

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 26th MARCH 2019**

Question

What services, such as respite, are currently available for parents and carers to provide care and support for children with autism outside of term time and school hours?

Answer

Community short breaks are funded by the Health and Community Services Department and are available to those children with autism and their families who meet the eligibility criteria. A family is eligible for a community short break if their child has a permanent and substantial disability or health condition that severely impacts on the family's ability to engage in normal day-to-day activities and their child would benefit from a short break. In addition, they must meet at least three out of the following six criteria:

- Their child has no or very limited access to universal services (eg youth club, after school activities, time away from parents with extended family and friends, nursery for younger children)
- Their child demonstrates behaviours that they find challenging – behaviours that may present risk of harm to themselves, to other people or the environment
- They are a single parent without access to extended family support
- They have more than one child with a disability or have other children under 18 years whose opportunities to enjoy ordinary life are restricted because of the support required for their sibling
- They have a disability or diagnosed health need which impacts on their ability to care for their child
- Their sleep is disturbed regularly due to the impact of their child's additional needs.

Those families in receipt of community short breaks receive 3 hours a week term-time and 6 hours a week during the holidays. This can, however, be managed flexibly with some families choosing to use more or even all of their provision outside of term times. A social work assessment is not needed to access this service. The approved providers take children to a range of locations for their short break as agreed with the family and child, for example Jersey Zoo, Tamba Park, bowling, swimming or to the beach. Autism Jersey has recently opened a 'summer house' where it is able to take some children for indoor activities such as arts and crafts.

There is currently a shortage of community short break provision from the current providers. To respond to this and informed by feedback from families and children about the short break services they wanted, market development work started in July 2018 and a new model of short breaks was proposed with three tiers:

Tier 1 - Universal: Universal services are open to everyone, e.g. youth groups, cubs, nurseries and sports clubs.

Tier 2 - Targeted: Daytime group activities designed for disabled children. Children do not need a social care assessment to access these services.

Tier 3 - Specialist: Specialist short break services will meet a specific need following a social care assessment of the child's and carer's needs. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, needs can be met through a range of services, including those at tier 1 and 2 but also providing access if needed to:

- 1:1 support to access community activities
- day time support at Eden House* or Oakwell* Short Break Centres
- residential-based overnight short breaks
- self-directed support.

By increasing the number of children supported at tiers 1 and 2, it is anticipated that the need for 1:1 support at tier 3 will reduce. By doing this, the limited 1:1 support available can be provided to those who need it. Following a public consultation in November 2018 which supported the new model, an invitation to tender was issued at the end of January 2019 for the following services:

- Targeted weekend play and youth schemes
- Targeted school holiday play and youth schemes
- Specialist individual support
- Inclusion support to enable children to access universal provision.

The tender has closed and clarification of submissions is underway with the intention of starting the offer of a wider menu of support from May 2019 onwards.

*Eden House and Oakwell are Government of Jersey-run specialist residential short break providers. Eden House tends to be for children who have autism and complex communication and behavioural needs. Oakwell supports children with a range of physical and/or sensory needs where children may also have autism. They are both accessed via a social work assessment of the child's and their family's needs.

A range of other support is also available:

Autism Jersey provides a broad range of support to children and families. It runs a holiday club for primary school-attending children (aged 5+) and is also one of the current approved providers for the aforementioned community short breaks. Autism Jersey also provides a lot of emotional support to families as well as a befrienders scheme, family days (i.e. swimming and bowling) and siblings group.

Children who attend Mont a l'Abbe School have the opportunity to access the holiday club run on the school site.

The Youth Service runs an Inclusion Project (Tuesdays 16-25yrs, Thursdays 11-18yrs and 11-16yrs, Fridays 16-25yrs) and also runs more universal groups that children with less complex needs can attend. Centrepoint similarly runs holiday groups that children with autism who can manage a 1 to 10 staffing ratio can access. Centrepoint is currently piloting a weekend playcare and youth activity group for children with disabilities with support from the Jersey Child Care Trust. This has been very successful to date with good feedback from parents and young people.

Other organisations such as Cineworld and Les Quennevais swimming pool run 'autism friendly' sessions where they attempt to ensure their environments are more conducive to meeting the needs of children with autism and their families. The Co-op runs an autism friendly hour to enable families to shop in a less stimulating environment. The Entertainer toy shop in Bath Street has introduced a 'quiet hour' every Saturday morning, from 9 to 10am. The 'quiet hour' also runs every day in the school holidays from 9 to 10am. Jersey Heritage has social stories available to download for each of their venues which support access to those with autism.

The Jersey Sports Association for the Disabled provides a range of opportunities for children and young people with disabilities through its affiliated organisations including gymnastics, martial arts, bowling and swimming. There are also a broad range of universal provisions (e.g. cubs, scouts) and sports opportunities

that should be accessible to all, but may not suit all young people with Autism. Jersey Sport runs targeted weekend sessions for children with disabilities and for the first time will run school holiday sessions at Easter.

The Government of Jersey launched the Children with Disabilities Register in 2017, which is voluntary. Families who sign up receive a card which offers discounts with several local organisations and 3,000 UK organisations. A newsletter is also sent to families which contains information about activities and events.

A Children with Disabilities Directory is available for families to download from gov.je in addition to the Jersey Online Directory.