



Short Breaks Services in Buckinghamshire

Introduction

Paragraph 6(1) (c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide services designed to give breaks for carers of disabled children. Regulations relating to this duty, which came into force on 1 April 2011, require each local authority to produce a Short Breaks Services Statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for these services, and how the range of services is designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children in their area.

A draft Short Breaks Services Statement produced by Buckinghamshire County Council; was published for consultation alongside a Short Breaks Services for Disabled Children in Buckinghamshire Survey.

Following that consultation an updated Statement was published on 1st October 2011.

The statement may be further amended following a Cabinet Member Decision (October 2011) and presentation to the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust Board (December 2011).

This paper is set out in four sections:

Section I: Delivering Short Break Services in the Future – The Short Breaks Services Statement 2011/2012 (pages 2 - 11).

Section II: The Consultation Process – How the Short Breaks Services Statement has been Prepared: *how the statement has been prepared and what the mechanisms have been for consulting on and agreeing it (pages 13 - 16).*

Section III: The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011- *the requirements on the Local Authority, as specified in the regulations (pages 17 – 18).*

Section IV: The Current Position on Short Breaks in Buckinghamshire - *What short break services are available and how these services have been developed (pages 19 - 37).*



Delivering Short Break Services in the Future –

SHORT BREAKS SERVICES STATEMENT 2011/2012

As a result of the consultative and participative work that it has undertaken over the course of the Short Break Transformation Programme, Buckinghamshire County Council believes that it is providing a good range of services that meet the needs of both parents and disabled children and young people. These services are provided fairly and, where appropriate, have clear, transparent and easy to understand eligibility criteria. Services have been designed to enable families, and their children, to have choices about the services that they access and when they access them to increase flexibility.

Buckinghamshire County Council has worked and continues to work in partnership with partner organisations, and in particular health (through NHS Buckinghamshire) in delivering its short breaks programme.

The Short Breaks Services Statement is set out below under the following headings and principles contained herein:

- Range of Services Available & Eligibility Criteria
 - ❖ Universal Services
 - ❖ Targeted/Supported Services
 - ❖ Specialist Services
 - ❖ Supporting Services

- Ensuring these Services Meet the Needs of Children and Young People and their Parents and Carers
 - ❖ Participation
 - ❖ Monitoring Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

This statement is subject to change following a Cabinet Member Decision and presentation to the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust and as a result of the consultation process, in particular in response to the views expressed by parents and carers and children and young people.

Range of Services Available & Eligibility Criteria

Universal Services

Buckinghamshire County Council, and its partner organisations, will continue to focus on ensuring that as many disabled children and young people as is possible should be able to access and enjoy universal short break services. It will do so by:

Information

- Promoting and publicising the full range of universal services available to families in Buckinghamshire through the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) website, newsletters, targeted emails and letters through the Council's Disability Planning (Pinpoint) Data Base and the Buckinghamshire County Council's Aiming High for Disabled Children's website.
- Working with service providers to ensure that they publish good quality information about their services which includes information about accessibility and their commitment to supporting disabled children's access.

Training

- Continuing to provide Parent led disability awareness/inclusion training, which can be accessed by any universal service provider.
- Ensuring that staff at universal services has information and access to more specialist training opportunities as appropriate.

Support

- Working with service providers to ensure that they understand and meet their obligations to provide services under the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and can access advice and training as needed (through the Bucks Activity Project – Inclusion service).
- Making sure that families have the right support available to them to enable access to universal services, this may be through the provision of information or may be to access additional support (through the Bucks Activity Project).

Access

- Continuing to encourage families and disabled children and young people to make use of services provided in their local communities and through open access to additional support where needed.
- Seeking the views from families about how successful these services are in meeting need and working to improve access where needed.

Buckinghamshire County Council intends to continue supporting the provision of the following universal services during 2011/12:

- Thomley Hall recreational facility
- Thames Valley Adventure Playground
- Longridge outdoor activity centre
- Green Park outdoor activity centre
- Shed at the Park

Eligibility Criteria:

Universal services are open to all and Buckinghamshire County Council has taken the view that as many children and young people as possible should be able to use these services.

Universal services – access will depend on the capacity of the short breaks service and needs of child / young person. They usually operate on ‘a first come first served’ basis and can be accessed by paying any fee applied by that service.

Targeted/Supported Services

Feedback about the range and quality of targeted/supported services provided by Buckinghamshire County Council over the past two years has been very good and there has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people (183% increase since 2008/09) that have been able to access these services which are specifically designed to meet their needs.

Buckinghamshire County Council intends to continue supporting the provision of the following targeted/supported services during 2011/12:

Open Access to Families, No Assessment Currently Needed to Access Targeted/Supported Services

- Crossroads Sitting Service – care in the child’s family home or to access an activity (planned to extend this to a county wide service during 2011/12 and currently out to tender)
- Action for Children: Bucks Activity Project – county wide project for children and young people aged 5 – 19 providing holiday activities, family trips, and 1:1 outreach support to enable children and young people to access universal services of their choice (can be short term bridging support or long term support).
- Action for Children: Bucks Activity Project – County wide targeted weekend clubs for children and young people aged 5 – 19 providing 3 hour group based activities. There is also a developing service to support young people with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) in social

activities, access to universal services and to access Duke of Edinburgh programmes.

- Desborough Play Den – providing a Wycombe based Saturday group based activity service for children aged 5 - 12 years.
- Crossroads Saturday Clubs - providing a Wycombe and Aylesbury based Saturday group based activity service for children aged 12 – 19 years.
- Barnardo's 'Little Breaks' Service- providing a mainly weekend county wide 3 hour short breaks service for children aged 0 – 5 years. This service is also offering developing a Little Summer Breaks service for children 0- 8 years summer 2011.
- Clearly Speaking – providing a range of short break services for children and young people mainly on the autistic spectrum, some of which are county wide.
- South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale branches of the National Autistic Society (NAS) - A range of social activities/ trip for families with children and young people with ASD and the Rainbow club, where nearly 1,500 hours were provided in 2010/11
- Young Deaf Activities - A range of social activities/ trips for children and young people with hearing impairments, where over 2,500 hours were provided in 2010/11
- Talkback – a range of school holiday arts based activity short breaks
- A range of county wide disability sports clubs across special schools
- A range of targeted youth groups across youth centres in Buckinghamshire

Responding to Feedback

Feedback has been received through our main provider of targeted/supported services and many parents/carers say they have experienced a reduction of some specific service provision.

This is because whilst there has been an increase in the range of short breaks services available, and increased funding to that service and other short break services under the transformation programme (group based targeted/supported hours have increased by 105% since 2008) , the numbers of children and young people accessing these services have increased dramatically. This is because more children and young people have become aware of services through increased access to information and participation work and accessing these services.

Buckinghamshire County Council has maintained its overall level of funding to support targeted/supported and specialist short breaks for 2011/2012. This is despite a significant reduction of funding available to the Council in this year.

Therefore to respond to this specific issue about reduced provision, specifically in the longer summer school holiday period we are doing the following:

- Redirecting some of the available short breaks funding to support local voluntary agencies to offer a range of additional activities/trips this summer.
- Identifying other funding within the Council to support the development of a new short breaks service (called Little Summer Breaks).
- Working with our main provider of targeted/supported short breaks to vary the contracts we have in place so that the services can be delivered more flexibly under the contract terms and funding. This means in practice that more holiday provision will be able to be provided this summer than was expected (increase from 1 to 2 activities per day over the whole 6 week holiday period).

Local Offer

Buckinghamshire does not currently operate a Local Offer (A minimum level of service over and above that provided by universal services offered without assessment to all children who meet clearly defined eligibility criteria and by providing existing evidence of a disability).

Instead, and in order to become as inclusive of as many disabled children and young people as possible, Buckinghamshire has opened up all the commissioned targeted/supported short breaks services (e.g. Bucks Activity Project – school holiday provision and 1:1 outreach to access universal services, Bucks Activity – weekend services, Crossroads Saturday clubs, Little Breaks, Crossroads sitting service etc) it supports with funding to all children who meet the following definition of ‘disability’ under the Equality Act 2010 -

In the Act, a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping

This means that families accessing targeted/supported services in Buckinghamshire are not subject to any additional assessment by the local authority, and do not need to provide existing evidence of a disability.

By doing this we aim to make these services easily accessible and in keeping with families' wishes to lead lives which are as ordinary as possible and where they often do not need or wish to have an additional assessment. This allows the local authority to deploy scarce resources for assessment where they are most needed.

If Buckinghamshire were to operate a more formal 'Local Offer' funding would need to be directed from the available resources for short breaks to administer this.

Eligibility Criteria:

Targeted/Supported services are open access services especially designed to meet the needs of disabled children and young people. All of these services can currently be accessed directly without assessment.

Access to targeted/ supported services will depend on the capacity of the short break and needs of child / young person. Most services at this level will not operate on an 'a first come first served' basis but will try to allocate their resources fairly and can be accessed by paying any fee applied by that service. Fees applied by these services may be subject to review.

Specialist Services

Specialist services enable those families and children and young people who require more support than is available through universal and targeted/supported services to access short breaks.

Access to these services is through the Children with Social Care Teams, who have clearly defined threshold and eligibility criteria for assessing need (this eligibility criteria is currently under review). Information on how to access social care for children and families can be accessed: http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/children_social_care/children_family.page?

Children with Disability Social Care Teams

Caring for a child who is sick or has a disability (learning or physical disability and/or visual or hearing impairment).

If your child is sick or disabled, he or she may already be receiving treatment and/ or support from your GP, health visitor, hospital doctors and nurses, and therapists. Social Care for Children and Families has a team of specialist social workers and occupational therapists who work with sick and disabled children and their families. The support they offer is different from the help other people can give you.

Social Care for Children and Families can help you by:

- Listening to your problems and trying to find ways of helping
- Giving advice about financial benefits and how to claim them
- Giving information about services available to help you cope with the extra problems illness and disability can bring
- Supporting you in dealing with other agencies e.g. education, housing, benefits agency etc.
- Working together with parents honestly and in collaboration with the people who know their child best
- Accessing the needs of the child, siblings and carer/s, also taking account of any diversity needs

Kinds of help available:

- Practical Help – There are services to provide help in caring for your child or to help you care for your other children. These are provided by carers from private and voluntary agencies. For any services provided through Social Care, a social worker will assess your needs and will let you know what services your child is eligible for based on this assessment. There are four possible routes to receiving services.
 1. Financing them through the benefits you receive from the benefits agency.
 2. Financing through Social Care for Children and Families but you may be asked to make a contribution towards costs.
 3. Social Care for Children and Families may offer you a direct payment so you can organise the service you need for yourself.
 4. Financing them yourself.
- Short Breaks – are provided to give you a rest and give your child some new experiences away from home.

Listening to your views:

Social workers from the team for Children with Disabilities are experienced at dealing with the challenges children and families have to face, because of sickness or disability. They are concerned and they will listen to you to identify how they can help. If you would like to talk to a social worker or another parent, please call 0845 370 8090 where all initial enquiries will go through the main call centre on **0845 370 8090**, then they will direct you to the relevant team for your where you live.

Buckinghamshire County Council intends to:

- Maintain its current level and range of provision (see below).
- Continue to seek the views of parents and carers and children and young people who use specialist services to ensure that these services are best meeting the range of needs.

- Respond to these views in a detailed commissioning plan to be developed over this year for implementation in 2012/13/14.
- Continue to work with colleagues in Adult Services (through the Joint Commissioner CYPS and ASC) to improve and develop the transition process between children's and adult's social care services.

Buckinghamshire County Council intends to continue supporting the provision of the following specialist services during 2011/12:

- The residential overnight short break service, which is jointly funded by Buckinghamshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire through a pooled budget arrangement (this specialist service is only accessed through a multi-agency needs assessment and children's health needs are met through the integrated service)
- Direct Payments for short breaks
- Funded Community childminding
- Domiciliary care (providing care in the child's home by a registered carer)
- Take-a-Break and Befriending service

Eligibility Criteria:

Access to specialist services is through the Children with Social Care Teams, who have clearly defined threshold and eligibility criteria for assessing need (this eligibility criteria is currently under review).

The Council applies a charge for some specialist short breaks services (currently only for overnight care) in the form of a contribution towards the child's short breaks service (under the provisions of the Children Act 1989). This would not be applied to families who are in receipt of certain welfare benefits. The Council is currently reviewing how it applies charges for short breaks services.

Supporting Services

In order to continue with the range of short break services highlighted above (universal, supported/targeted and specialist), Buckinghamshire County Council intends to continue to support and facilitate access to services by:

- Supporting the provision of the Child Specific Training Service (nursing and occupational therapist service to provide training to short break providers to enable disabled children and young people with complex health and/or complex moving and handling needs to access a short break. **Eligibility for this service: open to any provider across the range of universal, targeted/supported and specialist services.**
- Continuing to work with the NHS to ensure we are working together and making the best use of available funding and resources for short breaks.

- Continuing to provide the Childcare & Early Education Broker Service to ensure that all families who wish to use childcare as a Short Breaks Service are provided with high quality, up-to-date information and support to access suitable provision. **Eligibility to access information: open to anyone with complex requirements.**
- Continuing to support the Workforce Development programme to ensure that appropriate disability focus training is included in all training plans. That a modular short breaks training programme is provided for short break service providers to access. **Eligibility for this service: open to any provider across the range of universal, targeted/supported and specialist services.**
- Continuing to develop and promote the Buckinghamshire Family Information web-site to ensure that all families have access to good quality, up-to-date information, which includes disability and short breaks pages. **Eligibility to access information: open to anyone.**

Ensuring these Services Meet the Needs of Children and Young People and their Parents and Carers

Participation

Buckinghamshire County Council will continue to ensure that the views of parents and carers are represented at all stages of the commissioning and service monitoring cycle by:

- Continuing to fund and work in partnership with the Parent Participation Service and FACT Bucks, to ensure that
 - ❖ Its representatives' are fully involved in all relevant strategy and working groups and are able to influence the development of existing and new services.
 - ❖ It is able to collect and represent the views of parents and carers about short break services and is able to independently report its findings.
- Ensuring that parents and carers, are integral in any new commissioning/procurement processes for services.
- Ensuring that all short break service providers, funded by the Council, must regularly seek out and report on the views of parents and carers as to the quality of the service and must make this information available to service commissioners at regular contract monitoring meetings.
- Planning how we will more directly involve parents and carers in regular contract monitoring meetings so that they may put their views directly to service providers and service commissioners.

- Responding to all parent and carer surveys, or views expressed at contract meetings, setting out what action will be taken to address any concerns or issues raised.
- Regularly reviewing any complaints received at the Council to ensure that, where necessary and appropriate, lessons are learnt and remedial actions taken.

