



Shared Care Network

Promoting family based short breaks for disabled children throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Comprehensive spending review 2007

Joint Policy Review on Children and Young People

A response from Shared Care Network

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Summary of recommendations

Shared Care Network is the national organisation representing family-based short break services for disabled children and young people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Short break services provide opportunities for disabled children to spend time away from their primary carers on a regular basis. This gives them the chance to gain independence and expand their social lives while their families get a break from caring.

1. Short break carers should be adequately rewarded for the valuable service they offer and paid realistic rates. Short break carers should be resourced and valued accordingly.
2. A national system of allowances should be developed that reflects the skills of short break carers, similar to that introduced recently for fostering allowances.
3. Schemes should be adequately resourced to enable them to carry out regular and effective recruitment campaigns.
4. Resources should be made available for schemes to develop contract carer services and employ appropriate nursing or OT staff to help place children with complex health care needs or children who require lifting.
5. Services are constantly changing and workers need adequate specialist training in order to keep up with new policy and good practice in short breaks.
6. A standard preparation and training pack also needs to be developed for schemes. An edition developed by Shared Care Network in 1993 is still used by some schemes but it is very out of date and a new edition is often requested.
7. Funding made available to develop a set of appropriate assessment tools, which reflect the diversity of short breaks for disabled children

8. Support schemes to run targeted recruitment campaigns for carers from BME communities.
9. There should be investment to allow services the extra time needed to meet regulations which they are currently struggling to meet.
10. Voluntary organisations and schemes should work with the inspection agencies to develop clarity and a meaningful process of inspection with regard to short breaks. This should be on-going and allow regulators to be responsive and transmit this to the inspection offices in a coherent manner.
11. Review LAC regulations with regard to short break services.
12. Ensure that support for siblings of disabled children is included in the allocation of resources
13. Encourage the development of “whole family support”, for example breaks for the non-disabled children
14. Provision of out of hours specialist support for short break carers
15. Preparation and support for short break carers own children
16. Development of multi media materials to prepare the disabled child going for a break
17. Promote the participation and consultation of disabled children particularly those children who do not use language to communicate
18. Development of eligibility criteria which are meaningful and transparent and which ensure equity across a geographic area
19. Access to assessment and provision of adaptations and specialist equipment. (This is not always available for care outside the child’s home.)
20. A greater emphasis on multi disciplinary working and care co-ordination.
21. Budget Holding Lead Professionals DfES consultation April 2006. If this is adopted then Budget Holding Lead Professionals (BHLP) should have access to budgets to support (preventative) services identified as needed, even where a child might not reach current thresholds for statutory funding but still needs support e.g. access to play and leisure and for short break care. It will be important that services identified by the BHLP as needed by families and young people have access to sufficient core funding to maintain viability.