



A Guide to Developing a Short Break Bureau



Right Break, Right Time, Right Place

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Introduction

Shared Care Scotland exists to promote the development of more imaginative, person-centred approaches to short breaks and respite care. The carers and service users we speak to are looking for quality services which offer choice, flexibility and reliability; a range of services that meet different needs and circumstances rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. The development of Short Break Bureaux in Scotland, involving collaborative working between the statutory and voluntary sector, provides a model of service planning which is entirely consistent with these aspirations.

The concept is straightforward - to bring together in one place the necessary information, resources and support to enable more effective coordination and delivery of short break services. Better outcomes for all are achieved through improved communication, joint working and a more positive engagement with carers and service users in determining the 'shape' of their short break package.

We hope this guide will persuade those responsible for planning and commissioning short break services of the benefits of the Bureau model of delivery. In the process of developing this guide we have discovered a range of different approaches, each in their own way working to deliver more flexible, personalised services. We have distilled these down to a common set of values and characteristics to help guide the development of similar services elsewhere.

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Don Williamson

Chief Executive
Shared Care Scotland

About Shared Care Scotland

Shared Care Scotland is a registered charity which promotes and supports the development of short break services for carers and the people they care for. We work in partnership to:

- Represent the interests of those who need, receive, or provide services
- Campaign throughout Scotland to raise awareness of the benefits of short breaks
- Support policies and practices which result in more imaginative approaches to short break provision
- Share knowledge, skills and experience to improve the range and quality of services and to promote good practice

Our services include:

- An online and telephone enquiry service to put carers and service users in touch with short break and respite 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

Shared Care Scotland receives core funding from the Scottish Government.

For further information see - ***www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk***

Background

The planning for this resource began in mid-2007, when it was agreed that a guide to the process of setting up a Short Break Bureau (SBB) would be of value to local authorities which were investigating potential routes to the delivery of more personalised short break (respite care) services. The original intention was to scope the range of SBB approaches in Scotland, and to harness the learning of these initiatives in order that other local authorities might reduce their learning curve.

What is a Short Break Bureau?

For the purpose of this guide a Short Break Bureau is defined as a single point of contact through which carers, and those requiring care, can be supported to access personalised, *overnight*, short-breaks. The bureau helps to connect people with services that best meet their particular needs and situation, in much the same way as a travel agent might help people to arrange their holiday package. The bureau gives people the support they need to plan what they want and to organise it through the bureau or, if they prefer, through family and friends or advocate.

While there was an expectation that larger SBBs would also be a route to more traditional breaks in locally provided residential or day centres, it was anticipated that the majority of breaks being organised would be alternative, or non-traditional, in nature.

Shared Care Scotland consulted with local authority commissioning managers in their network, and a research brief reflecting their questions was agreed. The principal lines of enquiry included:

- A contrast between the SBB model of service and traditional routes to short-break provision: outputs, timescales, cost, efficiency and client satisfaction
- An exploration of ways in which the SBB approach can be integrated into existing services
- Feedback from carers and service providers
- How does current government policy support the SBB approach?
- In what ways can the SBB model promote increased choice and flexibility?
- What are the key ingredients needed to establish the SBB and make it a success?

Initial research focused on four local authorities known to be using an SBB approach, and a similar service offered independently by an established voluntary organisation.

Following a series of site visits, interviews, and desk-based research, it became clear that there was significant variation amongst services calling themselves a Short Break Bureau. While each service operated one or more of what Shared Care Scotland consider to be 'key ingredients', none of them were fully operational in this sense.

What we did find across all the services examined was a clear desire to offer people who use short break services more choice and flexibility in how these services are delivered. Three councils – South Lanarkshire, City of Edinburgh and Falkirk – had been operating and developing such services for a number of years in advance, it could be said, of the current policy agenda on promoting personalised services.

While our research caused us to alter our brief slightly, this resource stands alone in providing a snap-shot of SBB approaches across Scotland in 2008. It does not claim to be comprehensive, as Shared Care Scotland is aware of other local authorities and independent

organisations who are working toward establishing a bureau in their area. It does, however, provide clear information on:

- The current policy context for personalised services
- The 'Key Ingredients' for a successful Short Break Bureau
- Case studies of five approaches to providing a Short Break Bureau service
- Key benefits for carers, people who use services, care managers, service providers, and other stakeholders
- Useful related materials/links

The importance of short breaks...

7 out of 10 carers provide more than 15 hours care each day
6 out of 10 carers who are in poor health say it is because of the amount of care they provide, while **9 out of 10** who experience poor mental health attribute this to their caring responsibilities
6 out of 10 families don't get a short break that fully meets their needs
7 out of 10 families have never been offered a choice of short break service
1 in 3 families have had their access to short breaks reduced
7 out of 10 families have reached or come close to breaking point because of lack of short break services

“(being at) breaking point isn't inevitable. It can be prevented. It is not caused by caring – it is caused by caring without the right help. With the right kind of short breaks, families will cope and will continue to support and care.”

- from Mencap's 'Breaking Point' report into short break provision for people with learning disabilities and their families, 2006.