Buckinghamshire County Councils Children's and Young People's Service will continue to ensure that the views of children and young people are represented at all stages of the commissioning and service monitoring cycle by:

- Continuing to fund and work in partnership with the Children and Young People's Participation Service, to ensure that
 - ❖ That children and young people are supported to be involved in all relevant strategy and working groups and are able to influence the development of existing and new services.
 - ❖ It is able to collect and represent the views of children and young people about short break services and is able to independently report its findings.

Buckinghamshire County Council will continue to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard by:

- Ensuring that all short break service providers, funded by the Council, must regularly seek out and report on the views of children and young people as to the quality of the service and must make this information available to service commissioners at regular contract monitoring meetings.
- Responding to all surveys of children and young people's views setting out what action will be taken to address any concerns or issues raised.
- Regularly reviewing any complaints received at the Council to ensure that, where necessary and appropriate, lessons are learnt and remedial actions taken.

Monitoring Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

Many of the short break services provided by Buckinghamshire County Council do not require any assessment to be undertaken to access.

Our eligibility for services is based on the following principles:

- Promoting the health, safety and well being of disabled children and young people, ensuring that they can fully participate in family and community life, enjoying themselves with friends and making decisions about their lives.
- Preventing family crises through the provision of the right level of support at the right time.

- The need to be fair, clear and equitable.

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 of their child's disability and its severity. Some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. This is why we may need to assess your child and family to ensure we provide the right level of support and short breaks at the right time.

Buckinghamshire County Council believes that it has in place clear, transparent and easy to understand access to both targeted services/supported and eligibility criteria to specialist services assessment.

Buckinghamshire County Council will continue to ensure that our approach to offering targeted/supported short break services without the need for assessment or needing to provide evidence of disability is meeting the needs of families by:

- Regularly monitoring the targeted/supported services we offer to ensure that no group of children or young people have been unfairly excluded and that they have received equal access.
- Reviewing the eligibility criteria for Children with Disabilities Team.
- Reviewing the access and eligibility criteria for short breaks, and parental satisfaction with these, through the Parent Participation Service and FACT Bucks.

A Development Plan to support this Short Breaks Services Statement will be published during January 2012, which sets out how we will move forward with commissioning short breaks from 2012/2013 following the feedback received through the recent short breaks consultation, participation work, and work planned to review access/eligibility, priority and charging for short breaks. The Development Plan will be reviewed during 2012/2013.

It is planned to undertake a further formal consultation on short breaks services during 2013/14 and to refresh the Short Breaks Services Statement following this.

Section II: the Consultation Process - How the Short Breaks Services Statement was Prepared

Background

This statement was drafted using information from parents and carers, and children and young people, gathered over the course of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Break Transformation Programme in Buckinghamshire.

It has been subject to a period of external consultation, which ended on 7th September 2011 and using existing mechanisms for participation and consultation with both parents and carers:

- Council Website
- Pinpoint Disability Planning Data Base
- The Parent Participation network
- FACT Bucks
- Bucks Family Information Service (BFIS)

Disabled children and young people in Buckinghamshire:

- CYP Participation service

And internal consultation processes:

- Eligibility and Access to Short Breaks Task Group
- Short Breaks Programme Board
- Safeguarding Division

Consultation with parents and carers of disabled children

The 'external' consultation was supported by the Parent Participation Service, which is funded by Buckinghamshire County Council to seek out and report the views of parents and carers from both their network and the wider population of parents and carers of disabled children and linked to FACT Bucks (short for Families and Carers Together in Buckinghamshire, which is a group for parents who meet to discuss real issues that affect children and young people with additional needs and disabilities in Buckinghamshire).

There were 95 respondents to the formal consultation on short breaks and the draft Short Breaks Services Statement. Data from the survey has been analysed and showed the following results:

- 72% of respondents to the question were very satisfied or satisfied that 'targeted/supported' services met the needs of disabled children and young people compared with 12% who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (others expressed a neutral response)
- Of those respondents to the question of how satisfied were they that specialist services meet the short breaks needs of disabled children

and young people, there was a large response expressing don't know or neither agree/disagree. Our hypothesis regarding this is that specialist short break services are used by the smaller group of disabled children and young people with the highest needs/and family needs. Of those that gave a definitive satisfaction rating 85% were very satisfied or satisfied compared with 15% who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

- Nearly 60% of respondents to the question have a satisfied or very satisfied rating to Short Breaks services overall compared to 15% who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (others expressed a neutral response)
- 56% of respondents thought that the overall provision of short breaks had got a lot or a bit better compared with 31% who thought they had stayed the same and 13% who thought they had got a bit or lot worse.
- 50% of respondents to the question agreed or strongly agreed with the draft Short Breaks Services Statement compared to 2% who disagreed with the statement, though it is noted that 48% neither agree/disagree or don't know

The statement has been revised as a result of the consultation, but the consultation has generally supported the statement on how short breaks are provided in Buckinghamshire.

There is a further more detailed analysis to be undertaken of all the comments and suggestions for improvement provided through the survey, as well as the feedback received through participation Parent Forums across Buckinghamshire, which will be used to inform the development plan for short breaks.

Consultation with disabled children and young people

A separate targeted piece of consultation work was supported by the CYP Participation Service, which is funded by Buckinghamshire County Council to consolidate and extend the participation of disabled young people in decisions concerning services that are provided for them.

During August and September 2011 a total of 109 disabled children and young people were consulted with (main age range 6 – 16+ years). Consultation took place with children across 3 special schools' provision and children attending a holiday short breaks provision. There was an overall positive response to short breaks with suggestions as to how they could be improved (these will feed into the development plan to be developed for short breaks).

In response to the question: Why is it important for you to attend Short Breaks? The following comments were received:

- Meeting new people / making new friends
- Having time away from my family
- Mummy / family to have time to themselves

- Having Fun / To Play
- Learning new skills / Having new opportunities
- Building Confidence
- Broadening interests / Trying new things
- Being Active
- Keeps me out of trouble / So I don't get bored
- Helping others
- So parents see how good you are
- Family trips

The consultation concluded, having listened to the children and young people and having looked through all of the evidence, it is clear that children and young people on the whole enjoy the Short Breaks services they receive both with Bucks Activity Project and with the other providers mentioned. It was also clear from the evidence that the most important thing to the children and young people about the Short Breaks is the opportunity to attend a wide range of activities which keep them engaged and entertained, providing new opportunities to make friends and learn new skills away from the presence of their family.

Although the Short Breaks services are often viewed as an opportunity for the families of disabled children and young people to receive respite, it is clear that the children and young people also value this time away from their families as *their* opportunity to receive respite and spend time with their peers.

The consultation process has provided opportunities for parents, carers, children and young people to express their views both directly (face-to-face FACT Bucks meeting, parent forums etc) and indirectly (questionnaires, e-mails etc.). This consultation document highlights the questions that will be asked during the process; those consulted will, of course, be able to add any other comments that they wish to make and account will be taken of all responses.

A summary of the statement will be developed for disabled children and young people.

Consultation with professionals and Providers

Professionals and providers had the opportunity to complete the recent online survey regarding short breaks and the draft Short Breaks Services Statement, though there was a very limited response which does not support a viable analysis. An informal 'professionals' consultation was also undertaken amongst children with disability social work teams. This consultation was managed by the Commissioner responsible, based in the Commissioning and Business Improvement Service Directorate.

Agreeing the final statement

Following the consultation period the statement was revised and agreed by the Short Breaks Programme Board in September 2011. It is now subject to a

formal Cabinet Member Decision and will be presented to the Buckinghamshire Children and Young people's Trust Board in December 2011 where further changes may be agreed.

