

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **20 July 2007**

Title of Report: **Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Disability Short Break and Fostering Service, 1 April 2006-31 March 2007**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To outline the performance of the Children's Disability Short break and Fostering Service between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007.**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are no increased costs arising from this report.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Annual Progress Report of the East Sussex Children's Disability Short Break and Fostering Service is attached as Appendix 1.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Beverley Moores, Practice Manager, Short Break and Fostering Service, Tel: 01323 762024

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:  
None

**Annual Progress report of East Sussex Children's Disability Short Break and Fostering Service**  
**1 April 2006-31 March 2007**

**Introduction**

The Children's Short Break and Fostering Service changed its name from the Link Scheme in the summer 2006 to more accurately reflect the service that is offered. It continues to adhere to the fostering regulations and it provides 9 full time fostering placements, 1 shared care placement and 40 short break placements to severely disabled children. The majority of the children placed have learning difficulties and/or autism.

**1. Staying Safe**

1.1 This outcome is fundamental to all the activities by this service, notably through the careful recruitment and retention of carers, assessment and approval, supervision and training of carers. These are addressed in detail below.

**Recruitment and Retention of Carers**

1.2 From 1 April to 31 March, 66 new enquiries were received. This compares to 53 for 2006, 52 for 2005, and 44 for 2004. The methods of recruitment of carers are based on research from the Fostering Network, Shared Care Network and research from our current carers. As a result, the service works closely with children's own networks (Eg their special schools) to recruit carers, in addition to participating in activities organised in conjunction with the Fostering Team.

1.3 10 households have attended Skills to Foster preparation groups throughout this year. 5 have attended the additional sessions held specifically for carers who wish to care for disabled children.

1.4 25 households were recommended for assessment, of whom 11 went forward to the assessment stage and 7 were approved; 1 was a minority ethnic household.

1.5 There were 4 terminations of carers' approval during the year. The reasons for termination were natural conclusions to the respite placements (3 households) and changes in personal circumstances (1 household). Foster carers' feedback at their annual review indicates a high level of satisfaction among short break and fostering carers.

1.6 Retention events have included:

- Summer activity day for carers, parents and children at Bentley Wildfowl
- Summer trip to Little Canada for children who care
- Spring Dinner at East Sussex National Golf Resort
- Short Break and Fostering Newsletters
- Foster Carers Picnic at Bedgebury Pinetum

**Foster Carer Supervision and Training**

1.7 Short Break and Fostering workers meet quarterly with the training officer in the Fostering Service to participate in planning and evaluating training. There is less training specific to disability, and courses are sourced by carers, Eg through their work in schools or hospitals

or through the service, Eg Early Years Partnership training, Autistic Society Training. 75% of carers attended training this year.

- 1.8 Two carers undertook NVQ Health and Social Care for Children this year.

### **Placement Activity**

- 1.9 The service received 22 referrals this year. 19 were for short breaks and 3 were for full time placements. 10 children were linked to a short break carer and 1 child was linked to full time carers. Children who are not matched are redirected to other services, Eg residential respite care, or they await a link to be identified if this is appropriate to their need.
- 1.10 The children who present as most difficult to place are those with severe challenging behaviour and older children. The service works closely with the children's social workers and the Disability Service Resource Panel to identify an alternative service, Eg placement in the respite units where a match with a family cannot be identified.

### **BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Strategy**

- 1.11 The Short Break and Fostering Service works closely with the Fostering Service who has developed a strategy to recruit BME carers and to support both BME carers and non-BME carers who have BME children placed.
- 1.12 The Short Break and Fostering Service has 3 BME households and 3 BME children in placement. Toys and books that reflect Britain as a multi-cultural society are bought or loaned to carers.

### **Permanence**

- 1.13 The 9 children placed in the service full time are placed long term or permanently. Of these, 3 carers began the process of applying for Special Guardianship in relation to the child placed with them.
- 1.14 The Short Break and Fostering Service is represented on the Children's Disability Safeguarding Group which is a sub group of the Local Safeguarding Board.

