

Title:	Short Breaks Policy Public Consultation		
Report to:	Care Trust Executive Team/Trust Board and Torbay Council		
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1. Introduction and purpose

In December 2014 Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust (TSDHCT) made the decision to undertake a public consultation with respect to a policy for Short Breaks with a view to this becoming operational from the 1st April 2015.

The policy reflects TSDHCT's continued commitment to supporting carers in Torbay in their valuable role by ensuring they have access to a range of support and services. This can include providing eligible carers with funding for a short break in a variety of forms. TSDHCT has been carefully considering how best to ensure our policy on short breaks is fair and transparent. We also wish to make sure we are prepared for The Care Act, which comes into force with regards to carer's rights, in April 2015.

We want to make the right decisions for individuals whilst also considering the tough choices we need to make in order to manage services on substantially reduced budgets and a financial savings have to be delivered from this approach as part of the 2015/16 budget agreed by Torbay Council. The draft policy thus has the support of TSDHCT and Torbay Council.

2. Background and context

The draft policy sets out the way in which we are proposing to assess for short breaks in the future. Our approach is centred on these key principles:

The policy underpins TSDHCT commitment to supporting carers to continue in their valuable role by ensuring access to a range of services which provide eligible carers with a break from their caring role. This has to be balanced in the context of limited resources to provide these opportunities.

Short breaks can have a variety of forms.

- The policy recognises that a carer is someone who provides unpaid help and support to a relative or friend who could not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction, disability or other vulnerability.
- Access to short breaks is based on assessment and will be provided for people whose needs are eligible under National Eligibility Criteria Guidance.

- Short breaks are considered as part of the Resource Allocation Service, and provided directly or via a personal budget/direct payment.
- Short breaks encompass a wide range of different short term services. The common factor is not what service is provided but its purpose - to provide a break or the carer which helps them to sustain the caring relationship and which is a positive experience for the carer and the person with care needs.
- Adult Social Care and Health funding provide short term solutions through a variety of options to the carers of people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, people with physical disabilities, people with substance misuse issues, older people and other vulnerable adults across TSDHCT. This policy outlines how we will move towards a consistent and equitable way of all client groups in the provision of Social Care and Health funded short breaks.
- Current policy for the provision of adult health and social care is aimed at promoting the maximum possible choice and control for service user and their carer(s). This policy sets the mechanism by which a carer's need for short breaks can be met best through services provided to the user and/or a personal budget provided directly to them.
- The policy rests upon a general assumption and expectation that short breaks are services provided directly to the service users in order to provide the carer with a break from caring. As such they are treated as a service for the service user.
- Services provided to the service user are subject to financial assessment. This is undertaken as outlined by the Fairer Contributions Policy and the Fair Access to Care Services Policy Eligibility Framework and Guidance.

Thus the proposed policy sets the framework for the approach to Short Breaks agreed by TSDHCT and Torbay Council.

3. Consultation Methodology

The consultation ran from Friday 19 December 2014 and closed on Friday 13 February 2015. TSDHCT was keen to seek views on the proposed new policy on short breaks in Torbay. The consultation provided an opportunity to comment on the draft policy. Our objective is to make the right decisions for individuals whilst also considering the tough choices we need to make in order to manage services on reduced budgets.

Specifically we sought responses to the following questions:

- Whether you think we have taken all the facts and issues into account in our policy and if you think the policy is fair.
- Any concerns you may have about any content or omission in the policy.
- What support you would like if any changes were to go ahead.

The public could respond with a completed feedback form by email or post.

- A link on the front page of the Trust's website was live at the start of consultation on 19th December; this took the public directly to a copy of the policy and an electronic feedback form for ease of response.
- The same information and way of responding was available via the Torbay Council website.
- Hard copies of the policy and feedback form were available from the Trust engagement team, including a freepost envelope for response.
- The January issue of the Carers "Signpost" newsletter also featured an article with regard to the Short Breaks consultation, including how to respond and encouraging carers to have their say in the process.

- Also we utilised the carer's service electronic distribution of some 900 carers people so that the details of the consultation were circulated and so public awareness was raised and that it was clear how to respond to the policy proposal.
- The information was also made available to Health watch so a link to the consultation could be included on their website to raise public awareness.

4. Consultation findings

Five written responses were received. In addition, a session was held with users of the In House Short Break Unit (Four service users, facilitated by Speaking Out Torbay)

Two completed forms were returned:

- Form One – Member of the public. Supportive, no concerns.
- Form Two – Provider. Supportive, one concern about offering breaks to older people from managing their own care. Additional concern about younger people with a learning disability who need a break from their family environment.

Two emails were received regarding the consultation:

- Email One – Member of the public. Short breaks should be ring-fenced for carer, not included in the RAS. Opposes the proposals.
- Email Two – Member of the public. Short breaks should include holidays.
- Email Three – Member of the public. A suggestion that retreats should be available.

In House Short Breaks unit feedback: Service users value Short Breaks and they enjoy the activities.

The consultation response rate was low and only one objection to the policy was received (email one).

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

Recommendation:

1. TSDHCT Executive and Torbay Council to authorise the Short Breaks Policy. For implementation by operational staff from 1st April 2015.