The Policy and Social Context

It is estimated there are **480,000 carers in Scotland**, saving the public purse £7.6 billion ⁽¹⁾ every year - 75% of Scotland's NHS budget - through providing unpaid care to friends and family. Demographic changes, an ageing population and increasing pressure on limited health and social care services will place even greater importance on the contribution of unpaid caring in the future.

The Care 21 report into the future of unpaid care in Scotland (2005) identified these trends and highlighted the main areas where carers needed support. Regular access to suitable short breaks from caring was one of four key areas recommended for policy and practice development. A Respite Task Group was established to take this agenda forward and their work has informed new guidance ⁽²⁾ to support the development of more flexible and responsive short break services.

The Scottish Government's recent **Concordat with COSLA** provides local authorities with more flexibility to configure services to meet local needs, including services to support carers in their area. It also makes a commitment to work toward the provision of 10,000 additional respite weeks between 2008-2011 in residential or alternative care settings, as well as increasing respite and support for Scotland's young carers.

Other policy directives support this movement beyond more 'traditional' short break provision in care homes, encouraging greater personalisation and choice. **Changing Lives: The 21st Century Social Work Review**, published in 2006 states that new models of service delivery will be required and that *'doing more of the same won't work - tomorrow's solutions will need to engage people as active participants, delivering accessible, responsive services of the highest quality and promoting wellbeing.'* ⁽³⁾ In June of that year the government published a five-year implementation plan, which includes a clear focus on the creation of *personalised services*; services that reflect the aspirations and unique circumstances of each individual. **A simple definition of personalisation is that:**

'It enables the individual alone, or in groups, to find the right solutions for them and to participate in the delivery of a service. From being a recipient of services, citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive.' ⁽⁴⁾

Further expansion of the use of **Individual Budgets and Direct Payments** will require a corresponding growth in the choice of services. Local planning and commissioning will need to respond by creating more variety in the marketplace. Practitioner roles will change to become resource navigators, brokers and facilitators of services, helping people to find their way around the system to services which best match their needs and circumstances.

In essence, the case for establishing more flexible, personalised services has never been stronger. The Short Break Bureau model of service provision fits comfortably with the government agenda and, more importantly, with the stated needs of carers and service users.

1 Valuing Carers – calculating the value of unpaid care, Carers UK, 2007

2 Scottish Government Guidance on Short Breaks and Respite Care (expected publication date Sept 2008)

3 Changing Lives, Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review, Scottish Executive, 2006

4 Personalisation and Participation, Leadbetter, C. Lownsbrough, H., 2005

Key Qualities

Based on our research and consultation, we propose the following list of 'key qualities' for a Short Break Bureau:

The SBB will:-

- Demonstrate continuous and effective engagement/consultation with carers and the people for whom they are caring
- Support people to self-assess their needs and navigate their way to the services that best match these needs
- Assemble the necessary 'package' of support tailored to individual needs and circumstances
- Commit to the promotion of personalised, alternative breaks
- Promote the opportunity to take breaks outside of the local authority area
- Be innovative by developing new service options, continuously learning from experience

In terms of management and operation, the Short Break Bureau will:

- Actively win the support of staff at all levels of the organisation
- Operate with a staff team of 1 or 2 - ideally a Manager and Administrator - with whom all stakeholders can develop a positive working relationship. At least one member of staff will be knowledgeable about Direct Payments, Independent Living Allowance and other types of potential funding. The Manager should be a senior post with delegated financial authority
- Integrate and optimise different service budgets with users given more say over spending so services are commissioned around their needs. Close links with the Direct Payments Service will be important
- Use database and spreadsheet systems which are effective for operational needs, including the ability to produce comprehensive statistical information. *(IT should include integrated use of organisational intranet where available.)*
- Continuously monitor the development and evaluation of the service with a focus on *outcomes* for people having a short break rather than simply the *output* of a break having been provided
- Adopt person-centred planning approaches
- Achieve an appropriate balance between advance and spot purchasing of short break beds/opportunities. *(While it is foreseeable that there will always be a demand for this type of provision, it should ideally receive no more than 50% of the total budget allocation.)*
- Develop and implement clear guidelines for managing risk ensuring that all parties are clear of their shared and individual responsibility for a positive short break experience
- Provide for all groups who access short breaks. *(An initial pilot may be restricted to a certain group, ideally the bureau should be available for all who use short breaks.)*
- Market and promote the service to all stakeholders
- Be accessible via internet/email, telephone and in person
- Establish effective cross-sector networking

Key Ingredients for Success

At the earliest stage, it is important to have a **clear concept** about the vision and purpose of the service, and its intended outcomes. While arriving at such clarity may take some time, as it will necessarily involve consultation with carers and people who will make use of such a service, a clear vision will strengthen the planning and set-up phases of development.

We heard organisations describe **the benefit of having a ‘champion’**, someone who is passionate and confident about the potential value of such a service for a range of stakeholders, and is thus able to make a strong case for it. (Ideally the champion has the authority to release resources - see below.) Services with such a champion were more likely to get the go-ahead to pilot, to perform well in this pilot phase, and to secure the interest of the people who hold the purse-strings.