The final statement is being posted in full on the AHDC part of the Buckinghamshire County Council website, also accessible through the Children and Young People's Trust (Buckinghamshire Partnerships) website. www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/aiminghigh
(Website links will be sent via BFIS, Pinpoint Disability Planning Data base. Parent Participation network and through FACT Bucks.)

A summary of the final statement for disabled children and young people will be developed and also made available on the AHDC website (as above).

Development Plan

A Development Plan to support this Short Breaks Services Statement will be published during January 2012, which sets out how we will move forward with commissioning short breaks from 2012/2013 following the feedback received through the recent short breaks consultation, participation work, and work planned to review access/eligibility, priority and charging for short breaks. This will enable Buckinghamshire County Council to align any future consultation processes or revisions with service planning and commissioning cycles (which typically are aligned with financial years) to ensure that we proceed with a valid mandate. The Development Plan will be reviewed during 2012/2013.

Reviewing the statement

The statement will be regularly monitored at meetings of Buckinghamshire Short Breaks Programme Board.

It is planned to undertake a further formal consultation on Short Breaks Services during 2013/14 and to refresh the Short Breaks Services Statement following this.

Lead officer responsible for the statement

The lead officer responsible for preparing the Buckinghamshire Short Breaks Services Statement is Rona Hopwood, Commissioner, who reports to the Short Breaks Programme Board. Any queries on the process for producing and agreeing the statement should be addressed to Rona Hopwood at rhopwood@buckscc.gov.uk

Section III: The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011

Summary

This section of the statement summarises paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 which requires local authorities to provide services designed to give breaks for carers of disabled children. A copy of *The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011* can be viewed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/707/made> for detailed reference.

In order to meet the requirements of the regulations, Local Authorities must have regard to the needs of carers¹ in respect of their capacity to care for, or continue to care for, their disabled² child, and must provide a range of services designed to meet this need. A Short Breaks Services Statement must also be prepared and published.

Duty to make provision (summary)

Local authorities must take into account the needs of carers who would:

- Be unable to continue caring for their child unless breaks from caring were given; or
- Who would be able to give more effective care if breaks were given to allow them to, for example, attend educational classes, training or a leisure activity, meet the needs of other children in the family, or carry out necessary day-to-day tasks in the household.

Types of services which must be provided (summary)

Local Authorities must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide a range of services sufficient to meet the needs of carers to care, or care more effectively, including:

- Day care in the child's own home and elsewhere
- Overnight care in the child's own home and elsewhere
- Educational or leisure activities for children outside their own homes
- Services in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays

Short breaks services statement (summary)

Local Authorities must prepare a statement for carers in their area setting out:

¹ 'Carer' means a person who cares for a disabled child and who is the child's parent or a person who has parental responsibility for that child.

² 'Disabled' has the meaning given in section 17(11) of the 1989 Act.

- The range of services available;
- Any eligibility criteria for these services; and
- How the range of services is designed to meet the needs of carers

This statement must:

- Be published by 1 October 2011 on the Local Authority website
- Be kept under review and, where appropriate, revised
- Be prepared and reviewed with regard to the views of carers in the area.

Section IV: The Current Position on Short Breaks in Buckinghamshire

Background

In order to understand how best to proceed with the development of a Short Breaks Services Statement (and subsequently how best to develop and deliver services in the future) it is important to consider how services have been developed in collaboration with parents and carers and children and young people, and what services are currently available.

This section summaries services, and the rationale underpinning these services, under the following headings:

- A Definition of Short Break Services;
- The Vision for Short Breaks in Buckinghamshire – the views of parents and carers and children and young people
- The range of short break services currently available in Buckinghamshire:
 - ❖ Universal services
 - ❖ Supported/Targeted services
 - ❖ Specialist services
 - ❖ Supporting services

A number of consultation questions are highlighted, the responses to which will help inform the development of the Short Breaks Services Statement which is to be published by 1 October 2011. The statement will, in turn, underpin the development of commissioning and delivery plans for short break services for the year 2012/13.

A Definition of Short Break Services

Short breaks provide opportunities for children and young people with disabilities to spend time away from their primary carers, and provide opportunities for their parents and carers to have a break from caring responsibilities.

Short breaks can include day, evening, overnight, weekend or holiday activities that take place in the child or young person's own home, the home of an approved carer, a residential or community setting.

Short breaks range from supporting children and young people with disabilities to access universal services, through to providing specialist services at a local and regional level, where appropriate.

A local definition has been adopted across Buckinghamshire as follows:

- Time away from the family for the disabled child or young person, giving them the opportunity for independence, to have fun with their peers, make new friends and have new experiences.

- A break from caring for their parents and siblings – locally we have agreed that a short break would usually be a minimum of 2 hours when family members do not have to be present to provide care or support for the disabled young person.

The Vision for Short Breaks in Buckinghamshire - The views of parents and carers and children and young people

A short breaks survey was undertaken at the start of the Aiming High Short Break Transformation Programme (2009) to support the development of a strategic vision for the future of short breaks.

During 2010 some targeted pieces of consultation work have been undertaken with disabled children and young people to understand their short break/activity needs.

During 2009/10 and 2010/11 the Buckinghamshire Parent Participation Service has facilitated a range of regular meetings and occasional events to participate with parents on either specific topics or more generally to support the overall AHDC programme and supported parent representatives to become core members of both the AHDC Programme Board (now the Short Breaks Programme Board) and key task groups which have reported into the Board e.g. Eligibility and Access to Short Breaks Group, Participation, Communication and Communication Group, Residential Short Breaks Consultative Group, Workforce Development Group, and Disabled Children's Access to Childcare Group (DCATCH). Parent Participation worker represented parent view at Access to Universal Services task Group as no parents were identified to attend.

During 2009/10 and 2010/11 the CYP Participation Service has supported opportunities to work with disabled children and young people to improve access to services by:

- Increasing awareness of services available to them in their area
- Increasing understanding of how those services can be accessed
- Supporting them to be actively involved in the planning and delivery of services in their local area
- Increasing awareness of ways in which they can give feedback on their experiences of services

An overall AHDC programme evaluation survey was undertaken March 2011 and been evaluated.

The vision, set out below, is still held and shared by Buckinghamshire County Council and its partner organisations, and underpins the development and provision of all short break services in Buckinghamshire (parent/carers and children and young people views are represented through the quotes that support the vision).

Parents, carers, children and young people want services that:

- Are positive, enjoyable and appropriate experiences for disabled children and young people

"Active play for my son, with children of the same ability as him"

"Youth club, Sports Club, Friendship/social club"

"A young person to support my child and take them swimming or bring another child to our home to support them both to interact together on the play station or on other activities"

"More diversity needed for teenagers in short breaks."

"Teenagers with learning difficulties need opportunities to interact with peers without parents, but with adult supervision"

- Are accessible – our starting point is that all children and young people should be able to access universal services. In addition, we recognise the need to provide additional services according to some children and young people's individual need.

"A carer to join us on day trips"

"Help to access clubs/activities, information on activities willing to accept deaf children"

"Because of complex needs of my child (e.g., feeding, having Apnoeas) they would need to be looked after by people with a sufficient knowledge of their needs and understanding of risk factors"

"If staff of certain children could have higher training in medical needs such as epilepsy etc it would help gives continued care to children like our daughter"

- Are flexible and person-centred, and aim to meet the individual needs of children and young people, and their families.

