

# **GIVE US A BREAK: TURNING COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION**

**“Short breaks are most effective for both the carer and the person being cared for, when they match individual needs. One size does not fit all – this is why local authorities will be working closely with service users and carers to deliver personalised respite packages and also help those in the greatest need.”**

**Shona Robison, Minister for Public Health, July 2008**

## Why are we writing this note?

We have written this briefing note to make you aware of and explain some important developments relating to the future planning and availability of short breaks and respite care. These are:

- the newly revised Scottish Government Guidance on Short Breaks (Respite Care);
- the Scottish Government's commitment to delivering 10,000 additional respite weeks by 2011, and
- the Scottish Government's commitment to introducing a guaranteed entitlement to respite care for those in greatest need by 2011.

Local authorities, with their responsibility for community care, will have a lead role in delivering these national policies and commitments in their areas. We encourage carers and carer support organisations to use the information in this leaflet to ask their Councillors and Service Managers how they are responding to these developments in their area.

The Scottish Government has made it clear that it wishes to see improvements in the choice and amount of short break services available across the country. While we welcome strong words these must be followed up with action which makes a real difference in carers' lives. Carers have a key role to play in holding central and local government to account on these matters. At the same time it is important to work in partnership with service planners, contributing knowledge and experience to find ways of making the best use of available resources.

## More than just a policy document

Carers have repeatedly identified the need for regular breaks from caring and more short break options as a top priority. Despite this, we know that many carers struggle to access these services which are vital in protecting their health and wellbeing.

- 39% of carers surveyed as part of the Care 21 research had not had an overnight break in at least the last 2 years.

- 75% of carers had not had a regular break in the last 12 months.
- According to Audit Scotland figures, between 2006 and 2007 there was a 7.6% drop in local authority arranged overnight respite, equal to about 34,000 nights.

As part of a national agreement (the Concordat) with the Scottish Government, local authorities have agreed to develop an additional 10,000 respite weeks at home and in other care settings. Local authorities will receive additional resources over the next 3 years to enable them to deliver this commitment in full by the end of 2011.

The Scottish Government has asked local authorities to develop their services in line with the recommendations contained in their updated Guidance on Short Breaks (*Guidance on the planning and development of personalised short break services*, to give its full title.) These include the recommendation that carers and service users should be involved at an early stage in the planning and development process. This, it says, will result in more 'responsive, high quality short breaks services'.

## In a nutshell – How the Guidance aims to improve short break services

The guidance aims to promote better planning of short breaks services, greater choice, flexibility and fairer access to services for carers. It sets out the following best practice guidelines:

- **Carers health and wellbeing** – Short breaks are particularly important for maintaining carers' health and wellbeing and preventing the breakdown of caring relationships.
- **Personalisation** – Quality short break services should be right for you. The guidance encourages local authorities to plan services around people's needs rather than try and fit people to inflexible and inappropriate arrangements.
- **Choice** – The new guidance gives a wide range of examples of both day and overnight short break opportunities. The guidance

promotes a more flexible approach with more options to suit people's different needs and circumstances.

- **Being clear about decision making** – The guidance highlights the particular needs of specific groups, such as young carers and carers from ethnic minorities. Local authorities should produce a set of 'eligibility criteria' to explain how they will assess people's needs. It calls for carers and service users to be involved in the development of the 'eligibility criteria'.
- **Better planning** – Local authorities are strongly encouraged to develop a Short Break Service Strategy or Plan, with help from health, voluntary sector organisations and other stakeholders. Joint work like this will lead to more joined-up services and more effective use of resources. The guidance also includes a template to help local authorities and their partners to prepare their Short Break Services Strategy.
- **Listening to carers** – Carers are 'key partners in care' and therefore have an important role to play in planning short break services. The guidance emphasises that carers should be involved in a meaningful way not only in the services they use, but also in developing new short break services in their local area.
- **Better information** – Carers and service users should be fully informed about services in their area and able to make choices about the services which will produce the best outcomes for them. To help this happen, the guidance sets out best practice in relation to the provision of information on short breaks.

### Repeating the commitment – A guaranteed annual entitlement to breaks from caring

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The Scottish Government has promised to introduce guaranteed annual entitlements to breaks from caring for those carers in greatest need by 2011. This commitment is repeated within the guidance – see below. This raises a number of issues, not least how we define

'carers in greatest need'? There is no detail provided in the guidance but the Government is planning to make progress on this in 2009. The call for a 'statutory right to a break' was expressed in the Care 21 report as one of the report's key recommendations.

*Because of the priority we attach to this area, the Concordat between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities includes a commitment to progress towards delivering 10,000 extra respite weeks per year. The Scottish Government is working towards a manifesto commitment that 'by 2011 carers in greatest need will have a guaranteed annual entitlement to breaks from caring'. Clearly, these measures, including the expansion of local provision, serve to increase the importance of thorough local respite planning.*

*Guidance on Short Breaks (respite)  
CCD 4/2008*

### What's happening in your area? Key questions for local decision makers

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Using the information in this note, we suggest that you speak to key decision makers in your local area to find out how they are responding to these developments. Questions you can ask might include:

- Does the local authority have a short break strategy document?
- Is it up-to-date and being used? When was it last reviewed?
- Who oversees the strategy development and how are carers involved?
- What is being done to offer carers and services users more choice and flexibility in their short break services?
- How are decisions made about people's access to short break services (what are the eligibility criteria) and how do people find out what's available and what they are entitled to?

- What does the Council plan to do to deliver and monitor its share of the additional 10,000 respite weeks?
- How will we know these additional weeks are delivering the best possible outcomes for carers and care recipients?

## Contents of the Scottish Government's Guidance on Short Breaks

The Guidance contains the following information:

- Summary
- Action and Expected Outcomes
- Introduction
  - Definition and scope
  - Purpose of short breaks and evidence of their value
  - Purpose of guidance
- Policy Context
- Strategic Planning
  - Strategic planning – context – children's services
  - Strategic planning – context – local authority and NHS responsibilities
- Types of Short Breaks
  - NHS services providing breaks from caring and NHS input to 'social care' short breaks
  - Planned short breaks and crisis support
  - Choice and personalisation
- Information
- Access to Services /Eligibility
- Monitoring, Quality, Assurance and Regulation
- Charging
- Annex A – Indicators of good short breaks
- Annex B – Personalised short breaks – Examples of good practice
- Annex C – Short break needs and risks of specific groups
- Annex D – Glossary
- Annex E – Short break strategy template

## Where can you find a copy of the Guidance?

Copies of the Guidance can be obtained from the following sources:

- By downloading from the Scottish Government website  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/20094716>

An Easy Read version can be downloaded from

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/20094628>

- If you don't have access to the internet or would prefer a paper copy, please contact the Coalition of Carers in Scotland or Shared Care Scotland.

## Useful resources

- Online Short Break Information Service: [www.carebreaksscotland.org](http://www.carebreaksscotland.org)  
*Shared Care Scotland's internet based directory of short break and respite care services in Scotland. Services can be searched by 'type of break', 'care needs', 'ages' and 'location'.*
- Shared Care Scotland, Short Break Telephone Enquiry Service:  
01383 622462 (10.00am to 4.00pm)  
*A telephone enquiry service for people searching for short break and respite care opportunities.*
- Shared Care Scotland website: [www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk](http://www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk)  
*News, information, research links, case studies and events*
- Coalition of Carers in Scotland website: [www.carersnet.org](http://www.carersnet.org)

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