

# **Make a difference to lives of a Nottinghamshire disabled child and their family...**

Give a little time and make a big difference – that's the message being sent out by Nottinghamshire County Council in an appeal for more people to support disabled children.

The Council is asking for people from Nottinghamshire to register as carers to give disabled children a short break.

The Council's short break service offers a support service requested by families of disabled children and offers regular opportunities for families to have a break from caring while the child enjoys spending time with a carer.

They offer disabled children a chance to make new friends, develop their independence and enjoy new activities.

Experience of caring for and supporting disabled people would be a real advantage and training and support is given in addition to an allowance towards the cost of care.

A national survey has identified that awareness of short breaks amongst the general public is low, with only three in ten people knowing about the opportunity to become a short break carer. In comparison, eight in ten people know about the change to foster.

Despite this low awareness, one in five people would consider giving a break if they were aware of the opportunity.

Councillor Philip Owen, the Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "Research shows lots more people would become short break carers if they knew they were needed.

"We currently have 41 short break foster carers supporting disabled children in Nottinghamshire, but we still require an additional 20 carers for children currently waiting for a short break.

"We are hoping this campaign results in many more short break foster carers coming forward to make a big difference to the lives of disabled children and their families."

Paul and Gemma Scott from West Bridgford have been short break carers since 2005. They currently provide breaks for two young people, including 15-year-old David Marriott who has autism and attention deficit disorder and lives with his grandmother Christine Marriott in Arnold.

Gemma said: "I used to teach in a special school and a few of the children in my class received short breaks. I saw how they made such a difference to the young person, providing them with new opportunities and also to the parents giving them a much needed rest.

"I felt my husband and I were able to offer a loving home where a disabled young person would have interesting and enjoyable short breaks. I also wanted to make a difference.

"We have provided successful short breaks for three children with different impairments and health care needs.

"Providing short breaks has been such a rewarding experience. The young people we care for have become part of our family and it has been so satisfying watching them develop.

"They have enjoyed making new friendships with our family and friends and we have been able to broaden their experiences. The families have enjoyed a change too, as they have been able to spend time together doing things that they may not normally be able to do."

Christine Marriott said: "David first started having short breaks when he was seven years old. It is really good service; without it I don't know how I would have coped.

“David has been going to stay with Gemma and her family for four years. He loves going to stay with their family. Gemma’s husband Paul also gets fully involved, and this is great for David.

“David is able to do different activities – they spend time teaching him how to use the computer, go swimming and play games, which he really enjoys.

“It also enables him to make new friends and learn boundaries whilst gaining independence in a supportive environment.

“I also benefit, as it gives me time to spend some quality time with David's sister Jessica, doing activities that David may not enjoy and Jessica really appreciates this.”

More short break carers are urgently needed to look after disabled children on a regular basis. The Council is looking for short break carers from a wide variety of backgrounds.

For more information about becoming a short break carer, please contact the Council’s short breaks for disabled children team on 01623 433249 or email [fostering@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@nottscc.gov.uk)