



SNAP PARENT CARER FORUM
CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

Update on Short Break funding

Fantastic news regarding Short Breaks funding, we have been heard and the charities are receiving their full funding arrangements for this year, continuing until March 2020!

SNAP Parent Carer Forum works alongside Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as a strategic partner and critical friend. We have built strong working relationships, and have a trusted role as parents of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. We are experts by experience and as such, have a unique understanding of how challenging life can be raising a family. We therefore work with our Local Authority partners to improve services delivered by education, health and social care.

In July 2016 we wrote a report after running workshops with parents to understand the Short Breaks delivery model, and to give families the opportunity to develop the services they needed. We stated in this [report](#) *'there must be clear information for parents about criteria, access to support and appropriately trained carers. Pathways must be defined and easy to navigate.'*

In March 2017 we produced a [report](#) on a survey we ran to complement the CBC Short Break survey. Our report concluded *'88% reported the loss of the specialist services would have a huge impact on their families, with 72% stating the importance of their child accessing a specialist provision. In conclusion, the voluntary agencies in Central Bedfordshire are well established, their services valued and well used by families.'* We ended the report with these words

'It is important to remember Short Break provision holds families under pressure, together. They provide dignity, self-esteem and support in addition to respite. They are more than clubs. They are essential to the well-being of our families the cuts will be keenly felt. "As families we did not choose this." Parent'

SNAP PCF has worked tirelessly to understand the current funding arrangements of Short Breaks and the new proposed personalisation agenda. We have met with; councilors, the charity sector, the Head of Children with Disability Service, parents and the Director of Children's Services. In October, a position was reached where the local charities providing Short Breaks had received one final payment of far less than they were expecting, along with the message that this was the last payment. The charities were expected to now run as a business which they were unable to do. The charities consulted with their members as they would have to withdraw some services for families in Central Bedfordshire.

SNAP PCF meets quarterly with Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services. At their meeting in November, Kirsty Green, Director and Participation Manager of SNAP PCF asked for Short Breaks to be added to the agenda. We were very concerned at the situation regarding Short Breaks, the lack of planning, information and communication. 175 Families had already reported to us in our Satisfaction of SEND Services [Survey](#) that they had to fight for services. Some of the most vital services the charities provided may no longer be accessible, instead they were expected to use universal services such as the library which may not meet their needs. As a trusted partner of Central Bedfordshire Council, we were listened to and action was taken.

“We have been listening to SNAP PCF and these organisations along with our children and families and we are working with them in order to find a positive way forward together.” Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services

We would like to thank Sue Harrison for trusting us, working at such a fast pace to investigate our concerns and to rectify the situation. SNAP PCF felt this was true partnership working and appreciate the change in direction. The result was the Central Bedfordshire Council met with the charities affected and invited us to attend those meetings. It was a humbling experience to hear the dedication and passion of; Autism Bedfordshire, Families United Network, Bedford District Cerebral Palsy Society and Mencap Bedford who spoke about their services they provide to families. The charities which will also include Special Needs Out of School Club and Mencap Leighton Buzzard will receive their full funding arrangements until the end of March 2019 and then a years funding until March 2020.

So, what's next?

We now need the Central Bedfordshire parents who attend these charities to join the SNAP Parent Carer Forum to work with us in developing a new personalised model that meets our family's needs. To help us also explain why the proposed new way of working was not going to work and to find a solution that meets central governments personalisation agenda whilst meeting needs. We are committed to run workshops in partnership with the charity providers and Central Bedfordshire Council ensuring we get the right fit for families, information will be sent out in the New Year.

It is easy and free to become a [member](#) of SNAP PCF and currently give our members a free [Max Card](#). You also can attend our training sessions, coffee mornings, receive our newsletters and we also are holding our second [conference](#) funded by the Department for Education in March 2019.

We are stronger together and every parent who joins our membership helps to strengthen our voice.

For further information please contact; admin@snappcf.org.uk, like us on [Facebook](#) or see our [website](#).