

WHAT IS MEANT BY SHORT BREAK (RESPITE) CARE?

Date: August 2009

Respite care means a carer and the person they care for being supported to have a break from their normal routine and the often stressful demands of their caring situation. People without a carer can also benefit from a break from their home circumstances.

Short breaks are an essential part of the overall support that families and carers need to help them care for a family member, partner or friend. Short breaks should deliver positive outcomes for both the carer and the person with care needs. Outcomes might include:

- A break from day-to-day routines
- A chance to experience new things
- Time to rest and recharge the batteries
- Opportunities to meet new people and maintain friendships
- Time for personal interests, leisure or cultural activities
- Improved health and well being
- Greater independence

One size doesn't fit all

Services that provide breaks from caring can take many forms. Traditionally respite care has meant a break in a care home or nursing home. This type of break may be suitable for some but people want more choices about how, where and when the break is provided. Families or couples may want to have a break together with some extra support, or they may choose to have some time apart. Breaks will vary from a few hours to a few weeks and may be arranged on a regular planned basis, as a holiday or to deal with an unexpected emergency.

What's important is that people should be given choices so that they can have a break that meets their needs and circumstances. A break that people enjoy and find stimulating helps everyone to feel comfortable and enjoy the experience.

Types of break

The following list shows the range of different ways that breaks can be provided. You can find examples of these in the case study section on our website: www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk.

Some local authorities may not fund all of these types of short breaks.

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Breaks in specialist/dedicated respite accommodation

These breaks are based in accommodation which is used only for respite/short breaks. The accommodation might be community flats, purpose-built or adapted accommodation. Depending on the care group catered for, facilities may be able to offer additional care to cater for specific health conditions.

Breaks in care homes (with or without nursing care)

Some care homes may have a small number of places set aside specifically for respite breaks. Rather than simply offering a 'spare bed' the home should provide separate facilities with a carefully planned programme of activities for short-term guests to suit individual needs and interests.

Breaks in the home of another individual or family

These involve overnight breaks provided by paid carers in their own home. These are sometimes referred to as shared care, family based or adult placement schemes. Families or individuals offering this support are carefully recruited and registered - normally by the local authority or through voluntary sector organisations.

Breaks provided at home through a care attendant or sitting service

This includes individual support provided in the home of the cared for person for periods of a few hours or overnight. The purpose may be to provide support while the carer is away, or to support the carer in other ways, e.g. by enabling the carer to have an undisturbed night's sleep.

Supported access to clubs, interest or activity groups

These opportunities might focus on a particular activity (e.g. lunch clubs, leisure activities) and may be based in a day centre or community building. These generally take place over a few hours, perhaps once or twice a week.

Holiday breaks

These include opportunities for the carer and cared for person to have a short break or for them to go away separately. These breaks can be supported in different ways - through organisations specialising in breaks for people with particular needs, in adapted accommodation or in ordinary hotels and guest houses, perhaps with additional equipment or care agency support. More mainstream breaks may also be possible with the support of a paid carer or companion.

Befriending schemes where volunteers provide short breaks

Befriending normally involves a paid worker or volunteer accompanying the 'befriended' to social and leisure activities, for example going to the cinema, meeting friends, shopping, swimming and other such activities.

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Day care

Day care is typically based in a community building and provided by a local authority or voluntary organisation. The degree of flexibility varies; most are characterised by fixed opening hours on particular days; some offer a drop in service whereby people can attend for part of the day only. Day care is not generally provided for short break or respite purposes but services which offer more flexible arrangements, designed around the needs of both the client and carer, can achieve this purpose.

Hospital based respite

This type of break is for people who need medical supervision because of complex or intense health care needs. Some short term hospital based care provides a respite break for the carer.

Other information leaflets in this series

- How to arrange short break (respite) care

About Shared Care Scotland

Shared Care Scotland is a national charity which exists to support the development and improvement of short break services for carers and the people they care. Our services include:

- An online and telephone enquiry service to help put carers and service users in touch with short break services that best match their needs
- General information and advice on all matters relating to short break services
- Events, networks, publications and learning resources to share knowledge, experience and successful practice.

Please contact us if you require further information or advice.

w www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk
t: 01383 622462