

## **Staffordshire Short Breaks for Disabled Children and their Families Statement**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's first Short Breaks Statement. The aim of this document is to provide parents and carers with information on short breaks for disabled children in Staffordshire.



In 2010 Parliament agreed the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations. These regulations came into force 01 April 2011 and establish in law a local authority (in this case Staffordshire County Council) duty to provide short breaks for disabled children and their parents and carers.

The regulations also say that the local authority must produce a Short Breaks Statement; the first one of these must be published by 01 October 2011 and then be kept under regular review. The Statement must include information on:

- who can access short breaks
- the range of short break opportunities available
- how short breaks are designed to meet the needs of disabled children and families

We have tried to keep our statement short and simple and include the information which families tell us they want to know as well as what the new regulations say we must include.

For people who want to know more there are other sources of information referred to throughout this statement. The Short Breaks Statement has been prepared alongside the Staffordshire Aiming High Short Breaks Strategy 2011–2013. The strategy provides more detail about some of the information referred to in this statement and sets out the priorities for Short Breaks Development in Staffordshire (as at October 2011).

### **What are Short Breaks?**

Short breaks provide fun and leisure activities for disabled children and young people, outside of the school day. Short breaks enable disabled children and young people to try new things, gain new experiences and have more opportunities both with and away from their families. Short breaks enable parents and carers to have a break from their caring role, which may allow them to have a rest, catch up on day to day activities, spend time with other family members or take up other interests.

## Who Can Access Short Breaks?

Staffordshire Short Break Services are available for disabled children and young people who are ordinarily resident in Staffordshire and aged from birth up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

As part of the Staffordshire County Council Aiming High programme there are now many new short break opportunities and a new way of allocating short break resources. Over the past two years a wide variety of short break services have become available which can be accessed by any child with a disability without the need for a formal assessment. This is a big change from how short breaks were allocated in the past and has made short breaks available to many more parents, carers and disabled children and young people.

## Having a short break

### **Community Based Short Breaks**

Families can choose to take up these opportunities without needing to be referred or having any assessment. Aiming High has funded services provided in the community e.g. family fun days, community playschemes and sport and leisure activities that do not require any form of assessment (although sometimes opportunities may be provided for a specific disability, age range or geographical area), often it's a case of first come first served, so book your place and make sure you turn up on the day!

### **Targeted Short Breaks**

These are short breaks which are targeted at children and young people because they are in touch with a specialist service. For example some short break services provided by special schools are targeted at children already known through contact with specialist services such as Autism Outreach Service. This may be to meet gaps in current services and ensure children with specific needs are appropriately supported. Some places provided through Special Schools will also be available on a first come first served basis.

### **Complex Short Breaks**

Complex Services are accessed through a social care assessment, children accessing these services will usually rely on others to meet their needs and there may be other complex issues affecting the family's circumstances. A social care assessment looks at the strengths of the family and how the child is developing. From this will come an agreement about why support is needed and how it will benefit your son or daughter.

### **Specialist**

Specialist Services are agreed through a Complex Needs Panel. The Complex Needs Panel is a group of professionals from health, education and social care services which meet to discuss children who have been assessed as having complex needs requiring very specialist support. If a child's situation is very complex e.g. they have palliative care needs, we work with colleagues in health and education to provide a joint package of support to ensure their needs are met.

More detailed information about access to services (which is sometimes called eligibility criteria) is available in the document 'Disabled Children's Short Break Services', there is a copy of this at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh)

## **What Short Breaks are in Place in Staffordshire?**

### **Community Based Activities**

Activities are offered through a wide range of third sector, statutory, independent and voluntary organisations. These include specialist youth clubs, football, holiday playschemes, a wide variety of trips out, dance clubs, sport and leisure clubs, horse riding, farm visits, family fun days and stay and play clubs etc.

### **Day Care**

Day Care can include care in the child's home, in a specialist environment, in a community based setting and also outreach work which helps children to access activities with the support of a paid or voluntary carer. Day Care is provided by Disability Resource Centres (building based and outreach opportunities), specialist Family Link and Contract Carers (professional carers providing care in their own homes), Children Centres and by private, voluntary and independent childcare settings. In Staffordshire there are also befriending and mentoring schemes offered to support children who need one to one support to access activities.

### **Overnight Breaks**

The Local Authority provides and commissions overnight opportunities for disabled children with a range of different providers including Resource Centres (building based overnight opportunities), Family Link (specialist foster carers providing care in their own homes), Contract Carers (highly specialist carers providing care in their own home for children with very complex needs) and Residential Special Schools (providing sleepover clubs at weekends and during holiday periods). Health and other agencies also provide specialist overnight opportunities and some children are also supported through Hospice provision.

For information on how to find out about short break opportunities in Staffordshire see '**How do I get Further Information**' below.

## **How are Short Breaks designed to meet needs?**

Parents and carers as well as children and young people are involved in the shaping of services in a variety of ways. Aiming High has run specific consultation events with parents and carers of disabled children, and parents have been involved in the panels which have made decisions about which services and activities to recommend for funding. Children's Panels have also been held to gain disabled children's views. A Parent Board of parents with disabled children from across the County is in place which feeds information in to the Aiming High Programme and takes information back to a wider group of parents. For more information on SPAN please visit [www.span-info.co.uk](http://www.span-info.co.uk)

In September 2010 a Short Breaks Sufficiency Assessment was produced which gathers together the known data on disability in Staffordshire. Specific surveys, research and evaluations have also taken place. Further information about this can

be found in the Aiming High Strategy 2011-2013 which is available at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh) . All of the information gathered helps us to identify how to develop the short breaks programme in response to parents, carers and children and young people's needs. Current services are evaluated with disabled children and parents and carers to ensure they are meeting needs and to identify any needs for the future. More detailed information on the needs of disabled children can be found in the 'Short Breaks Sufficiency Assessment' report (accurate as at September 2010) which can be accessed at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh) and click on the 'Sufficiency Statement' link on the left hand side.



## How Do I Get Further Information?

For up to date information on Aiming High, short breaks and other activities for disabled children in Staffordshire go to [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/disabledchildren](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/disabledchildren) and click on 'What's On in Your Area' or go to [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh)

To register your details on the Aiming High email distribution list contact [aiminghigh@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:aiminghigh@staffordshire.gov.uk) providing your name. You will then receive updates on any new activities which become available.

If you want to speak to someone about accessing short breaks in your area contact the G8way Team.

## How Can the G8Way Team Help Me?

The G8way team are available to support any family who has a disabled child or children living in Staffordshire aged under 18. G8way offer advice, information about activities and other support. There are eight G8way workers in place across the County. G8way also arrange events and activities for families with disabled children in their local area. The team aim to listen to children, young people and parents and to promote the access of disabled children and young people into community activities.

You can contact the team on free phone 0800 093 0414 - please leave a message including your name, contact number and the district where you live and G8way will call you back.