"It would be helpful to have more care at home rather than always having to go away to the respite unit"

"We would appreciate more opportunity to arrange a break at short notice and more help in school holidays during day"

- Allow parents and families a break from caring responsibilities.

"For some parents the provision of short breaks simply means the difference between being able to cope with their disabled child and not being able to cope."

"Over night respite"

"Someone who could look after my child every now and then so I can spend quality time with my other daughter or have some time with myself"

"Short break services provide us time to gain our equilibrium/charge our batteries up. It has been a lifeline"

"Short breaks are a lifesaver and allow time for other siblings and partner."

- Are regular and reliable and at the times that children and young people and their families most need the breaks, for example during the school holidays and at weekends.

"Help in holidays"

"Would like more schemes at the weekends and during holidays." More support in the evening, which would enable me to do activities with my other son"

"Weekend respite"

"Need more help during school holidays"

"More provision during school holidays would be helpful"

"More respite during the holidays especially during the summer"

"Weekend clubs"

"Yes we would appreciate more short break help during school holidays"

- Are easy to access, and have transparent, easy to understand eligibility criteria, and make available good quality, clear information about services.

"How do you know if you are entitled to receive a short break service or direct payment?"

Are these things offered to you or do you have to ask?"

"It is difficult to find information on what services are available"

"We are not aware of the available services"

Disabled children and young people in Buckinghamshire told us they want:

"To take part in more fun activities"

"To take part in activities with their siblings and non disabled peers that builds their confidence"

"Access to a big range of exciting opportunities including challenging and adventurous ones"

"To be safe but not prevented from doing certain activities"

"To access local facilities with their siblings, peers and non disabled peers"

To achieve this vision, we agreed to:

- Work together, with parents and carers and other local partners, through the AHDC Programme Board, the task groups reporting into it and through the Parent Participation Service and their link to FACT Bucks and parent forums.
- Work to improve the involvement of parents, carers and disabled children and young people in all aspects of short break planning and delivery. Within this to support a more active engagement with those potential service users who are not currently receiving services and those in hard to reach groups and communities.

- Develop the short breaks market by working closely with providers and potential providers to ensure that we commission services that are of the highest possible quality, that meet the needs identified, at the best value cost. This includes working with small local voluntary organisations to support them with small amounts of grant funding to increase the range of work they do.
- Develop our short breaks workforce by ensuring that we identify the skills that our commissioning plan requires our workforce to have and to meet the Children’s Workforce and Development Council (CWDC) Short breaks Carer Worker Standards where appropriate, and ensuring that this is reflected in our workforce development strategy, working closely with the core Workforce Development Group to achieve this.
- Develop our universal services through supporting the workforce by providing access to parent led inclusion training and providing access to both capital and revenue funding to support increased access by disabled children and young people.
- Regularly monitor and report on progress to the AHDC Programme Board, who, in turn, report to the Joint Commissioning Group through to the Children’s Trust Board.

The Range of Short Break Services Currently Available in Buckinghamshire

Universal Services

Buckinghamshire County Council has taken the view that access to Universal Services (leisure centres, children’s centres, after school activities, child care, libraries, playgrounds, bowling, cinemas, theatres and youth clubs for example) is very important for disabled children and their families, and that as many children and young people as possible should be able to use these services.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken over the past two years to ensure that universal services are accessible and explicitly welcoming to disabled children and their families. This work has been supported by workforce development and in particular the "Opening Minds, Opening Doors" training; a programme which has trained Parents to deliver inclusion training to universal services and childcare settings. This has been extremely well received and has provided part-time flexible employment to 13 parent carers. Feedback from providers has shown that training provided by parents has a greater impact.

“Encouraged review of our activities and approach. Will think about ways to improve our practice over next few weeks.”

“Very informative, given me ideas on how I could make my setting available to children with disabilities and special educational needs.”

"Helped me to understand a little bit more that children need a positive response around them and can be very aware of the negativity of others who are fearful."

"It was good to have parents providing information as they have more knowledge about how children and parents are treated and how this can be changed or improved."

A significant sum of capital funding has been invested across a range of universal services in Buckinghamshire to increase access by disabled children and young people.

Places that have been funded included:

- Thomley Activity Centre in Worminghall - a recreational facility for disabled children, their families, friends, schools and groups, which AHDC funding supported to complete their new disabled teenage provision.
- Longridge in Marlow – an outdoor activity adventure centre, which AHDC funding supported to complete their new training centre
- Chandos Park in Buckingham, which AHDC funding supported their new children's play area and purchase some additional play equipment suitable for physically disabled children.
- Jardines Bowling Club in Aylesbury, which AHDC funding supported to purchase specialist balls/bowling ball ramps and to create a ramped access into the main bowling area to replace an old 'dingy' access route
- Green Park Outdoor Education Centre a county wide provision in Aston Clinton – AHDC funding enabled the purchase of a range of specialist sensory and adventure equipment to improve the activities for disabled children and young people e.g. pipe garden, swing and zip wire
- Aqua Vale in Aylesbury and Swan Pool in Buckingham – AHDC funding used to support these two swimming pools to improve their changing areas and hoisting equipment
- Chesham Leisure Centre, which AHDC funding supported the adaption of a gym area into a sensory play area
- Chiltern Pool and Leisure Centre, which AHDC funding supported 'changing places' facilities and access to the climbing wall for children and young people using wheelchairs
- Chalfont Leisure Centre, which AHDC funding supported improvements to access in the reception area.

"The new sensory equipment was a big hit with all the students; they especially liked the ball pit and lights. We are hoping to set up regular session for local schools with special needs to visit this area and benefit from all the new equipment we offer."

Families told us that accessing universal facilities was often difficult because of a lack of appropriate changing and toilet facilities and also quiet areas for children and young people (needing 'quiet time'). The Aiming High team encouraged capital bids to provide 'Changing Places'. Changing Places are different from disabled toilets as they provide extra facilities such as hoists and larger scale changing areas. A Changing Places has been installed at the Chiltern Leisure Centre in Amersham; a further facility will open at the Aqua Vale Pool in Aylesbury during 2011. These facilities will be open to disabled children and adults regardless of whether or not they are using the centres. Two activity centres in the north and south of the county have also installed 'Changing Places' as a result of the funding they received.

AHDC funding has also been used to help the Buckinghamshire library service install 'Boardmaker' across 5 sites, so that families can access this communication system to support the work being done with their children in schools. This was in direct response to parents asking for this.

AHDC Funding has also been used to increase the range of sensory and specialist toys available to both the Community Childminding network and to Boomerang, a county wide toy library resource to improve access to disabled children.

Carers Bucks the Buckinghamshire carers service has benefitted from funding through AHDC to offer carers breaks and to supporting sibling carer activities.

Colleagues in Early Years have undertaken a considerable amount of work to ensure that disabled children and their families have improved access to good quality childcare in Buckinghamshire through the workforce development programme, increased information and the introduction of a child care broker.

Short breaks funding has been used and continues to be used to support the ongoing short break and activity work of the following range of services:

- Thomley Hall recreational facility - where over 3,000 hours of activity were provided for Buckinghamshire families during 2010/11
- Thames Valley Adventure Playground – where over 1,500 hours of activity were provided for Buckinghamshire families during 2010/11
- Longridge outdoor activity centre – where nearly 2,000 hours of activity were provided for Buckinghamshire families during 2010/11
- Green Park outdoor activity centre – all ability programme where residential breaks were provided to over 20 young people and nearly 5,000 hours of activity were provided in 2010/11
- Community Childminding

"He enjoyed it a lot and I think it helped his confidence, his interaction with others his gross and fine motor skill development especially."

