

# Share the Care

Information on  
**providing short breaks**  
for disabled children/young people



To find out more visit:  
[www.southglos.gov.uk/sharethecare](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/sharethecare)  
or call 01454 866423

[www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk)



**Providing a short break for a child/young person with a disability can be very rewarding.**

Share the Care short break carers provide regular short breaks to disabled children/ young people including those with learning difficulties, autism and physical impairments. This type of fostering offers a long term relationship with a child/young person and their family. It suits people who can offer short breaks and who feel positive about disabled children/young people.

## **How does Share the Care work?**

Short break carers come from all age groups and all walks of life. They are recruited and approved in the same way as other foster carers. Once approved, short break carers are carefully matched up with a child/young person who is gradually introduced to them.

If this goes well, a pattern of visits is agreed, perhaps an overnight stay every two or three weeks or a weekend each month.

Short break carers receive an allowance, training and support through the Share the Care Scheme and any requirement for special equipment will be assessed.



## How much time will I need to give?

We ask that you are able to commit to at least one weekend a month on a regular basis: most of the children will stay overnight in your home. Some short break carers are linked with one child, others provide short breaks to more than one child. The amount of time you give to a child depends on the plan for the child and is agreed in advance.



## What is expected of Share the Care short break carers?

When approved as a short break carer you will need to be able to:

- Provide a safe and comfortable home for the children and young people you look after.
- Give children the time and attention they need.
- Work as part of a team with parents, other carers and Social Workers.
- Accept that smacking, or other degrading punishments, is not permitted.
- Keep information confidential.
- Attend necessary training courses.
- Support South Gloucestershire's commitment to equal opportunities by working positively with all people, recognising accepting and respecting difference.
- Refrain from smoking.



## **Who are the children and young people?**

The children and young people who need Share the Care are all living in South Gloucestershire and have a range of physical and/or learning disabilities. They come from various different home environments and diverse ethnic backgrounds. Some children will need a short break one weekend a month whilst others need more support and receive more frequent short breaks. The care the children receive is tailored to best meet their needs and the needs of their family.

## **How old are the children and young people?**

Predominately it is school aged children that need links either after school, at weekends or during school holidays.

## **Why do children and young people need Share the Care?**

Disabled children/young people can frequently miss out on activities and opportunities outside the home which help them to build up some independence from their own family as they grow up. Share the Care makes it possible for children/young people to gain new experiences and new friends whilst, for their parents, it means some extra time for themselves and for any other children in the family.

## What disabilities do the children and young people have?

Each child has a specific set of needs depending on their disability. Share the Care provides short breaks to children with a wide range of physical and/or learning disabilities.

Children are referred to Share the Care because:

- They have a condition which was diagnosed in the first few months of life which has caused a long term disability (such as a chromosome abnormality or a child who was born very early and who is showing signs of cerebral palsy).
- Children who have had a illness which has led to a disability (for example meningitis – which can have long term effects on hearing and learning).
- Children with behavioural difficulties associated with conditions such as Autism, Aspergers or ADHD.
- Children who need a lot of extra care during the day or night – such as children who have fits or who have to be tube fed.

Don't worry; you will be given detailed information on the specific needs of the child you link with and training can be identified to manage the care whilst a child stays with you.

## What activities do the children and young people enjoy?

All children and young people have different likes and dislikes; you will be given an opportunity to find out about the child you are linked with. It is important that where possible you help the child or young person who stays with you to engage in activities both within your home and outside. This can be things like playing games, reading together, helping with everyday family activities, going to the park, going shopping, using local buses. It can also involve other activities such as swimming, other sports, cinema trips, bowling, visits to the zoo or museums. You will learn what activities you both enjoy and can manage.

## About Share the Care short break carers

We positively welcome short break carers from all parts of the community so that we can find the best link for every child. You can be considered for Share the Care if you are:

- single - male or female
- married or living with a partner
- a family with or without children
- Gay/lesbian or straight
- any ethnic or cultural background
- a person who is disabled
- employed or unemployed
- a house owner or tenant.



## What accommodation is needed?

For overnight stays you do need to be either the legal tenants or owners of your property. Although you don't need a big house you will need a spare room.

## What Support will I receive?

### Your Social Worker

A Family Placement Social Worker is there to offer advice, guidance and support to short break carers. A preparation programme will be arranged before you start Share the Care and regular supervision and consultation is offered throughout your time as a short break carer

All the children will have access to a Social Worker who can support them and work with their parents, family and short break carers. This social worker is there to ensure that each child has a comprehensive child care plan to meet their current and future needs.

## Planning & Review Meetings

All care provided through Share the Care is part of a plan for the individual child and their family. The plan is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the needs of the child and family continue to be met and to address any issues.

## Out of hours support

If you need help outside of office hours you can telephone the “Help Line” for Foster Carers, or in an emergency contact the Emergency Duty Team.

## Buddying Scheme

From the end of the preparation course, through to assessment and the first year of Share the Care, new carers will be linked with experienced carers who will be available to give advice and support in addition to that provided by Social Workers.

## South Gloucestershire Foster Carers Support Group

The South Gloucestershire Foster Carers Support Group is an informal support network set up by local carers who meet regularly without Social Workers present. At these meetings they share their experiences of fostering and give each other advice and support.





