Policy Context

On 1 April 2011 the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations came into force. These regulations prescribe the manner in which local authorities must make provisions that enable parents and carers of disabled children and young people to take short breaks from their caring responsibilities. They also place a statutory obligation on local authorities to develop and publish a ‘Short Breaks Services Statement’.

The regulations specify that the Short Breaks Services statement must set out the local service offer and include the range of services available and any eligibility criteria or assessment process that may apply. When developing and revising the statement local authorities are obliged to pay regard to the views of local parents and carers.

Development

In May 2011 local parents and carers of disabled children and young people were consulted about the content of the statement. They wanted the statement to be web-based and include:

- Any eligibility criteria for accessing short break services
- Any assessment processes required to access short break services
- What activities children do, how they will benefit from and what skills they will develop through each short break service
- All services available to Lewisham residents, including mainstream services, that could enable parents or carers to take a break from their caring responsibilities
- Venues, hours, frequency, activities offered, additional needs catered for and the level of care provided by each short break service
- Related statements and services
- How the Council assures the quality of short break services
- The rights, responsibilities and roles relating to short breaks including the borough’s financial commitment and the level of parental involvement required to access short break services.

Lewisham’s Short Breaks Services Statement was co-produced by the council, a representative from Contact a Family and a working group of local parents and carers of disabled children. Between July and September 2011 7 local parents and carers gave over 40 hours of their time to develop the statement.

Content

Lewisham’s Short Breaks Services Statement covers the following areas:
• Lewisham’s commitment to short breaks
• What short breaks are and who might benefit from them
• Roles and responsibilities for short break services in Lewisham
• Lewisham’s tiered approach to short breaks encompassing universal, targeted and specialist services
• How families can access short breaks, including Lewisham’s referral assessment process and eligibility criteria
• Lewisham’s range of short breaks services
• How Lewisham assures the quality of its short break services
• How Lewisham involves parents and carers of disabled children
• The legislative framework around short breaks services
• Links to further sources of information and help for families with disabled children

Publication

Lewisham’s Short Breaks Services Statement was published on 1 October 2011 as a microsite of the Council’s website.

Appendix

When the Statement was published as a website, revisions were made as a consequence of limitations to the functionality of the Council website. Parents were unhappy with the following revisions. Some have now been remedied and others are pending. The table below identifies the se revisions and their status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Removal of photos illustrating short break activities</td>
<td>Photos had been embedded in the document and as such had lost quality. Only photos emailed as individual jpegs could be included in the website</td>
<td>Pending - Comms provided a website with approved images and asked the working group to select appropriate images for inclusion in the webpages. The images have been selected and emailed to comms. Due to be complete by 1.12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of case studies and photos</td>
<td>Photos and text had been embedded in the document as images and as such had lost quality. Only photos emailed as individual jpegs could be included in the website.</td>
<td>Pending - There was a delay in sending photos as it was not possible to obtain the original photo from one of the members. Case studies and photos have now been emailed to comms for inclusion in the webpages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Removal of working group members photos and statements</td>
<td>Photos and text had been embedded in the document as images and as such had lost quality. Only photos emailed as individual jpegs could be included in the website.</td>
<td>Resolved - All photos and text provided by working group members have now been included in the webpages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of diagrams</td>
<td>Diagrams were embedded in the document, which meant that the text in them would be inaccessible to individuals accessing the website using web-reading software.</td>
<td>Pending - Some diagrams (e.g. the triangle of need) were designed and have been included in the webpages. Other diagrams were turned into tables. Parents were unhappy with the tables as they felt that they are difficult to understand. Comms have offered to turn the original diagrams into interactive PDFs that will link to the website. Due to be complete by 1.12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>The structure of the document was changed to enable the document to sit within the Council website. Parents felt that these changes made the pages hard to follow.</td>
<td>Pending - Some revisions have been made, others are pending. Due to be complete by 1.12.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Warwick Tomsett

Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance