

Give me a break! Short-break fostering for disabled children

Introduction

Short-break fostering is looking after a disabled child for regular weekends or holidays in your own home.

Short-break fostering differs from normal fostering because the child does not live with you all the time but will visit on a regular basis.

You can make a big difference to a child's life by becoming a short-break foster carer.

Why do these children need short breaks?

Short breaks can have a positive impact on everyone concerned.

Families and carers who care for disabled children need a short break from time to time to recharge their batteries and spend time with their other children.

Disabled children need the opportunity to broaden their horizons, meet new people and develop a sense of independence.

Short-break carers will know they are helping the disabled child's natural or foster parents to have a well-earned break.

How frequent and for how long would the short breaks be?

Every child is different.

Short-break care is determined as part of a child's care plan so the frequency and duration of the breaks would be agreed by the child's parents/foster carers and social care and health professionals.

Ideally, we would like a pattern of care to be established.

A short break may simply be for one night, a weekend or longer.

What types of disability will the children have?

All disabled children are individuals and some will have more severe disabilities than others.

Disabled children may have learning or physical disabilities, which may be mild through to moderate or severe. Some children are very physically active and others may have mobility problems; some may have limited speech or communication difficulties, others are very talkative.

Some children may use a wheelchair, and others may be unable to bathe or may need personal care.

Often it is the families of children with the most severe disabilities who are most in need of a short break.

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Who can be a short-break carer?

Anyone really. You don't need experience or particular skills, but you must be patient, understanding, dedicated and committed to caring for a disabled child. We will train you and support you.

Payment and training

All short-break foster carers are paid a fostering allowance plus expenses incurred while looking after the child. Allowances are not a wage, and dependent on earnings may be non-taxable.

Short-break carers must attend the same training courses as full-time foster carers, plus a special session about each individual disabled child. All carers have the same opportunities to achieve a professional NVQ qualification.

All short-break carers must undergo a medical and a Criminal Record Bureau check and provide the names of three referees who know you and your family. Other references may also be sought.

Adaptations and equipment

We realise that not everyone's home is suitable for wheelchairs and larger pieces of equipment, e.g. hoists, and we would not expect short-break carers to attempt the impossible.

We will consider the suitability of your home when you are being assessed, e.g. room size, location of the available bedroom and bathroom, stairs, etc, as we are unable to carry out costly building modifications.

We will, however, provide car seats, stair gates and special beds if needed, and any other equipment which is considered necessary for the disabled child to stay safe in your home.

Becoming a full-time foster carer

All foster carers are approved according to the age and number of children they may be able to look after. Short-break carers sometimes decide that they would like to foster full-time. The Family Placement Team will help you to decide if this is the right decision for you and your family.

If you are interested in becoming a short-break foster carer or need more information please contact us.

We welcome all enquiries and would like to talk to you whatever you feel you can offer.

Our contact details

Telephone: 01495 766693

E-mail: familyplacementteam@torfaen.gov.uk

Our Address:

The Family Placement Team
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This factsheet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request. Please contact us in order to arrange this.