

Parents in Partnership Stockport

c/o Mr J Longman
19 Motcombe Road
Heald Green
Cheadle
Cheshire
SK8 3TP

13th November 2004

Dear Mr Boylan,

With respect to the Shorts Break Consultation, we writing to you on behalf of our members / families that will be potentially affected by the proposals outlined in the consultation document.

With the Shorts Breaks proposal of cutting the budget so that only families with level 3/4 social care will only be able to access Shorts Breaks provision is both discriminatory and not a fair allocation of resources.

Many of our families have more than one child with a disability and rely on the short breaks provision they access as the form of respite not only to the child receiving the break but to the wider family as current legislation prescribes.

These families are either single parents, have stay at home dads, persons who have lost their employment due to their caring roles and have low incomes. They struggle financially due to their caring roles. If they lose their short breaks provision then many of the families will not be able to afford to fund services etc that they received directly.

If these families lose the access to the short break provision you will be in the danger of having to support them through crisis intervention and they will need the support of the Social Care system because of the lack of break provision in their caring role. They would end up being in a crisis, a divorce situation or a safeguarding child protection issue because they cannot cope and there being no respite in their situation.

Cutting the budget to the Shorts Breaks provision may have the desired effect in terms of reducing the current budget but in overall terms the Children's Social Care finance could be significantly stretched that outweighs the budget savings made for the Short Breaks provision, when families lose the shorts breaks provision, hit crisis and require Social Care intervention.

We have used the feedback we have received from a family, to illustrate the impact on the family the proposed cuts would have:

“As a family we really try our best to spend our time and resources that will encourage Son A to progress in his own way and, of course, have an enjoyable life. And we always try and balance our time between both our sons. So having respite support workers (for two separate 2 hour slots) who can take Son A to a couple of out of school activities, it is so important to us all as a family. We may have to cut back on one or both of these activities as only one of us will be home from work and we will have to take Son B along as well; thus he misses the chance to play and meet etc with his pals. There's no way we would be able to afford to pay for the time of a support worker - we are just about coping with paying for their travel costs and the activity costs that Son A enjoys and Son B plays for a football team so we have his subs.

I can't believe that there aren't other budgets that the council could make cuts on that don't impact upon such a vulnerable population in Stockport to be honest.

But if that isn't negotiable I don't feel the proposal to arbitrarily stop any support for those without a Social Worker is a reasonable approach.”

In terms of the actual consultation and the information regarding the proposed cuts to the Short Breaks provision that has been published, we believe that there has not been sufficient information given to enable an informed and intelligent response by the consultees. The area where we feel is lacking is that there has been no information provided about alternative options and solutions which were considered and rejected prior to the consultation. As part of the consultation, there have been no alternative solutions to the proposal of cuts. There has been case law around the issue of consultations and the standard of fairness of the information given. We would like to know, what if any options were considered and rejected prior to Short Breaks consultation and why there weren't any tangible alternatives proposed as part of the consultation other than the proposed cut to services.

We would like to know in relation to Stockport MBC's Public Service Equality Duty what understanding the decision makers have on the impact of the cuts about the decisions on the disabled children and their families that will be affected by the proposed cuts. Can the decision makers demonstrate that they have considered the particular needs of the disabled children and their families / carer's in their decision making process to ensure that for example the need to advance equality of opportunity for disabled children have been part of that decision making.

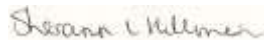
We have been involved in discussions with Edward Timpson MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families regarding the Short Breaks consultation and we have requested to feed back our response to the consultation.

We are very concerned at these proposals to the Short Breaks provision and the impact that this will have on some of the most vulnerable families within our community of Stockport. We do hope that voice of families will be heard and listened to through this consultation exercise. If it could be considered that dialogue could be had with all interested parties to explore all viable alternatives to the proposals which could meet Stockport MBC's aspirations to the financial situation but also provide the continuing support to those families who need the support.

We looking forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours faithfully

For and on behalf of
Parents in Partnership Stockport



Sherann Hillman & Jeremy Longman
Co- Chairs

Cc Andrew Webb
Phil Beswick
Chris McLoughlin
Cath Millington