On-going consultation with carers and the people for whom they are caring is a vital ingredient. There are many ways to do this, but organisations described the benefit of forming an advisory group at an early stage. While these groups also had ‘professional’ membership, strong representation from carers was a key objective. Their involvement was of particular benefit in enabling the advisory group to plan for potential challenges that the SBB might encounter in relation to the needs of people using the service, and also ensured that the rhetoric of ‘choice and flexibility’ evolved into a practical reality.

While most of the organisations we spoke with initially established the SBB as a pilot project, it is important to **work toward sustainability from the outset**, and plan for the fact that significant impacts will take time. Actions to take might include ensuring that senior managers are involved from an early stage, putting systems in place to identify and measure impacts and monitor the experience of key stakeholders from the outset, and conducting regular reviews for the purpose of ensuring effective use of resources and achievement of aims. It will also be helpful to ensure that your project has a high profile with the right audiences (carers and carer organisations, senior managers, short-break providers, related voluntary organisations and statutory services, etc) and that they receive regular updates on service development and impacts. Having a wide range of supporters is always an asset.

Sufficient resources will be needed in relation to the scale of the endeavour. While resources may need to be stretched, successful outcomes will depend on having the necessary resources available to allow the service to develop to its potential. Piloting on a small scale will enable a case for budget optimisation and customer satisfaction to be made, as well as offer the opportunity to develop effective operational systems. Experiments elsewhere in relation to more flexible, individualised budgets, demonstrate the savings that can be made in the long run but it may be advisable, in the initial stage, to under-promise in order to over-deliver.

In addition to staff and a budget for service provision, our research highlighted the significant value of **appropriate Information Technology**. While some services operate with a minimum of IT support, there is clear benefit in developing a bespoke database. Good quality IT systems were shown to enhance service management and delivery, creating access to the booking system via the intranet offered significant benefits to associated professionals within one local authority setting we visited.

We found a clear benefit for carers and the people they care for when **SBB staff were knowledgeable about Direct Payments, Independent Living Allowance (ILA) and other sources of potential funding**. The SBB model offers the opportunity to create more flexible integrated packages of funding across service budgets and benefits.

Whenever possible, **limit the financial resources that are tied to ‘block booked’ provision**. One of the real opportunities of the Short Break Bureau approach is the ability to provide clients with choice and flexibility to offer truly personalised short breaks. The capacity to do so is reduced when financial resources are committed to one specific type of provision. That said, it is clear from our research that the SBB approach enables purchasers to optimise the use of block-purchased respite beds, which are the preferred short break option for some clients. While it is foreseeable that such provision will remain available

through SBBs, it is hoped that we are moving into a future where it is not the only type of break which people imagine for themselves.

Given that most people in Scotland think of short breaks as taking place in traditional settings such as care-homes and respite units, it is foreseeable that **efforts will be required to broaden understanding of what a short break can be**. The need to increase awareness of the range of potential alternative breaks is likely to be as important for related professionals as it is to those who use short break services. A proactive approach to awareness-raising will be a key output for a new Short Break Bureau, in order that it can successfully generate the referrals and client numbers it needs.

Research conducted by Paradigm Consulting with adults with learning disabilities and their families generated the following 'wish list' for short break services:

- The local authority has a good knowledge of current services **and** the extent to which these meet the needs of the people in their area
- Accessible and timely information is available and provided
- It is quick and easy to access a service
- Breaks are regular, frequent and long enough
- A range of options is offered which meets identified local needs
- People can 'mix and match' different options, at different times, for different reasons
- Services are flexible and responsive
- Staff, individuals and families are matched so that enabling, supportive and trusting relationships can develop
- Family carers and people with disabilities are involved in and able to influence changes and developments at different levels
- Person Centred Planning is used to help identify what will work best for the person.

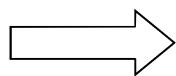
- from 'A Guide to Short Breaks', Paradigm Consulting on behalf of the Valuing People Support Team, 2007.

While internal promotion with related staff may be a straightforward undertaking, similar work with people who use short break services is likely to be more time intensive. Some of the projects we visited use person centred planning methods to encourage clients and their families to 'think out of the box'. While very successful, the use of these methods requires both skill (training) and time. Linking back to the need for sufficient resources, it will be important to **be clear about the approach that will be taken to promoting alternative breaks**, and ensuring that it is adequately resourced.

Finally, we found that successful Short Break Bureau approaches had a policy of **shared responsibility for risk management**. This responsibility was shared between the SBB/ local authority, the family involved and the short break provider. This increased responsibility for the family was explained as being necessary in order to safely manage the increased choice and flexibility they were offered through this model of service.