"I am sure that she feels the benefits of the week and will be braver to tackle new challenges with her self confidence. I felt truly privileged to see the young people participating and growing in confidence in their abilities"

Targeted/Supported Services

Whilst Universal Services are important, it is recognised that some disabled children and young people will need additional support to access them, or may need to access groups or services that are specifically designed to meet their needs.

This support has been provided through AHDC funding and continues to be funded through Early Intervention Grant and other Council funding streams:

- The provision of a number of services especially designed to meet the needs of disabled children and young people. All of these services can be accessed directly without assessment and include:
 - ❖ *Crossroads Sitting Service – care in the child's family home or to access an activity (planned to extend this to a county wide service during 2011/12)*
 - ❖ *Action for children: Bucks Activity Project – county wide project for children and young people aged 5 – 19 providing holiday activities, family trips, and 1:1 outreach support to enable children and young people to access universal services of their choice (can be short term bridging support or long term support). There are currently over 200 children and young people accessing this group of services.*
 - ❖ *Action for Children: Bucks Activity Project – County wide targeted weekend clubs for children and young people aged 5 – 19 providing 3 hour group based activities. There are currently over 80 children and young people accessing these services. There is also a developing service to support young people with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) in social activities, access to universal services and to access Duke of Edinburgh programmes.*
 - ❖ *Desborough Play Den – providing a Wycombe based Saturday group based activity service for children aged 5 - 12 years. There are currently about 50 children accessing this service.*
 - ❖ *Crossroads Saturday Clubs - providing a Wycombe and Aylesbury based Saturday group based activity service for children aged 12 – 19 years. There are currently over 40 children and young people accessing these services.*
 - ❖ *Barnardo's 'Little Breaks' Service- providing a mainly weekend county wide 3 hour short breaks service for children aged 0 – 5 years. There are currently about 60 children accessing this service.*
 - ❖ *Clearly Speaking – providing a range of short break services for children and young people mainly on the autistic spectrum, some of which are county wide. This has included debate clubs, social outings and the development of a 'Glee' club. There are currently about 40 children accessing these services.*
 - ❖ *South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale branches of the National Autistic Society (NAS) - A range of social activities/ trip for*

families with children and young people with ASD and the Rainbow club, where nearly 1,500 hours were provided in 2010/11

- ❖ Young Deaf Activities - A range of social activities/ trips for children and young people with hearing impairments, where over 2,500 hours were provided in 2010/11
- ❖ Talkback – a range of school holiday arts based activity short breaks for approximately 20 young people in 2010/11
- ❖ A range of county wide disability sports clubs across special schools
- ❖ A range of targeted youth groups across youth centres in Buckinghamshire (despite extensive budget cuts to youth services for 2011/12 there will continue to be at least one disability group at each of the Council's two retained centres (Youthspace Aylesbury and Youthspace Wycombe) as well as three open access nights which any young people can attend at each centre)

"Generally a little bit more confident and has helped prepare him for nursery."

"1-1 system has helped with speech and language. Has calmed down a lot - behaviour has really improved"

"Here my child is happy and free in his skin with no-one judging his quiriness. It provides a huge relaxation for me as his mum"

"This group is having a positive effect on my child and is great for our whole family"

"It has created a blossoming network of social opportunity as well as sporting"

"My daughter has complex needs, and requires 24/7 care. This can be very tiresome however the 3 hours per week which has been allocated to her are of great benefit to not only her but also my eldest daughter as it enables me to spend some quality time with her, to make her feel just as special as her sister".

"At a time when the pressure is really on for children and young people to be able to speak up and communicate clearly with others, what better way to build confidence and encourage that voice than through song and music making"

Further information about all these and other activities can be found on the Buckinghamshire Family Information Website (BFIS)

<http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/>

Some capital funding was used in 2011/12 to support targeted/supported services and included:

- Specialist sensory (lighting and sound) equipment for Booker Park Hydrotherapy pool
- Toys and moving and handling equipment for the Bucks Activity Project – weekend clubs
- Specialist toys and sensory equipment for the Little Breaks Service

“Thank you for arranging the family swim sessions we have all thoroughly enjoyed each one. I think following Father Christmas Visit to our house it has been one of the highlights for the girls they have been so excited before each session.”

“We were able to purchase some more sensory equipment, including a pop up tent, cause & effect toys, musical instruments, a large water/sand tray that allows for wheelchair access, large spinning top, role play resources and a new skittle game were amongst the many items.”

Specialist Services

Some children and young people and their families will require even more support than is available through the universal and targeted/supported services available in Buckinghamshire, for example overnight residential, specialist outreach through the residential service, family based care such as Take-a-Break, funded community childminding or domiciliary services or Direct Payments (for families to directly purchase short breaks) etc.

Access to these specialist services is through the Children with Disability Teams (CWD), who have clearly defined threshold and eligibility criteria for assessing need which have been agreed by Buckinghamshire County Council (this eligibility criteria is currently under review).

Children who do not meet the threshold for the CWD Teams may be entitled to assessment of their needs through other Children Social Work Teams e.g. Referral and Assessment Teams, where such needs are assessed.

AHDC has contributed to these specialist services through capital and revenue funded projects and is continuing to support these services through Early Intervention Grant 2011/12.

The range of capital projects has included:

- Specialist equipment and adaptation across the two residential overnight short break buildings:
 - ❖ Phase 1 of capital works to the Grove – extension to house increased social space and a sensory room to increase the access of children and young people with complex health

needs (phase 2 is planned for 2011/12, which will see the completion of a 2 bed extension)

- ❖ Specialist adapted bath/ hoists/ beds, chairs /equipment for Merryfields
- Specialist equipment to support Take-a- Break and contract carers e.g. car seats, beds, hoists etc

With the closure of two of the residential buildings as they were no longer fit for purpose it has been essential to improve the space and access of the two remaining residential units.

AHDC Revenue funded projects, which will be continued through 2011/12 from early Intervention Grant have included:

- Development of a Contract Carer scheme to expand the work of the Take-a-Break service. These are approved foster carers for disabled children and young people like the Take-a-Break carers but provide such care on a much more regular basis to several children over each month.
- Expansion of the Direct Payments Service – increased budget to support new short breaks direct payments and to increase some packages
- Development of a new Outreach service as part of the re-commissioned residential overnight short break service – this service offer 1:1 care to provide overnight sitting in the child's home, or access to community activities, where this is more appropriate than a residential stay.

