

Shared Care

Information for parents

This factsheet has been prepared to give more detailed information about the shared care scheme to a child/young person's parents when they are referred for a service. For general information about shared care please see Factsheet 011: General information about a service for the families of children with disabilities.

NB Throughout the factsheet references to 'parent' include any full time carer for the child. References to 'carer' means shared carer.

Legal status of children/young people who use shared care

Families are referred to us by the disabled children's team who are responsible under the Children Act 1989, for assessing the needs of all the family, including the disabled child, their siblings and you, their parents.

For more information please see the leaflet CSF 4380 entitled 'Information for parents/carers when children are receiving short breaks (respite care)'. Your disabled children's team worker may also be able to answer any queries you may have.

How we make placements

Matching children with carers

When a suitable carer has a vacancy, we send them a copy of your child's profile. If the carer wishes to meet your child, a shared care worker will contact you and arrange for you to meet the carer.

A medical protocol form indicating the child's health care needs and giving details of any medication or treatment required during placement is completed and discussed before the start of the arrangement. (See **Health Matters** below)

Hertfordshire County Council
Children, Schools and Families

Telephone: 0300 123 4043
www.hertsdirect.org/csf



If all are in agreement that this is a suitable match, we then arrange, with your agreement, an opportunity for the carer to see the child in school or another setting away from home. If the carer is happy to go ahead, we arrange for them to visit your child at home so they can be introduced. If care is to take place in the carer's home, you and the child will then be invited to visit. We then arrange for the carer to look after the child, maybe for an hour and then for longer periods. This helps everyone involved to get to know each other better and decide if they want to continue.

Either party has the right to say 'no' at any stage. If you refuse a particular arrangement, it will not affect any future matching of your child with another carer.

Making the placement agreement

It is arranged for the parent, prospective carer and the shared care and disabled children's team workers, to meet, complete and sign the placement information record. This gives contact details of the child and their parents, sets out how often and how long the visits/stays will be, the information needed to ensure the arrangement will be as problem free as possible, and outlines each person's rights and responsibilities regarding the short break.

The agreement is reviewed after the first three months and then every six months to check that the arrangements continue to be satisfactory. Children in receipt of day care will be reviewed annually.

The Placement Information Record includes a medical consent form so that the carer can seek, and give consent to, medical help in an emergency.

Allowances and expenses

Payment to carers

There are a small number of fee paid carers who are paid for their time but, on the whole, shared carers approved by Hertfordshire County Council are volunteer carers and are not paid for the time they give but claim a tax free allowance.

This allowance is not a payment to the carer, but an acknowledgement that, in becoming a shared carer, they will incur some expense. The carer attends training and support groups, or may incur travel costs in the course of providing shared care. To receive payment, carers complete a claim form for each period of care they provide. Parents may be asked to verify that a short break has taken place.

Travel expenses

In general, we expect parents and carers to share the travel costs of placements. For instance the parent may bring the child to the carer's home, and the carer will take the child home at the end of the placement.

In exceptional circumstances, such as when the child lives a long way from the carer, we can arrange for the carer to be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred, provided that this has been agreed in advance by the disabled children's team and is included on the placement information record.

Payments for outings

Part of the shared care task may be to provide the child/young person with opportunities to experience, and take part in, social and age appropriate activities. Depending on the activities outlined, and the cost of the activities, the carer and the parent should agree what expenses are involved. Generally, we expect parents to be responsible for the cost of their child's activities. The carers are responsible for their costs, and are reimbursed through the payment of the allowance outlined above. For some activities the carer may be admitted free, using their shared care ID.

Carers may also wish to include the shared care child in family outings and activities which are not included in the care plan. It is helpful if the parents and carers are given the opportunity to discuss this prior to the placement meeting and any agreements can be noted in that document. This will help to ensure that everyone is clear about expectations and responsibilities for payment.

Health and Safety Matters

Moving and Handling

If your child has mobility difficulties we will arrange for an occupational therapist to give advice on any training the carer needs in order to care for your child safely. If equipment is needed we will ensure that this is provided.

Medical treatments

Your child may have special health needs, for example they may be fed through a gastrostomy tube. As parents will have already received training, we would expect them to be able to advise carers about how to carry out procedures like this. When the carer feels confident, we then arrange for a suitably qualified professional to observe the carer and verify that they are competent.

Carers receive appropriate training from qualified medical personnel before undertaking any invasive procedures, such as giving injections. Shared care workers will identify suitable trainers and make training available.

If the carer administers any type of medicine, this is always done with the agreement of the parent, and the carer will make a written record of the time of administration as well as the type of medicine and dose given.

When a child is unwell

When children are unwell, we feel that their place is at home with their parents. Please do not ask your shared carer to look after a child who is poorly unless this has been agreed as part of the placement agreement. Most shared carers are happy to offer an alternative date for the short break if the child is not able to attend through illness.

If the child becomes unwell during the course of their stay the shared carer will contact you as parents in the first instance unless they need to take any emergency action required to save the child's life. This is thankfully a rare event, however it may be helpful if this is anticipated and discussed before placement commences.

Confidentiality

Information about carers and children's involvement with the scheme is regarded as completely confidential. We expect carers to respect the privacy of the families involved and they should not divulge any information concerning any user of the scheme unless authorised to do so.

Similarly, we expect parents to treat as confidential any information that carers may decide to share with them.

Contacts

The shared care scheme is operated by Hertfordshire County Council, Children Schools and Families (CSF) and can be contacted as follows:

North (North Hertfordshire, Stevenage) and **East** (East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn Hatfield) Family Placement Service, Shared Care Team, SFAR 125, Farnham House Stevenage SG1 2FQ
Tel. 01438 843294

West (Hertsmere, St Albans City & District) and **South** (Watford and Three Rivers, Dacorum) Family Placement Service, Shared Care Team, Apsley One, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9BF
Tel. 01442 453010

The scheme is a member of the Shared Care Network, a national organisation which aims to support and promote family based short breaks. Parents of disabled children can also get involved in the Shared Care Network, for more information contact:

Shared Care Network

63-66 Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Easton, Bristol, BS5 0HE
Tel: 01179 415361 Fax: 01179 415362 www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk

www.hertsdirect.org/sharedcare

This information can be made available on request in other formats, including large print, Braille, audio and other languages.