contacted on (01325) 489999 or email: [mail@darlingtondisability.org](mailto:mail@darlingtondisability.org) or [chyps@darlingtondisability.org](mailto:chyps@darlingtondisability.org)

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