

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Children's Services

Short Breaks Statement

2015

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1. The vision:

The overall aim of children's social services in Merthyr Tydfil is to support children and young people to live in permanent family arrangements with their own or substitute families where they are safe and well cared for and they are given every opportunity to grow and develop into independent adulthood. To deliver this we:

- ~ Work with other services and partner agencies to ensure that early interventions and support for children and young people who are identified as vulnerable and in need are available and effective;
- ~ Provide good quality services that reduce the impact of disadvantage and disability while improving the outcomes and life chances of all children and young people that we support;
- ~ Provide family support arrangements that deliver long term stability for children in their own families;
- ~ Respond quickly and consistently to concerns about children and young people who are at risk of harm; and
- ~ Ensure stability and the best possible outcomes for looked after children through placements that meet their needs with carers who are supported to provide the best possible care.

Advice and multi-agency support and services are available for children with additional needs and children with disabilities who are assessed as being in need according to the definition of in need contained in the Children Act 1989. Fundamental to this is working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other relevant family members to promote their participation so that the support and services provided meet the needs of the relevant child and provides support as required to the family as a whole.

Children with additional needs / disabilities may use universal services (e.g. school, primary health, leisure) and may also receive specialist services from different agencies (e.g. special educational needs support, Community Occupational Therapist, portage). Based on an assessment of need Children's Services may provide additional support to the child and their family to both assist the parents / carers meet the child needs and to enable the child to live comfortably in their homes and access services in the community. The services provided may include services directly provided to other members of the child's immediate family e.g. parents and siblings, to enable them to continue caring.

We recognise that resources are limited and strive to manage them responsibly in the spirit of integration, imagination and creativity. To do this we need to draw on our own knowledge, experience, resources and skills, those of colleagues in partner agencies and also of children, young people and families themselves. The Local Authority has at the heart of this agenda the concept of inclusion and this underpins the development of services that support children and young people to access mainstream services wherever possible. Outcomes that are important to service users and their carers are considered as part of our service provision agenda

2. Who is responsible?

Members and senior officers of the County Borough Council are ultimately responsible for the provision of services to support children and young people with disabilities and additional needs.

The Social Services Department of the council sits within the Community Services Directorate. The Director of Community Services is the statutory Director of Social Services and she, together with the Head of Children's Services, discharge their responsibilities for the provision of services to children and young people with disabilities and additional needs through a range of teams and services. Support to children who meet the eligibility for the Children with Disabilities team will be provided by this team, while other teams and services will be involved in providing services to those with less complex disabilities and other additional needs.

Within Children's Services the strategic lead officer for the short breaks is the Principal Officer for wellbeing and early intervention and the operational lead officer is the Team Manager of the Children with Disabilities Team.

3. What is a short break?

A short break was described by Together for Disabled Children (TDC) as an 'additional service' to support disabled children and their families; in other words, short breaks are services over and above the universal services expected and available to all families.

A short break can be for just a few hours, overnight care or longer and take place in a variety of settings including the family home. Short breaks are designed to engage disabled children and young people in either one to one or group activities with the objective of being enjoyable, reducing social isolation contributing to the child / young person's personal and social development. Short breaks also enhance the ability of parents / carers to continue to care for the child, and take care of other children they may have, by enabling them to undertake everyday activities, take care of their own physical and psychological well-being and maintain or develop their education training and employment opportunities.

Short breaks are a way of delivering enjoyable and fun activities for children and young people with disabilities or additional needs that meet a range of individual needs including the need for sports or leisure activities, contact with peers and other social activities. They can be in the form of after school activities, accessing mainstream leisure and specialist resources with support from appropriately trained and skilled staff during the week, weekends or during school holidays. As above short breaks give much needed opportunities for parents/carers to recharge their batteries+and take a break from their caring role which is often demanding. They can also enable them to spend quality time with their other children, each other or carry out home management tasks and some aspects of leisure or work activities that would not be possible without the short break provision.