## **2. Being Healthy**

- 2.1 There is a range of health services available to disabled children and the Short Break and Fostering Service works closely with them. For example, workers from the Paediatric Development Units of Eastbourne and Conquest Hospitals will visit carers to educate on specialist issues, Eg management of epilepsy, naso-gastric feeding. This enables children with complex health needs to be placed within families.
- 2.2 Access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has improved through the new single pathway referral service. The Disabled Children's Service works closely with the Family Intensive Support Service (FISS), who has developed a consultation service with a child psychiatrist who specialises in learning disabilities.
- 2.3 The Duty and Assessment Teams have developed the service offered by child protection nurses so that the whole county is now covered and the Children's Disability Services can access the 2 nurses as appropriate. There is also access to the Looked After Children's Nurses and to the new school nurse recruited specifically to cover the special schools.

2.4 The Head of Service for Children's Disability has recently joined the Continuing Care Panel in order to ensure closer working relationships with health when determining appropriate packages of respite care for disabled children.

2.5 The Fostering Panel now has a medical adviser who can advise on complex medical matters relating to carers.

### **3. Enjoying and Achieving**

3.1 Group activities are held each season, Eg Christmas party for the children, carers and parents to socialise with one another.

3.2 Carers are encouraged to access local attractions and leisure facilities. Information and funding is provided for this, Eg membership of Drusilla's Zoo and the Disabled Ski Association. Radar keys are provided to access public toilets and appropriate toys and equipment are bought for carers

3.3 The Short Break and Fostering Service supports full time carers by offering a range of short breaks for them, including accessing the outreach service, or the residential respite units. The most popular forms of support are carers who know one another being supported to care for each other's disabled children, and children attending 'Activeventure', a specialist residential outdoor pursuits centre.

### **4. Making a positive contribution**

4.1 Carers are making an increasing contribution to the process of transition to adulthood by participating in the planning process for a young person's education or placement, particularly in assisting the young person to express his/her views. Two carers are being themselves assessed to provide the long term adult care to the young people that they have in placement, and 1 carer is being assessed to provide short break adult care to the young person that they currently provide short breaks to.

4.2 The Short Break and Fostering Service has developed a variety of methods to obtain the wishes and views of children both prior to the link being made with a carer and to contribute to the carers' reviews. This is in addition to the contribution that they make to the Children's LAC reviews and service reviews.

4.3 A Looked After Children's participation project is being developed in conjunction with an Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure that all looked after disabled children have the optimum opportunity to participate in their reviews.

### **5. Economic Well-Being**

5.1 Carers contribute to the transition to adulthood plan and are involved in developing independence for disabled young people appropriate to their development and understanding. In particular, many young people begin to manage pocket money and, if able, their Disability Living Allowance.

5.2 One young person with a learning disability has part time work, facilitated and supported by his carer.

### **6. Commission for Social Care Inspection**

6.1 The annual fostering inspection took place for five days in December 2006. The Short Break and Fostering Service was inspected as part of the Fostering Service and there were

no separate recommendations for the Short Break and Fostering Service. The overall judgement was "excellent" with Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Management all scoring 4 ("excellent"), and Being Healthy scoring 3 ("good").

## **7. Conclusion**

The Panel is asked to note the performance and achievement of the East Sussex Short Break and Fostering Service for this period and endorse the key management priorities:

- To continue to increase the number of households offering short breaks to disabled children
- To increase the number of households able to offer care to children with challenging behaviour and to adolescents
- To encourage carers to apply for Special Guardianship Orders where appropriate
- To promote the use of kinship care for disabled children
- To work closely with other services and agencies, Eg independent fostering agencies to identify suitable resources for those children who have not been linked to a short break and fostering carer
- To maintain a high level of performance, in line with national standards and regulations
- To ensure that issues of diversity and equality are fully integrated into service planning and delivery