

Linda's Story

Looking back on the 8 years as a Short Break Carer today, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with is the praise I received from my husband (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of children that I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on.

It's lovely to hear that people appreciate/admire the work that I do, some call me a special person, some have mentioned therapeutic carer but for me, it's embarrassing!! Writing it down is even harder!

I always remind my work colleagues that I will always say yes to anything because that is my nature. Must learn to say no!! The first paragraph was the hardest to write but I wanted to show the respect that I have gained being a Short Break Carer. I suppose that if I didn't have these comments then I would probably think that I wasn't doing a good enough job! So in that respect I thank and appreciate everyone of them.

Being a Mum of four children and a grandmother of seven children I suppose I have had plenty of practice of looking after children but not with children additional needs, until recently. My grandson, Harrison has been diagnosed with Autism within the last year. My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. My husband noticed an advert in the Llanelli Star advertising for volunteers to provide respite to help support families. I fancied helping out so Kay and I became Short Breaks carers. We attending training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006. In time, Kay moved back to Newport, South Wales and I carried on as a single carer. In April last year we were taken in-house by Carmarthen Council and I now work for the Short Break Service.

A little bit about the children I support....

They broke me in gently so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started caring for children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome. I now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include, Multi Sensory Impairments, OCD and spacial awareness issues, Dietary needs, Acid Reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my Team (Short Break Service), Speech and Language Specials, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend Annual Reviews at Schools, Meetings with GP's, Children in Need Meetings, and any meetings that I can, that will enable me to help support the child. A typical visit could be a child arrives on school bus to me. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and then work from there.



Linda...

Parents arrived with other sibling which gives me a chance to check on any issues such as, change of medication, update on what the child has eaten etc. Once the parents have left and the children are comfortable and relaxed then the fun begins....if its a nice day we may put a blanket out on the grass, collect some toys that the child may enjoy interacting with and at the same time seeing to the needs of their sibling, which maybe very different from the other child, such as wanting a bounce on the trampoline, fun in the sand pit or just chilling watching Peppa Pig. After tea, then bath time for the children and their favourite story time before bed. Once one child is settled to sleep then medication for the other child and supper then their bed time.

Tidy up time for me, including washing clothes for children before settling down to start my recordings....before my early night! Up early next day, before children, to get ready myself then waking children to give them breakfast, wash and brush their teeth and getting dressed ready for school. After they leave then it's tidy up time and maybe changeover of bedding for different child arriving at 3.15pm.

Memorable times.....numerous amount of times, over and over again... Standing at a gate watching some animals grazing in a field, standing on a bridge waiting for a train to go underneath, watching a child running towards me for a cwtsh, a child repeating a repetitive tune back to me, watching the response from a child who doesn't communicate in the usual ways but by poking out their tongue as a response to your efforts, watching a child learn to work a block puzzle and requesting praise in their own little way by clapping their hands, watching a very unstable child learning to walk with shoulders, arms and hands in control, taking a memorable photo of a child or recording a memorable video to see progress a child is making....I could go on...I have learnt so much from these children and from my role as a Short Break Carer.

Linda