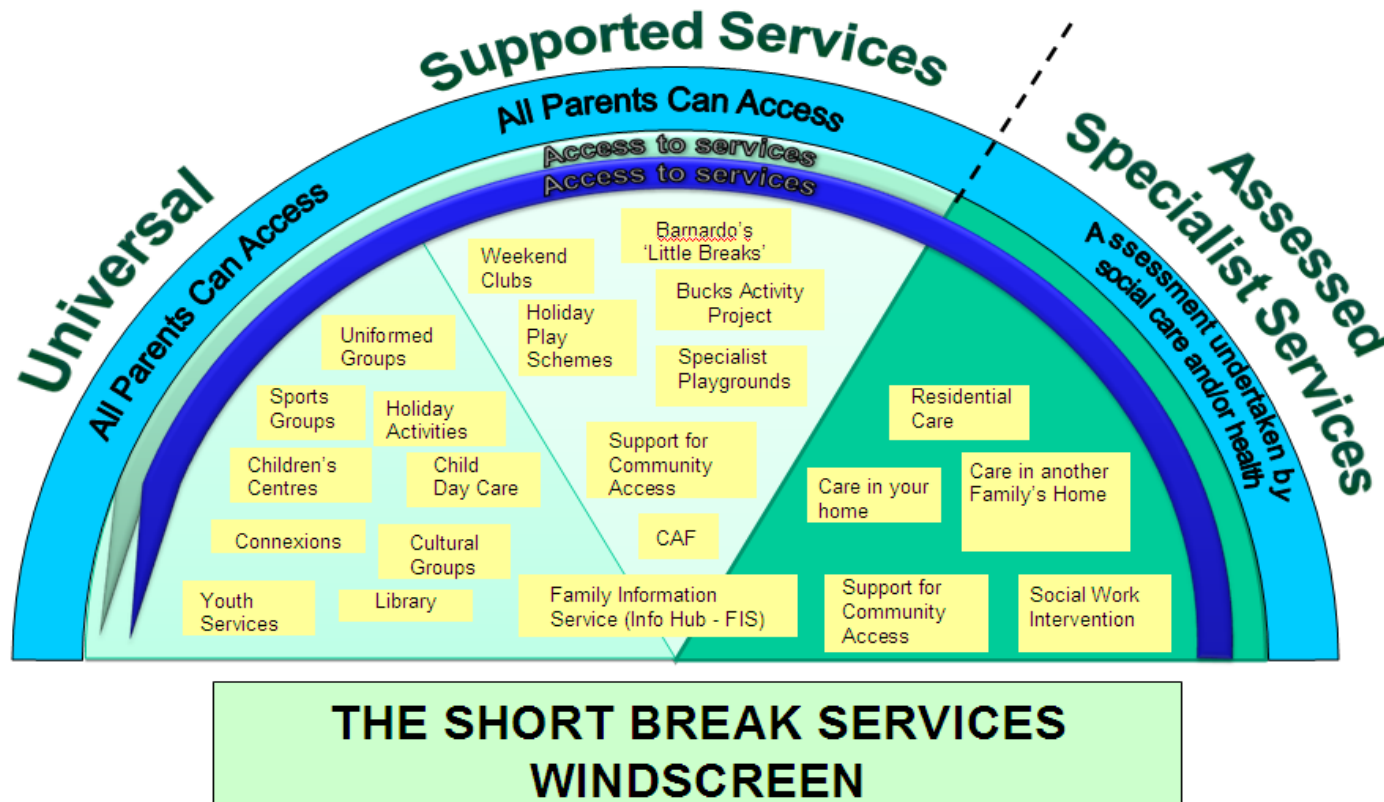
Other Council funding continues to support a range of short break options, which include:

- The residential overnight short break service, which is jointly funded by Buckinghamshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire through a pooled budget arrangement (this specialist service is only accessed through a multi-agency needs assessment and children's health needs are met through the integrated service)
- Direct Payments for short breaks
- Community childminding
- Domiciliary care (providing care in the child's home by a registered carer)
- Take-a-Break and Befriending service



Eligibility & Access to Short Breaks Criteria

The diagram below sets out how families are eligible and could access short breaks in Buckinghamshire:



When can I get an assessment?

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a universal holistic assessment of need. It should be used where needs are unclear, are unmet or where an additional agency needs to be involved. It can be used as a single agency action plan, or as a means of assessing which other services might be needed. It must be completed in collaboration with the child, young person or family and with their consent. Early Intervention and Prevention Team: 01494 586363 or caf@buckscc.gov.uk

You can ask for a social work assessment as long as you live, or are going to be living in the county at any time by calling 01269 395000 if you live in the north of Buckinghamshire or 01494 475000 if you live in the south

For support for your child's health needs please contact your GP, Paediatrician, Health Visitor, School or Community Nurse.

Eligibility & Access to Short Breaks Criteria

- a) All families can access universal services without the need for any assessment
- b) All families can access targeted/supported services without the need for any assessment
- c) Access to specialist services is through the Children with Social Care Teams, who have clearly defined threshold and eligibility criteria for assessing need (this eligibility criteria is currently under review).

Supporting Services

Revenue money has been invested to ensure that, alongside the growth in the range and volume of short breaks, the right support services are available to facilitate timely access.

AHDC has supported, and Early Intervention Grant continues to support the provision of a Child Specific Training Service.

This service provides a specialist nurse who provides training to short break workers for them to be able to support children and young people with complex health needs in their service. Examples of training needs that have been met are to support children who need access to emergency epilepsy medication and children who require Gastrostomy feeding.

An Occupational Therapist (OT) is also employed under this contract and their role is to risk assess short break settings to enable children and young people with complex moving and handling needs to safely access the setting and to advise the provider re safe moving and handling and any equipment that might be needed. The OT has also worked across universal services to advise them regarding access when making their AHDC capital bids for funding.

This service which is now being extended to cover child care settings has already enabled 115 disabled CYP with the most complex health and/or physical needs to access short break services and activities they might not otherwise have been able to do safely.

AHDC has supported, and Early Intervention Grant continues to support the provision of a short breaks and childcare workforce development programme.

As mentioned under the section on universal services a training programme has been developed called "Opening Minds, Opening Doors", which has trained Parents to deliver inclusion training to universal services and childcare settings. This has been extremely well received and has provided part-time flexible employment to 13 parent carers. Feedback from providers has shown that training provided by parents has a greater impact.

“Able to share ideas across centres. Prompted valuable discussion about including all children. Confirmed that we are quite open minded.”

“Even though I have a daughter on the autistic spectrum and a statement for nearly 6 years, I’ve heard and learned of some things for the first time.”

“A very open course and knowledge of what we can give to parents who need the support.”

“Informative – real life experiences bring it more to light. Realisation of hidden disabilities.”

Under the workforce development programme a modular training programme is being delivered for short break workers. This training can also be accessed by workers parents directly employ through Direct Payments.

The modular training programme has offered 6 core modules:

1. Discrimination, inclusion & the experience of disabled children, young people & their families
2. Understanding the development of disabled children & young people
3. Communicating effectively with disabled children, young people & their families
4. Working in partnership to support positive transitions for disabled children, young people & their families
5. Understanding & positively managing the behaviour of disabled children & young people
6. Working in partnership to safeguard disabled children & young people & provide a safe & healthy environment

“It has made me aware that the parents are the teachers, they have all of the knowledge about their child. So communication is the key for a good outcome”

“I feel more confident in dealing with negative behaviour”

AHDC funding has also been invested in development of a comprehensive parents’ directory, which contains information on benefits, education, social care, health, childcare, transitions, short breaks etc.

“It would be good to have an up to date version of the old ‘green/blue book.’”

This was developed as a response to many parents referring to how useful their old 'green/ blue books called "Starting Point" were and that it would be good to have an up to date version.

Parents choose the name 'Starting Point' again for the new directory and contributed to what sections should be included; some of the information contained and supplied all the pictures of disabled children and young people that were used in the directory.

It has now been circulated widely to parents, schools, GP surgeries, other health settings, child care and short break providers etc. and received very positive feedback about its content and usefulness.

The directory continues to be distributed through Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) as requested. It is also held as PDF version on the BFIS website, which can be updated as needed.

<http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/>

The BFIS also continues to provide families with access to good quality up-to-date information about the wide range of services available in Buckinghamshire. Work continues with plans to develop the disability pages of BFIS and will be working with parents to do this.

