

rest assured?



questions to guide local
discussions on how to
improve short break
(respite care) provision

January 2013





This document has been produced by Shared Care Scotland in response to an earlier publication (July 2012) called 'Rest assured? A study of unpaid carers' experiences of short breaks'. Rest assured? was published by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS), in partnership Shared Care Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland and MECOPP. You can view and download a copy of the original report (pictured left) by visiting www.iriss.org.uk.

rest assured?

questions to guide local
discussions on how to
improve short break
(respite care) provision

table of contents

introduction	1
research into action	1
about 'Rest assured?'	2
more information	2
.....	
the key improvement areas	3
.....	
1. information and advice	4
.....	
2. extending the reach	5
.....	
3. particular groups	6
.....	
4. self-directed support	7
.....	
5. families and communities	8
.....	
6. measuring the effectiveness of short breaks	9
.....	
7. developing solutions together	10
.....	
8. short breaks planning	11
.....	
first steps	12
.....	
short breaks improvement plan – template	13
.....	

introduction

We have produced this paper to encourage and support local discussions to explore the findings of '*Rest assured?*' a national piece of research which reports on carers experiences of short breaks and respite care. We hope these discussions will help local authorities with their community planning partners to work with carers, service users and providers to identify any improvements in respite care that may be needed in their area, and the actions that will deliver these.

research into action

The questions contained in this paper are designed to guide these discussions towards an agreed set of actions to improve provision, making the **best use of available resources**. Ideally these discussions will be 'anchored' to local developments to help guide for example the writing or updating of the **local authority carer strategy**, or plans to manage the roll out of **self-directed support**, or efforts to target **Change Fund resources**.

In many respects *Rest assured?* makes uncomfortable reading, describing the difficulties people continue to face in having quality breaks in their caring. On the plus side the research helps our understanding of what carers are looking for in the form of flexible, personalised breaks and points us towards good practice. Most importantly the research findings can help us identify realistic steps that can be taken now that would make a difference.

With this discussion paper, we therefore wish to support local authorities and their planning partners to lead local discussions and action around the issues raised by the report. The questions in this guide will help structure your discussions and by the end you will have agreed the steps you can take to improve provision for the benefit of carers and care recipients in your area. A template form is attached to this document to help with action planning.



about ‘rest assured?’

The *Rest assured?* research (2012) describes the findings of a Scotland-wide study into unpaid carers’ experiences of short breaks from caring. The study explored, from the carers’ perspective, the benefits of short breaks (provided by formal services and family and friends), good practice in planning and provision, and areas for improvement. IRISS, Shared Care Scotland, Coalition of Carers in Scotland and MECOPP worked together on the research which involved a national survey, focus groups and interviews. The survey data is available for download.

The report of this research completed a two-part project that was undertaken to improve our overall knowledge and understanding of short breaks provision in Scotland - *It’s about time: An overview of short break planning and provision in Scotland* (Shared Care Scotland/Reid Howie) was published in 2010.

Whether you are a member of a local strategy group, carer support group, staff team or voluntary committee, we hope you will take time to read the *Rest assured?* research report before your discussions.

The ‘quotes’ introducing each question are taken from the ‘*Rest assured?*’ and ‘*It’s About Time*’ reports. These reports can be found here: <http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/rest-assured>

more information

Please contact:

Shared Care Scotland
Dunfermline Business Centre
Izatt Avenue
Dunfermline, KY11 3BZ

E: office@sharedcarescotland.com

T: 01383 622462

W: www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk



the key improvement areas

“For the purposes of this research, short breaks, breaks from caring or respite care all refer to a carer and the person they care for being supported – mainly through the provision of a service – to have a break from their normal routine and the demands of their caring situation. The break should be planned and delivered in such a way to achieve positive outcomes for both the carer and the person with care needs.”

“The Key Improvement Areas are ... a starting point for a local exploration of the issues.”

The *Rest assured?* report suggests several Key Improvement Areas:

- Improving the availability of information and advice about short breaks
- Efforts to extend the reach of short breaks to other carers that traditionally don't access breaks
- Helping carers and care recipients to understand and use Self-Directed Support as a means of accessing breaks in a more flexible, personalised way
- Helping carers to get support from family, friends and neighbours
- Collecting better information about people's experiences of short breaks and about levels of unmet need
- Involving carers in decisions about the local development of short breaks
- More systematic approaches to short breaks planning based on evidence of what works well

It is for local areas to decide the context for their discussions and the range of stakeholders that need to be involved.