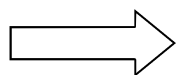
SUMMARY

Key Benefits of the Short Break Bureau Model



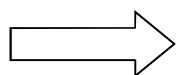
For carers and the people for whom they are caring

- Improved choice and flexibility in the type of breaks that can be organised, and when they can be taken
- Single point of access to information, advice and booking of short breaks
- Specialist help in organising personalised, alternative breaks
- Specialist help in organising assessments and funding (community care assessments, Direct Payments, Independent Living Allowance, charitable trusts, etc.)
- Carers are able to have a quality break with the knowledge that the person they care for is having a break of their choosing
- Increased confidence and ability to self-manage



For those planning & commissioning services

- Providing services which fit within the current policy climate in relation to planned, preventative interventions and the personalisation of services to carers and service users
- Efficient use of staff resources – having a single point of contact for organising short breaks, thus freeing social work staff from this largely administrative responsibility
- A central source of experience and expertise with improved strategic awareness of gaps in services and areas of unmet need
- Improved inter-agency working in relation to the provision of respite, as the SBB approach streamlines access for NHS and related staff seeking to arrange a short break, including crisis admissions
- More efficient use of financial resources – alternative breaks generally cost less than traditional residential breaks, and the SBB approach optimises the use of block booked provision and associated contract negotiation
- Being visibly responsive to the findings of national consultation with carers
- The opportunity to develop relationships with short break service providers and influence their service developments
- Clear and effective lines of communication relating to short breaks, amongst all levels of staff
- The SBB is an adaptable service model and can easily accommodate change (can be developed or limited in relation to available resources)



For those providing services

- Single point of contact in relation to all contracted short breaks
- Effective communication and good planning
- More effective use of resources (more able to plan into future, also more likely to fill available spaces)

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Falkirk Council

Conceived in 2000 by a Service Manager within the Council's Community Care team, and fully operational within six months, the Falkirk Short Break Bureau is perhaps the most recognised in Scotland.

Arising out of the Scottish Executive's 'Modernising Community Care' agenda, a commitment by Falkirk Council to be responsive to needs of the local population, and pressure to increase bed nights of respite in Falkirk by 2.5%, the Bureau was initially funded through the Carer's Strategy budget with centrally funded money to buy extra beds.

In addition to benefiting carers and those they care for, it was also intended to benefit Community Care staff and their Health Service colleagues through widening the potential range of breaks that could be made available, and offering a single point of contact for organising short breaks.

Initially established for adults with physical disabilities, frail older people and those with dementia, the Bureau soon began working with adults with learning disabilities as well.

While the Bureau does make alternative short breaks available – arranging stays in hotels by supplying a paid carer or using the Arthritis Care Hotel at Largs, bus tours and even a flight to Australia with a support worker – the majority of breaks arranged are still in residential units (including a range of local authority, private and voluntary sector providers). The Bureau approach enables Falkirk Council to maximise the usage of its block purchased provision, with 80%+ of its capacity being utilised annually.

One of the changes they have made in relation to this provision is that the Bureau now forward purchases beds for a number of *days* rather than *weeks*, thus enabling people to use their entitlement more flexibly to suit their needs. The Bureau also acts as a 'broker' for the Council, purchasing with its budget at a better rate than individual teams would be able to negotiate due to the volume of purchase.

The Bureau will fund one assessed, 'tailor made', alternative (non-contract) break in any financial year per client. Anyone assessed for additional breaks within this time period will be offered 'contract' short breaks if appropriate. If such provision is not considered appropriate, additional non-contract placements may be funded by the Community Care team budget, subject to approval. Individuals are also encouraged to use Direct Payments and ILA where appropriate, though Direct Payments are not intended nor provided to 'top up' breaks funded by the Bureau (or vice versa). Those assessed as able to fund their own break will be required to do so.

When funding spot purchased, alternative breaks the Bureau will pay the cost of accommodation, subsistence/meals (up to £70/week for self catering breaks) and any care costs, but will not fund travel costs unless there are specialist requirements, e.g. oxygen is required for the journey. The Bureau is careful not to subsidise holidays – only assessed respite breaks. At present, only overnight breaks are available through the Bureau, with any care at home funded through Community Care budgets.

The Bureau supports eight Community Care Teams as well as integrated Learning Disability and Mental Health Teams, which carry-out all necessary assessments. The Bureau is used widely by all teams, with some more likely to spot purchase alternative breaks than others.

The Bureau is also open to individuals who chose to access it independently, but they must have had a community care assessment. If they choose not to undergo a community care or financial assessment they are able to seek information from the SBB, however any breaks will need to be self-funded. Individuals are able to purchase 'contract' breaks through the Bureau using Direct Payments.

Community Care staff interviewed about their experience of the Bureau recognised many benefits to their own work, including:

- Effective for organising crisis admissions
- Able to source new resources to meet client need, including required aids, etc.
- A central budget helps streamline access
- Enables a significant reduction in the staff time spent organising/booking breaks
- Having access to the intranet database of block purchased beds, updated daily, enables staff to see at a glance what is available
- Overnight social work services can use the intranet to identify vacant beds and email SBB to notify them of intended usage

They also recognised a small number of limitations, including:

- The Care Commission has decreased flexibility for crisis placements
- The Bureau cannot presently arrange for breaks in clients own home
- Those who book earliest may have a better choice of dates – it is difficult to prioritise need

While several of the carers interviewed use the Bureau for more flexible access to residential respite beds, one carer spoke about using the Bureau to enable a more appropriate break for his daughter, who requires 24 hour care. Previously she was only able to access a high dependency bed, which was the wrong environment for her.

He is now able to use support from the Bureau to arrange a paid carer to accompany the family on their annual holiday. He appreciates the fact that he is able to book the holiday and then be reimbursed for his daughter's costs through providing receipts, thus ensuring that his family enjoys the break that suits them. He considers an individual budget to be the ideal. He is aware that the cost of his daughter accompanying her family, with support, is less than a week in a high dependency bed and would like the flexibility of having a full financial entitlement rather than a number of days. He appreciates being able to work directly with the Bureau, following an assessment through his daughter's Social Worker.