Access to short breaks provision can also be facilitated through Direct Payments which allow parents / carers to employ personal assistants thereby removing the reliance of carers on social services provision, creating greater flexibility and empowerment to manage the process.

4. Who can access short breaks?

The range of short breaks available covers universal, targeted and specialist provision.

Universal / targeted	No assessment is required. Families can contact the service directly. Families may be signposted to these services	Disability sports, The Engine House Barnados Young Carers Project Bridging the Gap Youth services Day Nurseries Pre -school Playgroups Out of School Clubs Parent, Carer & Toddler Groups Childminders Youth Services

		Leisure Activities Uniform groups (e.g. cubs, brownies, guides, scouts)
Specialist / complex	An assessment is required using the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. Assessment for Continuing Health Care	Leisure Link sessional support service Sitting services, Specialist Childminding Nursery and day care provision Direct Payments Law yn Llaw pre-school inclusive play service Specialised health care services

Short breaks are designed around the level of need to ensure that they are a positive experience for the child and when appropriate achieve the outcomes identified in the assessment and care plan.

Some children and young people with disabilities or significant health needs may be eligible for a short break service following an assessment of need. Merthyr Tydfil uses the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families to undertake this assessment. This is a statutory framework that assesses the needs of children by considering their development needs, the parents parenting capacity and family and environmental factors.

Where children and young people have disabilities or additional needs the impact of this on these factors is considered. Parents / carers will also be offered a carers assessment which can provide additional insight into what services may be appropriate to help support the carer of the disabled child to sustain high quality care provision.

An assessment of need as outlined above may provide sufficient information that the Children with Disabilities will provide allocation to this team. If this is not the case other teams or services may be able to offer support. In some circumstances immediate services may be put in place in the short term to support children, young people and families while the assessments are completed.

The nature of the services and support provided will be outlined in a care plan which will be discussed with the child / young person (where possible) and the parent / carer.

There may be specific eligibility criteria for some but not all short break services; more information about this is contained below in the description of services available.

Care plans are reviewed at least six monthly which provides the opportunity to ensure that services continue to meet current needs and identify whether the assessment needs to be updated. Short breaks is a flexible service and can be allocated at any point in the assessment and review process aiming to respond not only to planned provision but that of changes in the family circumstances. Any change needing an urgent response can be managed by simply making a telephone call to the relevant social worker who will seek agreement from a manager to amend the service pending a re-assessment or review. The range of services generally accessed by families in Merthyr Tydfil is listed in this document however there is scope to be creative and to develop specific packages of support to meet the identified needs of children and their families as resources allow.

Direct payments can enable carers, or older young people with disabilities to make their own arrangements for short breaks. Welsh Government guidance sets criteria for the use of direct payments; these are offered by an allocated social worker once a relevant need has been identified by the assessment.

The Family Information Service covers the whole of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. It offers a **one- stop information service** for parents, carers who need childcare or request information about children's services. The FIS provides information on childcare provision and working with children:

Tel: 01685 727400

www.fis.merthyr.gov.uk

The Intake and Early Assessment Team provide an assessment service. They can provide an assessment that helps to determine if more specialist support may be needed.

Tel: 01685 724506

5. Transition and short breaks:

Children experience transition of one type or another throughout their lives but for young people with additional needs and disabilities it is important, from the age of fourteen years, that care planning, services and support begin to focus on preparation for independence especially around life and independent living skills. Short break provision can enhance this focusing on outcomes that support the development of skills and experience.

6. Legislation, eligibility and current short break provision:

This statement is written in line with the ~~the~~ Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children (Wales) Regulations 2012. In providing services to children and young people with disabilities and additional needs the authority works within its responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Chronically Sick and Disabled persons Act 1970 and the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000. In April 2016 the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 becomes operational. As part of our preparation for this change there will be an enhanced focus on the views of carers and what services are likely to support their role. Direct payments will be used in an increasingly flexible way as a method of providing services to benefit families. How we assess and provide information and advice will also change in line with new legislation.