

Jazz hands: Comedian Jo Brand has a short break with local children and their carers



Sharing the care

Respite breaks, or short breaks as they are now known, are essential for any carer or relative looking after a child with a disability. Children, too, need time away from their normal routine. SEN magazine takes a look at this year's Share the Care Week and finds out which organisations offer respite care

Share The Care Week (15th – 22nd March) was a huge success. Organised by the Shared Care Network to raise awareness for the work they do, there were big names supporting the week-long event. Comedians such as Rory Bremner and Jo Brand were on board, actresses such as Jane Horrocks and Julie Fernandez (also a disability rights campaigner), Welsh rugby star Jonathan Davies, BBC Radio sports commentator Alastair James Hignell and Sir Clive Woodward, Director of Elite Performance at the British Olympic Association, to name but a few.

The Shared Care Network recruits rigorously trained, CRB checked and registered carers to look after a child with a special need in either the carer's own home, the child's home or

elsewhere in the community (an activity centre, for example).

As part of Share the Care Week, the network launched their Big Break campaign which aims to recruit as many carers as possible, to ensure more children with special needs receive essential short breaks away. Their long-term aim is to double the number of children having short breaks to 20,000 by next year as well as providing long-term carers (including family members) with a well-earned rest. Respite for those who care for children with special educational needs is just as crucial for them and their emotional health, as it is for the children who deserve some time away.

Even the government has recognised the need for families and carers to have breaks away and has

pledged £430 million to local authorities to improve short break provision for families of disabled children by 2011.

So in the spirit of respite care and short breaks, in support of this year's Share the Care Week, SEN Magazine has compiled a list of organisations that offer short breaks and activity holidays for children to give them time away from their families and respite for their full-time carers.



Jo Brand holds up the Share the Care Week cake