AHDC also has a website through the Council and this can be accessed at

www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/aiminghigh

The Children Act 1989 requires all Social Services departments to keep a database of children with disabilities to help with planning and monitoring services. The Council's previous Planning Database for Children with Disabilities was out of date so AHDC re-launched it as the AHDC Pinpoint Database.

Registration is voluntary on the AHDC Pinpoint Database and as well as providing information to help understand needs and to help plan services the database is used to distribute information of interest to families with disabled children and young people; this is done in conjunction with BFIS.

AHDC has supported, and Early Intervention Grant continues to support the participation of disabled children and young people.

The Disability Participation Worker was appointed in September 2009 to take forward the participation with disabled children and young people. Since then the worker has worked in partnership with other members of the Children Trust Participation Team, the Youth Service Participation Team and, collaboratively with a range of agencies and services to engage, support and promote disabled children and young people's involvement and ongoing engagement in a range of initiatives to involve them in shaping and developing services.

AHDC has also supported, and Early Intervention Grant continues to support Parent Participation.

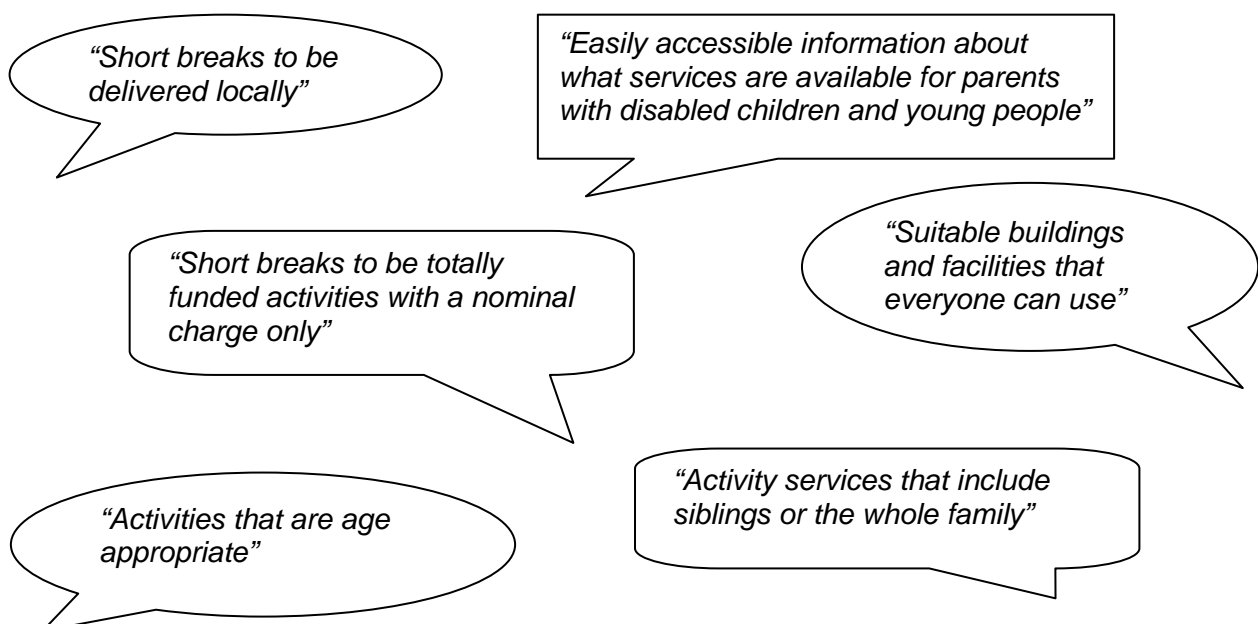
The Parent Participation workers were appointed in April 2009 to take forward participation with parents of disabled children. Two parents are elected to AHDC Programme Board (now called the Short Breaks Programme Board) and parents have been involved in key AHDC task groups, which report to the Board, some of which are continuing to ensure we keep the momentum to keep improving services. The Parent Participation service supports FACT Bucks as an independent parent led group and it is hoped that this group will develop sufficiently during 2011/12 to be able to undertake the parent participation work in 2012/13 and receive a funded contract from the Council to do so.

Conclusion – Short Break Services Currently Available

There are many different ways to provide short break service and Buckinghamshire has focused the majority of its AHDC funding and continues to do so through Early Intervention Grant, on the provision of group based activities and access to flexible individual support to access universal services rather than on the more expensive residential and family based care provision.

This was shaped with the knowledge that the Council was already spending considerable amounts of funding and continues to do so on those more specialist service that are only accessed through assessment with the Children with Disabilities Teams.

By increasing the range of services that families could directly access themselves it is hoped that this will support families to be more autonomous and supports what children and young people and their parents had told us in a survey and consultation that took place in 2008 and 2009.



“Training for staff teams in meeting all complex health needs but particularly in relation to emergency medication”

“Need for more targeted and specialist services to meet the needs of children and young people with complex health needs, challenging behaviour or social and communication difficulties”

“Short breaks delivered by carers able to take child/young person out for a few hours to take part in fun, social activities”

Families will however be able to ask for an assessment of their child’s needs through Buckinghamshire County Council’s children’s social work teams where they need more support.

Consequently, Buckinghamshire has transformed services in a way that is sustainable by:

- Supporting universal and mainstream sectors to become more accessible to disabled children and young people
- Minimising bureaucracy - by promoting a model of service accessible without assessment
- Increasing the range and volume of short breaks/activities to enable increased family choice

Over the period of the AHDC programme the success of this approach can be seen in the monitoring data collected by Buckinghamshire County Council to submit to Together for Disabled Children (TDC); the 3rd sector organisation contracted by the previous central government to support local authorities in implementing their local programme.

% Increase in the numbers of children receiving a Short Break Service

	Buckinghamshire	National Average
Increase from 08/09 to 09/10	61%	70%
Increase from 09/10 to 10/11	76%	42% (Proj.)
Overall increase since 08/09	183%	141% (Proj.)

The largest increase shown was in group based provision and family and individual provision. There was a strategic decision to grow these areas given that “overnights” was the major element of the original respite provision:

- Increase in overnights overall increased by 8% since 08/09

- Increase in the number of family based day hours by 26% since 08/09
- Increase in the number of group based specialist day hours by 105% since 08/09
- Increase in the number of group based universal day hours increased by 86% since 08/09

Not only have we changed the way in which services are provided, but we have also changed the way in which we work with and listen to the views of parents and carers, and children and young people, through the evolving participation work done to date.

Parents and disabled children and young people have been involved in the commissioning of services (including the planning of service specifications and tender evaluation), have provided feedback on the delivery of the services and are starting to be involved in the review of services. An example of where parent carers have been involved in the steps described above would be the Residential Short Breaks Service now provided by Action for Children. Also parents have been very actively involved in the commissioning and evaluation of the Little Breaks project provided by Barnardo's.

Buckinghamshire CYP Commissioning approach to working with parents is supported by the contract for each commissioned service which includes the requirement for the service provider to regularly seek feedback from the parent and children and young people using the service and report on this in their contract reviews. Contract review meetings would also monitor how feedback from parent and children and young people using their service is influencing the development of the service and activities on offer etc.

In a recent survey to evaluate the AHDC programme 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their views will be taken into account to improve services, however 18% of respondents did not agree so there is more work needed to improve this perception.

38% of respondents felt they have not had opportunities to participate/ give their views on the work carried out by Buckinghamshire County Council to improve short break services which shows that we still have a long way to go to improve the way the Council participates with parents.

We are therefore committed to working on improving participation so that children and young peoples and their parents voice is heard when we make decisions about services.