Service Costs

Staffing budget for the Bureau is £60k, including a FT Co-ordinator (develops relationships with providers, single point of contact, budget/funding co-ordination) and FT Administrator (organises bookings, pays invoices and maintains database). In 2007/08 the Bureau had a budget of £273k to cover 8,500 overnight breaks. It is also able to access the Community Care budget for respite.

Key Learning Points

- Through a shared assessment, Mental Health Nurses are able to access the Bureau via a Senior Social Worker. It has frequently proven difficult to organise alternative breaks for people with mental health problems, although the numbers are increasing. The principal barrier has been the fact that people are unable to predict how well they will be in the future – so breaks which have been planned may need to be called off

- due to an individual not feeling well enough to take their break.
- The Bureau benefits from being part of a local authority, through having clear lines of communication with senior managers and practitioners.
 - The Bureau benefits from the coordinator's knowledge and experience of operating Direct Payments.
 - The primary demand from the client group (adults only) is for a break in a residential respite facility. More work to change people's perception of what is possible from a short break is required in order to shift demand to more alternative breaks. Such demand will encourage more creativity from providers, including local authorities.
 - Efficiency of the Bureau is undermined by having to rely on paper-based records and not having appropriate IT for the service.
 - Costs for spot-purchased, alternative breaks are often significantly less than those taken in a residential care home.
 - Management of risk requires that a good assessment has been carried out, that the break is supported by carers/family, that venues are either Care Commission registered or thoroughly checked (ILF can be used to purchase paid care when a break is taken in non-registered accommodation, when approved by ILF), and that there is no perceived 'risk to self or others'. It is also considered important, particularly in relation to alternative breaks, that the individual (or their carer/representative, if accompanying) is able to talk through the break, not just fill in the form.

Case Study 2: South Lanarkshire Council

South Lanarkshire Council Short Break Bureau provides a short break booking service for older people and carers of older people within the South Lanarkshire area. The service is able to book short breaks/respite in care homes in and outside of South Lanarkshire for people who require residential or nursing care. Information about alternative holiday breaks, including companies who can arrange these in South Lanarkshire, and elsewhere in Scotland, is made available for individuals seeking an alternative short break. The Bureau does not, at present, arrange alternative breaks.

It is able to source emergency placements in most instances.

In addition to accepting referrals from Social Work and Health, the service accepts self-referrals. Individuals must have had a community care assessment, and have funding in place before a service can be offered.

Although the Bureau organises exclusively contract-purchased breaks, having a single point of contact provides advantages for carers. The main differences to traditional routes of access to short breaks include:

- Named person within social work for carer/person cared for to contact in relation to organising short breaks, and the case is kept open after case closed with social worker
- A detailed letter is sent to carer/person cared for after break is booked to show dates; name and address of provider, cost
- A checklist is sent to carer/person cared for to ensure they have packed appropriate luggage/medication etc.
- Contact two weeks before the break to ensure all is okay, transport organised and to stop/start any home care services
- Contact made with the carer/person cared for after the break for feedback

Benefits to the Social Work department include:

- A reduction in frontline staff's workload relating to organising breaks, stop/start of homecare and reporting
- A central place for the development of short break services and statistical monitoring/reporting
- A single point of contact for respite-service providers
- Efficient and effective use of block-purchased respite provision, with a single staff member maintaining an overview and ensuring budgets are managed effectively
- Positive lines of communication with carers

Risk is managed principally through using only registered care homes and ensuring that clear information about a client's requirements are sent to the home, as part of confirmation paperwork, two weeks prior to the stay commencing.

Service Costs

The South Lanarkshire service is staffed by one FT Administrator. As the role is exclusively administrative, there is a need for adequate technology – currently Excel, Word and SWIS (Social Work Information Service) are in use.

No specific financial information was made available.

Key Learning Points

- Ideally, the Bureau will expand to offer access to alternative breaks, and extend its client group to include children and adults.
- Technology could be improved to provide more accurate short break statistics; keeping an electronic diary of all respite beds that could be shared with staff and updated with online bookings; and further access to a directory of service providers

Case Study 3: Perth and Kinross Council

With momentum created by a Best Value review, funding from Carer's Strategy, and in consultation with local carers, Perth and Kinross Council established a pilot Short Break Bureau for adults with learning disabilities in late 2007. An evaluation of the pilot is due to take place in August 2008.

The Bureau aims to provide the individual and her/his family more choice, offer more control and increased flexibility in how they spend their time apart. It has been developed based on the principles of 'in Control' (self-directed support model, www.in-control.org.uk). Staff described its ultimate goal as "...improving lives, choice and flexibility for families".

The pilot service is initially being offered to six families caring for adults under the age of 25 with a learning disability. (Younger adults were thought more likely to embrace the opportunity for a non-traditional short break.) Their experience and feedback will be considered when reviewing the pilot and assessing the potential for establishing a permanent service.

