

**Scottish Government Debate:
Implementation of the Carers' and Young Carers' Strategy – Short
Breaks**

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes and supports the Scottish Government's Carers and Young Carers strategy. We are particularly involved in the delivery of short breaks and we currently provide a range of short break services across Scotland. Our short breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to take part in afternoon play activities, receive in-home care or stay overnight at specialised support facilities. Our services give carers much needed time, which allow them to re-charge their batteries, spend time with the other children in the family or just have a break.

We believe that the Government is making progress regarding short breaks, but that more can still be done to improve them and ensure that carers and young carers get much needed support, as well as providing the service user with an enriching experience.

Key Recommendations

Barnardo's Scotland would like to see the Government address the following concerns:

1. **Develop clearer definitions of the different kinds of short breaks**
– At the moment the definition is far too broad and includes everything from activity breaks to intensive high level overnight support at specialised facilities.
2. **More robust data from Local Authorities and better sharing of that information between Local Authorities and Scottish Government:**
 - a. currently there is not sufficient data recorded, what data there is focuses on outputs not outcomes. Data must focus on outcomes.
 - b. a lack of data means that services cannot plan appropriately to meet short break needs, including allowing for more specific needs and the provision of specialist services
 - c. it is also difficult to ascertain geographical needs without appropriate data.
3. **Local Authorities need to recognise the importance and value of short breaks and give them a higher priority** by ensuring adequate funding is in place with the appropriate level of support and that short breaks be encouraged from an early age.
4. **Important to ensure the needs of young carers are being met** – more has to be done to recognise the different needs and support required by younger carers compared to adult carers.

5. **There needs to be more choice and control over when and how carers can take advantage of short breaks** – the progression of the personalisation agenda is an opportunity to ensure that short breaks are more suitable to the needs of carers and families and can be provided at times to suit the family. Government needs to ensure that as this agenda is progressed the range of choice for short breaks improves.

What is a short break?

Short breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to have regular short stays away from their families. Short breaks can range from providing afternoon play activities during school holidays, to in-home care or stays overnight at specialised support facilities.

Short breaks are an essential part of the overall support that families and carers need to help them care for a family member.

Short breaks should deliver positive outcomes for both the carer and the person with care needs.

At Barnardo's Scotland we prefer to use the term 'short break care' rather than 'respite care' because it places the emphasis on giving the child a fun break.

The Short Break Continuum

The term 'short break' needs to be refined and more clearly defined, as currently the concept is far too broad. Short breaks operate on a continuum from low level, short daytime breaks to high level dependency overnight support in a specialised facility, such as the Caern facility provided by Barnardo's Scotland. Future discussions of short breaks need to bring out the different categories under this continuum more clearly and this also needs to be reflected in data capture carried out by service providers.

The importance of short breaks

The carers that work with Barnardo's Scotland regard short breaks as not only a lifeline in enabling families to stay together, but view these services as invaluable in enabling them to 'cope' with their family life.

There also considerable benefits to the young service users who take part in our short break services. In having regular breaks away from their caring families it helps them to both broaden their life's experience and in many

cases supports them take the first step towards independence and an independent future.

The benefits to the young siblings of service users are also considerable and well documented. They are often young carers as well and allowing them quality time with their parents and ensuring that they can enjoy individual attention is crucial in their own development.

The benefits of such short breaks hinge around ensuring and enhancing an individual families quality of life, given that they will have a life long commitment to caring for their son or daughter, or in many cases, grand children.

Starting early

Our families feel that short breaks should be encouraged from an early age, while recognising that some parents may not feel able to let go and trust others. Parents supported by Barnardo's Scotland say that seeking such support early in a child's life has enabled them as a family to have a much better quality of life for all family members and helped greatly reduce separation anxiety in their children as well as help them accept and get used to short breaks being a natural part of everyday life, in a similar way to going to nursery or school. In the longer term it has helped families cope much better.

About Barnardo's Scotland

Barnardo's Scotland works with more than 10,000 children, young people and their families in 98 specialised projects in communities across Scotland.

Barnardo's Scotland operates a number of services that provide a wide range of short breaks for many vulnerable families across North, West and East Scotland.

We provide a number of after school clubs and play-schemes, as well as sitting services, for disabled children and young people at services across Scotland. We also run a residential overnight short breaks service for children and young people with learning disabilities for Edinburgh and Midlothian, which includes an emergency service. This includes intensive support for children and young people with high-level needs.