



East Lothian  
Council

# Share the Care

**Short Breaks - supporting children  
with disabilities**



**Share the Care is East Lothian Council's family-based respite service for children with physical and/or learning disabilities. This service provides essential support to children and their families by offering regular breaks in the carer's home, the child's home or the local community. This gives the child the chance to take part in different activities and make new friends, as well as giving the parents the opportunity to spend time with others in the family, or just to recharge their batteries.**

We are looking for families or single people who can care for a child at regular intervals throughout the year and can provide any or all of the following:

- daytime support
- weekend support
- overnight support
- school holiday support

## **Experience**

Although no particular qualifications are required to become a Share the Carer the personal qualities of warmth, humour and patience are essential. It can be helpful if a carer has some knowledge or experience of disability but this is not necessary in every situation. It is essential that carers can work in partnership with the child and their parents or carers to understand the child's individual needs. It is also essential that Share the Carers have an awareness of the need to challenge discrimination of all kinds.

## **The children and young people**

Most Share the Carers are linked to one child and their family, although some may be linked to several. It is important that there is careful matching of carer to child and family, and introductions are well planned and taken at a pace that suits everyone. Often Share the Carers continue to support children into adulthood.

The children referred are of all ages, though most often of school age. Most of them live with their families or occasionally with foster carers.

All the children are affected by disability, examples of which are learning disability with autism or Down Syndrome. Some have a physical disability and use a wheelchair, some have hearing or sight impairments. A number have epilepsy and a small number have complex health needs.



## **Steps to becoming a Share the Carer**

- 1 Contact a member of the Share the Care team to arrange a home visit. We will discuss your circumstances and interest in Share the Care then agree whether you attend an information evening about Share the Care.
- 2 At the information evening you will talk with members of the Share the Care Community, hear stories of our children who are waiting for Share the Care and express your interest in attending a preparation group for potential Share the Carers.
- 3 The preparation group involves sessions where parents as well as existing carers, discuss their experiences of caring for children with disabilities along with the benefits and challenges Share the Care brings.
- 4 You may decide to proceed with the assessment process by applying to become a Share the Carer. The assessment requires a social worker to assess you and your family's suitability to support children with disabilities. This identifies your current knowledge and skills along with areas in need of development such as epilepsy awareness or Signalong training. Medical, local authority, Disclosure Scotland checks and references are completed. Assessment and checks are necessary given the vulnerability of children in need of Share the Care.
- 5 Following assessment you and your assessing Social Worker will attend a Fostering Panel who will review the assessment and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
- 6 The Agency Decision Maker will write to you with their decision.
- 7 If successful you will be approved as a Share the Carer.

## Support for you

- Preparation before you begin to support a young person
- Learning and development opportunities
- Individual Support and advice from your own experienced Social Worker
- Out-of-hours telephone support
- Group Support – the chance to meet and share your experiences with other carers
- A carer payment, mileage and expenses



Existing Share the Carers all say that they really enjoy their contact with children and their families, and find Share the Care a very rewarding experience.

### What next?

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact:

#### Disability Team

**01875 824 309, [childrenandfamilies@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:childrenandfamilies@eastlothian.gov.uk) or [disabilityteam@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:disabilityteam@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

A member of our team will take some details from you and arrange for a Share the Care worker to meet with you to answer your questions and inform you of further information about how to become an East Lothian Share the Carer.

*Children's Services promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory policies, procedures and practices.*

East Lothian  
**Health & Social Care Partnership**