The Bureau aims to mix the security of traditional respite with this new, more creative approach through being based in, and sharing staff with, the Council's residential respite unit. While the pilot is not open to everyone, it is hoped that by having a visible presence in the traditional respite unit, potential future users will take an interest in the Bureau and the types of break it is able to organise.

The process of using the Bureau, in this pilot phase, involves a series of meetings. In the initial meeting Bureau staff collect the following information:

- Social Work Care Plan and Carer's Assessments, including financial assessment
- How the person with a learning disability and their family want to spread their time apart over the year
- The interests of the person with a learning disability
- What help and support the person with a learning disability might need
- What kind of holiday/break the person with a learning disability might want and who they might want to go with
- If the person with a learning disability might want to stay at home with support while their family member has a break (family and friends are permitted to be hired to provide such support.)

On the basis of this information, the staff member then undertakes the process of trying to source the type of break/opportunity that the individual is seeking. *A key feature of the pilot is that no budget has been committed to purchasing Council services, so funding can be used in a wholly creative, person centred way.*

A further meeting with the family is then organised to discuss the range of potential options. Once a choice has been made, the family will decide when the preferred break will be taken, and staff will discuss how much it will cost. During this meeting staff would also discuss the respite budget remaining for the year, so that the family are able to plan its use according to their needs.

At present, each individual has access to an equivalent budget to that of someone spending a week in the Council residential unit; any cost in excess of this amount must be covered by the family, or topped up with a Direct Payment.

Once the break has been taken, staff return for a follow up visit to review what worked well (or not), how the experience of using the Bureau could be improved and whether or not the

individual/family would recommend a similar break to others. In addition to collecting feedback about the process and experience, staff are also seeking to develop a system for measuring the impact on quality of life indicators, including the benefit to the carer/cared for relationship.

At present there is no provision for crisis breaks, but this would be considered as part of any future development.

Service Costs

Hosted by the respite unit within the Council, the Bureau has a 20 hr/wk Respite Co-ordinator (whose role includes administration) and has been allocated approximately 20 hr/wk by the respite unit Manager during this initial pilot phase.

The Bureau operates its own computer, and promotes email contact with people using the service; freeing them from having to wait in for a phone call. The Bureau also has a bespoke database.

Experience thus far has shown that alternative breaks are proving to be less expensive than those taken in the respite unit. It is envisaged that, should the service be mainstreamed, any savings could be used to provide an increased number of breaks, or to provide additional support to those with high support needs in order that they too can enjoy an alternative break.

Key Learning Points

- Having a bespoke database improves administrative efficiency
- It is possible to combine the provision of traditional and alternative respite breaks in a local authority context
- Alternative short breaks often cost less than traditional respite in a residential unit
- Carers are assured a quality break when they are confident that the person they care for is having a break of their choosing
- Based on findings from the pilot to date, carers and the person for whom they are caring experience increased self-esteem through their role in 'project managing' their break
- In addition to undertaking risk assessment, all stakeholders – including families – need to share responsibility; with more control comes more responsibility. Those taking a break are encouraged to take out private holiday insurance.

Case Study 4: The City of Edinburgh Council

While not operating a 'Short Break Bureau', Edinburgh has operated a Short Breaks Team since 2004, providing flexible, person-centred short break services to adults with learning disabilities and older people. The four services which are housed within the Short Breaks Team provide breaks ranging from a few hours to a few weeks, tailored to meet the needs of the individual and allowing carers to have breaks from their caring responsibilities.

For the purpose of this guide, we will focus on one of the services offered by the Team - the Alternative Scheme for Holiday Aspirations (ASHA). Established in 2001, this service is for adults (16+) with a recognised learning disability, including Autistic Spectrum Disorders, who live with a family member in Edinburgh and are without other forms of funded respite provision. The service aims to provide an 'ordinary holiday' experience for clients, while providing carers with a quality break.

ASHA uses a person-centred approach to support and guide individuals to choose the holiday they want, ensure any necessary supports are available for the holiday and match individuals to a 'volunteer holiday carer'. Staff then support all those involved to organise and prepare for a successful break.

A collaborative approach is taken by ASHA, seeking to work respectfully with the individual who will be using the service and her/his family for the best possible outcome. ASHA aims to maximise choice and control for the service user. Having a role in planning the holiday is the first benefit for the individual using the support of ASHA.

In most instances the initial ASHA break is simply an overnight stay with the volunteer with whom an individual has been matched, following a couple of informal 'get to know you' meetings. Subsequent breaks could be for a weekend, a few days or even a week. It is a wholly flexible service which aims to complement residential respite, and to be available when the individual requiring the service needs it.

Benefits of using ASHA include:

- Giving individuals and their families the experience of having real choice and control over their short breaks
- Enabling carers to have a quality break or holiday on their own, knowing that their family member is taking the break of her/his choice with appropriate support
- Offering an opportunity for people who might otherwise never meet to develop real friendships and community connections (many 'matches' go on to have more than one holiday together)
- Reducing the demand for, and expenditure on, residential services

ASHA accepts referrals from individuals, families, voluntary sector, health and social work staff. It is not necessary that individuals have had a community care assessment, as ASHA staff are able to undertake their own assessment. People using ASHA are required to cover the cost of their own holiday break (through statutory or personal means), with ASHA covering all costs for the volunteer holiday carer.