Rather than a broad look across all care groups, discussions could instead be focused on the needs of particular groups, for example short breaks for disabled children and their families, or breaks for families caring for people with dementia. However there is merit in taking a broad approach to begin with. From this any overarching issues can be identified and priorities decided.

The following sections will look at each improvement area in turn, the issues raised and examples of action that might be taken. Questions are then provided to help consider how these issues relate to the experience of respite care locally.

1. information and advice

“Coping with caring responsibilities leaves little spare energy to search for information.”

43% of those surveyed who had not had a break reported that poor access to information and advice about short breaks was the main barrier faced.

The report suggests each local area should:

- urgently review the quality and accessibility of its information about short breaks and respite care
- make sure there is clear, published advice about how people receive help with purchasing and arranging a break, and any eligibility criteria that apply
- ensure the local authority website has up-to-date information for carers about short breaks and that this information is easily found. There should also be links to further information and advice, and a list of the different short break supports available
- keep form-filling, and the process of arranging a break, as simple as possible and consider a single point of contact for people needing help to arrange a break



discussion points

- » how do people find out about short breaks in our area?
- » is information about services readily accessible?
- » is there clear information available to help people understand how levels of support are determined, and the process involved?
- » what steps can be taken to improve the information available and how it is provided?
- » who needs to be involved in taking this forward?

2. extending the reach


"Many carers have difficulty in taking the initial step in asking for help"

The report suggests more carers could be reached by:

- promotional campaigns about caring and the support available to people with caring responsibilities
- inputs on carer awareness and short breaks in the initial training and continuing professional development of health and social work staff
- locally managed short break voucher schemes to help carers and care recipients to 'test the water' and experience the benefits of a flexible break



discussion points

- 
- » would these approaches make a difference for our area?
 - » what other developments might be beneficial to raise awareness of carers, the need for support and the importance of carers taking some time out for themselves?
 - » what needs to happen to ensure more carers have access to information and support?

3. particular groups

“Some local authorities seem to find it difficult to identify the volume of short breaks delivered to individual groups of service users (e.g. disabled people, people with learning difficulties, or members of ethnic minority communities). This makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the needs of these groups are being met, and also makes it difficult for public bodies to demonstrate they are meeting their obligations under the equality legislation.”

The report raises concerns about particular groups of carers including:

- carers in remoter rural areas
- carers in BME communities and other hard-to-reach equality groups
- carers with multiple caring responsibilities
- carers needing longer/overnight breaks
- older carers



discussion points

- » are there particular groups in our area we think experience added difficulties in being able to access suitable short break provision?
- » what information do we need to collect from these groups to better understand the difficulties they face in accessing suitable breaks?
- » how can this be taken forward and who needs to be involved?

4. self-directed support

“People may need encouragement and practical assistance to take their first step.”

To make more use of Self-Directed Support (SDS) for short breaks, the report suggests:

- information and advocacy organisations have a key role to play
- local directories of services and the development of “planning tools” will help people consider their options
- finding ways to share good practice examples of people using SDS for short breaks
- SDS needs a wide range of provision for people to choose from – one size doesn’t fit all



discussion points

- » what is needed in our area to support those who may wish to take more control of their short break or respite care arrangements?
- » what can be done to ensure people have a range of different short break services to select from?

5. families and communities

“Less than half of carers in this survey receive any family support to have a break.”

With pressure on public funding we need to explore what other resources are to be found in our communities to support families with caring responsibilities. What role can neighbours, friends and community-led organisations play for example. Perhaps by combining and augmenting publicly funded resources with these other community supports there is greater scope to reach more families in need of a break.

The report suggests developing:

- community networks, using ‘community connector’ or ‘local area coordination’ to help link local communities with people needing assistance
- time banking initiatives as one way to help share the care within the wider community
- initiatives to connect families in similar circumstances so they can offer reciprocal support to each other (house swaps, cooperatives, circles of support, social media, etc.)



discussion points

- » what scope is there in our area for such initiatives?
- » what else could be done to ‘unlock’ other community resources?
- » what could be our starting point?