## **Will I receive any financial support or expenses?**

Yes. All short break carers receive an allowance for each child or young person placed with them.

Please see the separate information sheet for the current rates.

## **What about paying for leisure activities?**

A leisure allowance per child per year can be paid to take children out. For example it can be used to cover entrance fees and tickets. The leisure allowance is to support carers in enabling disabled children and young people to take part in the community.

## **Do you provide any special equipment?**

Additional equipment you need to help you care for the child or young person you are linked with can be provided on a loan basis. For example, beds, car seats and stair gates. We will also assess if you will require any specialist equipment to look after a disabled child.

## **What training opportunities are there?**

In addition to your preparation training, South Gloucestershire offers a range of further training courses to help you develop your knowledge and understanding of children and your role as a short break carer.



## **Next Step: An initial visit**

If you wish to proceed, a Family Placement Social Worker will arrange to meet with you in your own home. This visit provides you with an opportunity to discuss your personal circumstances and you will find out more about the skills you need to become a short break carer and the tasks of caring for a child/young person. The Family Placement Social Worker will also discuss with you what you feel you can offer a child/young person. The visit will also enable the Social Worker to explain the application, preparation and assessment process.

## **Will I have to undergo any special checks?**

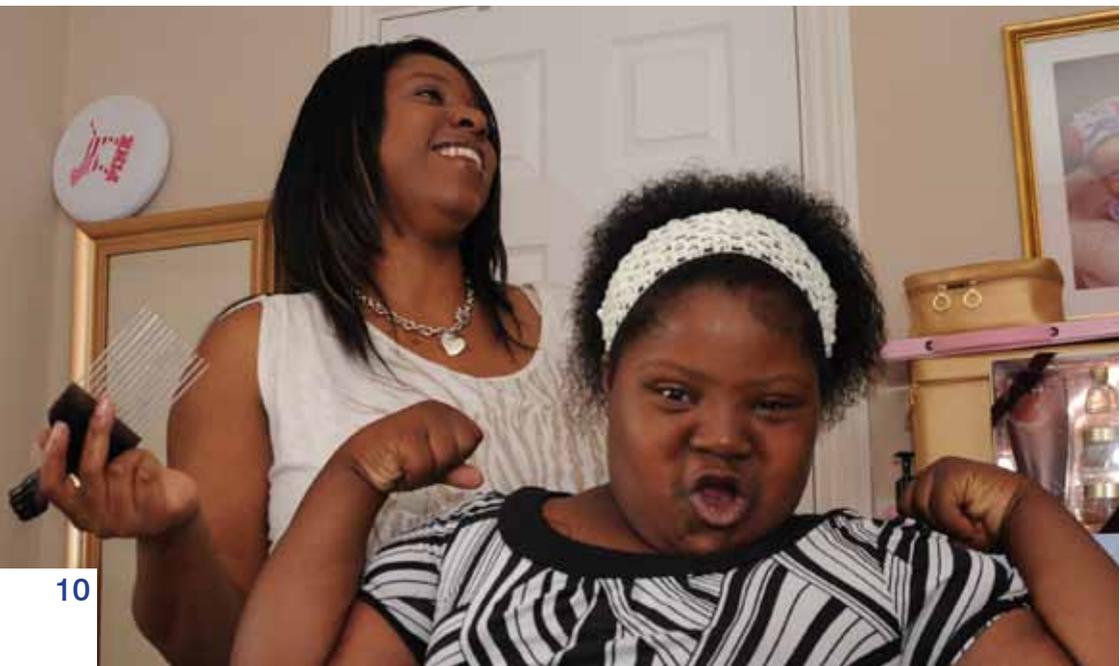
By law we have to undertake rigorous checks to ensure the suitability of our carers to look after vulnerable children & young people in their own homes. These will be explained to you during your initial visit.

- Criminal Records Bureau check on all people in the household who are over 18 and any people who will be regularly supporting you, such as babysitters.
- Local Authority checks will be undertaken.
- Child health & education checks will be carried out on any school age children in the household.
- Written current or most recent employers reference for each applicant. Additional References from any previous employer where there was contact with children will be obtained.
- GP Reference.
- Three personal references - we will interview two of the referees who should have known you for at least 3 years or more (but not be related to you). If you are a couple the referees should have known both of you for this period.

- Interviews will be carried out with any other adults in the household.
- Checks will be made with any ex-partners or significant relationships where there are any children from the relationship. This will be discussed with you at your initial visit.
- Social Worker will want to talk to your children whether they live in the household or not, including adult children.

## How long will it take to become a Share the Care short break carer?

We would hope to complete your training, checks and assessment within six months. We have a duty to make sure that you can offer a safe and caring environment where children will feel welcomed, cared for and valued.





## **Making a complaint**

If at any point you are not happy with the assessment, Social Worker or any aspect of the assessment process then we ask that you contact your Social Worker or the Practice Manager to give them the opportunity to resolve the issue. However if you feel unable to do this or you are still not happy with the process then you have the right to complain within South Gloucestershire's complaints procedure. Please write to:

**Complaints, DPA & FOI Manager  
Children & Young People Department  
South Gloucestershire Council  
PO Box 2082, Council Offices, Castle Street  
Thornbury, BS35 9BQ**

**Tel: 01454 866374**



**If you need this information in another format  
or language please contact 01454 868008**