Volunteer holiday carers are principally recruited through the press and university fresher fairs. Volunteers are carefully selected and vetted before being trained and supported by social work staff. Volunteers are chosen for their warmth, energy, flexibility, interest in people and the time they have available to support others to have a holiday. ASHA staff carefully match service users with volunteers who share similar interests and are likely to enjoy the same kind of holiday.

Service Costs

ASHA employs 1.5 FTE members of staff, and operates on an annual budget of £60k which includes a £12k holiday fund. Management, premises and other core costs are met by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Key Learning Points

- Volunteer carers, when suitably trained and supported, can facilitate a quality holiday experience for people requiring support; and thus a quality break for their carers.
- The use of Person Centred Planning approaches provides the additional benefit of empowering the service user through enabling their involvement in planning their holiday break

Case Study 5: The Thistle Foundation

Launched in 2006 by the Thistle Foundation, Smart Breaks aimed to offer a wholly independent, personalised short break service.

Serviced by one part-time member of staff, Smart Breaks offered an open service (self-referral was encouraged, and no social work involvement required) for people with disabilities, and often their carers, seeking alternative short breaks. Because Smart Breaks was an independent service it was free to use an entirely person centred approach.

“It is not *‘what can we offer you?’* but *‘what do you want?’*”

Smart Breaks aimed to create access to a greater range of options than might be available through a local authority. It sought to operate informally, to give the client an experience similar to that of visiting a travel agent. Similar to a travel agent, the member of staff described situations where the only thing she knew about an individual’s situation were their needs and aspirations in relation to the holiday they were planning.

In addition to working with clients to plan their holidays (*including active facilitation of this process when requested, using Person Centred Planning methods*), Smart Breaks staff also supported people to apply for funds when necessary. A comprehensive library of information about funding was a key resource to the service. People were also encouraged and supported to access statutory funding to which they were entitled, including Direct Payments.

A wide variety of breaks have been arranged through the service, including a Mediterranean cruise and stay in Italy for a young man and his father/carer. Assisting in the organisation of transport, support staff, and in some cases mobility aids or other required equipment at the destination (principally through liaising with local authorities), the member of staff was successful in enabling people to take breaks they may otherwise have been denied.

One of the couples (carer/cared for) who engaged the support of Smart Breaks in organising their holiday received information which has had a positive impact on all of their future breaks. With the support of staff, they were able to apply to a holiday grant fund for the cost of a fully fold-down portable shower chair from www.accessatlast.com. Having been previously limited to using only venues which could ensure appropriate wash facilities (and having been let down through well intended misinformation), they now have greatly increased freedom of choice in where and when they take their breaks.

The Thistle Foundation closed Smart Breaks in March 2008 due to uncertainty about future core funding. At this time the service was working across six local authorities. It had 45 individuals signed up to the service, had assisted in organising 27 breaks, and gave an information only service to 11 further individuals.

“...an excellent service which I found supportive and gave me the confidence to make this step...I was able to meet our first grandchild...thanks for everything.”

Service Costs

Because Smart Breaks was funded independently by the Thistle Foundation, costs for management, premises, IT and other aspects of core costs were absorbed by the organisation. The budget for the service was in the neighbourhood of £30k p.a., including the cost of one part-time member of staff, publicity and resource library.

Key Learning Points

- Older and younger clients brought 'different histories of experience', and therefore expectations. The model of Smart Breaks was able to provide for people seeking the full spectrum of alternative short break opportunities, and in some cases was able to expand the range of perceived options.
- Having been empowered through the support and information received when organising their initial break, and knowing that the Smart Breaks staff member was there for them in the event that they did need support, many people went on to organise future breaks independently.
- This sort of service would benefit from developing a resource bank of photos/videos of the types of facilities that people find on their breaks, similar to the way in which a travel agent is able to provide photographic information about hotel facilities. Photographs/videos would enable other clients to assess the suitability of 'disabled facilities' in relation to their own needs.
- Smart Breaks staff experienced the lack of opportunity to advocate on behalf of clients with their families as a limitation in some cases.
- The availability of funding information, and support to apply for funding, was a key element of the Smart Breaks model.

OUTLINE CASE STUDIES

(What we found on the web!)

The following examples of services were identified through web searches. The information provided has been taken from organisation websites – source provided. These services do not necessarily relate to the short break bureau model of service planning but demonstrate common principles such as flexibility, person-centred planning and the promotion of alternative breaks.

Momentum: Let's Go

<http://www.momentumscotland.org/web/Home>

Established by Momentum, an organisation dedicated to enabling and empowering disabled and otherwise excluded people in Scotland to identify and achieve their life goals, in 2001, 'Let's Go' offers community based short break opportunities for adults with learning difficulties living in the South Glasgow area. It was established to offer an alternative to building based respite, supporting clients to make the most of their leisure time and holidays.

'Let's Go' offers fully supported, flexible and individually tailored activities and breaks ranging from a few hours to weekends away. Clients are allocated a number of hours, according to the funding made available to them via social work, Direct Payments or ILA, which they can use to access support to undertake the activities they wish. Support to attend short courses, concerts or other performances, day trips out, sporting activities, or weekends away are some of the opportunities clients have accessed with the support of 'Let's Go' staff.