6. measuring the effectiveness of short breaks


"Our understanding is poor because of inadequate data."

The report urges local areas to:

- review the availability of good quality, local performance information about short breaks
- involve carers and care recipients in setting key indicators around the quality, availability and reach of services to help measure improvements in provision



discussion points

- 
- » what performance information is currently collected in our local area?
 - » how is this information reported and used?
 - » what more can be done to ensure that carers and care recipient's experience of short breaks is properly captured and helps inform future commissioning decisions?

7. developing solutions together

"Many carers have knowledge of what does and doesn't work"

There is growing evidence that more innovative and cost effective solutions can be achieved when solutions are arrived at in a 'co-productive' way. The report highlights the knowledge and experience of carers which could be harnessed by those planning services to target resources more effectively. This would increase the likelihood of better outcomes all round and, as a consequence, of financial savings as more expensive crisis-led service interventions are avoided.

The findings show that the best outcomes are more likely to happen:

- when carers and care recipients are fully involved in the decisions about their short breaks
- when they can contribute their knowledge and experience at a more strategic level to help shape the development of services locally



discussion points

- » what scope is there to increase carer and care recipient involvement in determining the future direction of short breaks provision?
- » what needs to happen to achieve this?

8. short breaks planning

“...Although the Scottish Government Guidance on Short Breaks recommended the development of a free-standing or summary strategy for short breaks, the research found that relatively few local authorities and their partners have chosen to do this.... it would clearly be difficult for any local authority without an up-to-date strategy to carry out an evaluation or structured assessment of the effectiveness of their short break provision.”

The report suggests that each local area should:

- prepare an Short Breaks Improvement Plan¹ based on a thorough understanding of the reach, suitability and quality of existing provision
- identify a senior manager to be the lead person accountable for short breaks improvement planning
- publish an annual short breaks improvement statement which sets out what plans are in place locally to provide and improve breaks over the coming year
- promote better joined up working between Social Work, Health and the Third Sector on the planning and provision of breaks

discussion points

- » are these the right steps for our local area?
- » what needs to happen to turn good intentions into measurable progress?
- » who should be involved in taking this forward?

¹ See Appendix for example template

first steps

You have discussed the following key improvement areas and given some thought to how these relate to the provision of short breaks in your local area.

- Improving the availability of information and advice about short breaks
- Efforts to extend the reach of short breaks to other carers that traditionally don't access breaks
- Helping carers and care recipients to understand and use Self-Directed Support as a means of accessing breaks in a more flexible, personalised way
- Helping carers to get support from family, friends and neighbours
- Collecting better information about people's experiences of short breaks and about levels of unmet need
- Involving carers in decisions about the local development of short breaks
- More systematic approaches to short breaks planning

As a result of your discussions:



discussion points

- » where do you think you should be prioritising your efforts?
- » what needs to be agreed now to make things happen?
- » is there a 'quick win'...something that can be implemented quickly that would make a difference and start you on your way?
- » using the planning template provided, try adding some initial ideas for improving short break provision in your area

short breaks improvement plan – template

Improvement	Action(s)	Measure(s) of Success	Outcomes Delivered	Lead Person(s)	Timescale
<i>Example:</i> To improve our information about short breaks	Research then update local authority website with information on short breaks – short breaks definition, directory of services available in the area, eligibility for financial support, information on self directing short breaks, links to further advice and information	New or refreshed website section on short breaks – linked to other relevant carer information. Promotional plan in place to raise awareness of this resource. Process in place for maintaining this information.	Carers and care recipients will be better informed about short breaks and have a clear understanding about what services are available, how these are arranged and what eligibility criteria apply	J. Smith	Draft information available for consultative group by 31 March 2014 Live by 30 April 2014

Shared Care Scotland
Dunfermline Business Centre
Izatt Avenue
Dunfermline, KY11 3BZ

E: office@sharedcarescotland.com
T: 01383 622462
W: www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk



This document has been produced by Shared Care Scotland in response to an earlier publication (July 2012) called 'Rest assured? A study of unpaid carers' experiences of short breaks'. Rest assured? was published by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS), in partnership Shared Care Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland and MECOPP. You can view and download a copy of the original report (pictured left) by visiting www.iriss.org.uk.