The majority of opportunities provided through 'Let's Go' are for short periods of time, rather than overnight.

'Let's Go' staff provide specialist support, using Person Centred Planning approaches, to more fully understand a clients interests and aspirations. Support is arranged to suit each person, and their family, according to their needs. Support for clients is provided by Let's Go staff members.

Referrals are principally made through the four area social work teams operating in the South Glasgow area. However, clients may self-refer if they have appropriate methods of payment – i.e. Direct Payments or ILA.

"Meeting the singer Daniel O'Donnell and travelling to London to see the stage show 'Fame' have been two of the highlights of the Let's Go service for me"

"One of the best trips was a tour of Manchester United's Old Trafford ground and to see them play Chelsea, as I am a big fan"

Momentum is an active member of Community Care Providers Scotland and the Social Care Association. They are an Approved Provider of community based individual support by a range of Scottish Local Authorities.

Newtonmore.com/disability

<http://www.newtonmore.com/disability/resident.htm>

This page on the Newtonmore (Highlands) community website highlights local services and amenities which people with disabilities may wish to access if living in or visiting Newtonmore. Pages such as this one enhance the ability to plan an alternative short break in an area.

Renfrewshire Respite Bureau

<http://tinyurl.com/3msgtg>

Renfrewshire Council Social Work Department offers a range of short break opportunities, including home-based care, for people with learning disabilities and their families.

The Renfrewshire Respite Bureau organises short stays away from home where service users can enjoy a break from the normal routine. The Bureau has been set up to make it easier and quicker for service users and carers to access the respite they need.

The respite coordinator offers advice and information to people with learning disabilities and their carers about the availability of respite services and how to access them.

respiteservices.com

<http://www.respiteservices.com>

Established by the province of Ontario, Canada, www.respiteservices.com is a public information portal about respite services throughout the province. A scroll-down menu, or post-code search, enable individuals to access information about a range of local authority, private and voluntary sector respite services in their area. Links are provided to their sites when available.

The website also includes a range of information specific to each geographical area, including a calendar of relevant events (training and information workshops, etc), key contacts in social services, sources of potential funding, opportunities to train as a qualified respite provider, and information about how to register as a respite provider.

The various area specific pages of the site are hosted by different organisations, which ensure they are maintained and up to date. The site is funded by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The Scottish Borders Short Breaks and Respite Care Directory

<http://www.carebreaks.org.uk>

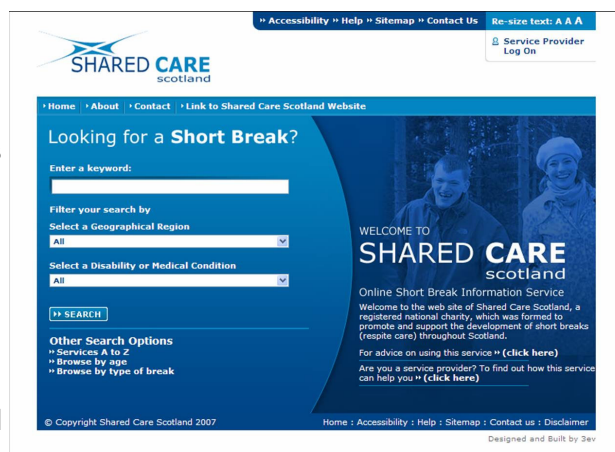
An online searchable directory of short break services available to clients in the Scottish Borders area. As well as a directory of alternative services the site also contains advice on definitions, funding, legal matters and case study examples.

ONLINE SHORT BREAK INFORMATION SERVICE

<http://www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk>
<http://www.carebreaksscotland.org>

OSBIS (Online Short Break Information Service) is a web-based directory of alternative forms of short break and respite care services available across Scotland. The directory is administered by Shared Care Scotland and contains information on a range of services including: home-based and residential based respite, family placements, befriending projects, activity and holiday type breaks and more specialised guest houses and hotels. The directory can be searched according to care needs supported, age, location and type of break.

The directory was launched by Shared Care Scotland in June 2008 and currently has around 200 different services listed. Shared Care Scotland is working with service providers to continually expand the number of services with the aim of making OSBIS a fully comprehensive, one-stop-shop for anyone searching for suitable breaks.



In addition to the online directory Shared Care Scotland also provides a telephone enquiry service for those that don't have access to the internet and for those who can't find what they're looking for on OSBIS.

OSBIS and the Short Break Bureau

With the development of OSBIS, local authorities, voluntary organisations and other partners now have access to a ready made 'platform' for holding and retrieving information about short break services in their area. Staff can upload service information on to the database themselves or, preferably, ask their service providers to do this directly. Once the information is on OSBIS, services will be sent annual automatic reminders to check and update their information and OSBIS users will be able to monitor this on the service records. In this way OSBIS can reduce the administrative load on SBB's who would otherwise have to keep and update a manual record of services.

Each service record contains the following information:

- Full contact details and website links
- Ages and care needs catered for
- Type of breaks offered
- Description of service offered
- Information on referral and eligibility criteria
- Costs/fees and financial support
- Links to related information

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