

# Siblings United



*In an initiative managed by Shaftesbury Young People, Siblings United safely brings together looked after siblings aged 8 - 18 who live in separate homes, through the use of holiday activity camps and year-round events.*

The camps give siblings the opportunity to share all the normal daily activities which they might do together living in one home. They also have a range of exceptional, fun activities to choose from and build shared experiences to strengthen their relationship.

## The Camps in the UK

The camps are run by qualified staff and registered volunteers in high quality environments. The first camp, in August 2008, is the first of its kind in the UK.

This initiative enables much needed contact between siblings, who have endured numerous family separations within the Care System. It offers an important opportunity for siblings to develop a sense of belonging and identity in order to move forward in their lives in a more positive secure and settled manner.

## Sibling Camps in America

In America a similar project called Camp to Belong has been running camps to reunite siblings since 1995. These camps, staffed largely by volunteers, work in many states across the USA and have provided sibling holidays for over 2000 children and young people. Many of these children come back year after year to spend an enjoyable week with their brothers and sisters. Shaftesbury Young People has been in close contact with Camp to Belong to develop this project and sent a representative to Maine in summer 2007 to gain first hand experience of a sibling camp.

## ABOUT THE CAMPS

2008 camps run:

**Sunday 10 – Friday 15 August**

Arethusa Venture Centre (Upnor, Kent)  
[www.arethusa.org.uk](http://www.arethusa.org.uk)

**Sunday 24 – Friday 29 August**

Longtown Outdoor Education Centre (Nr. Hereford)  
[www.longtownoec.co.uk](http://www.longtownoec.co.uk)

### Activities

Both camps provide an exciting choice of activities, including climbing walls, rope courses and water activities. All activities are supervised by qualified instructors.

A wide range of art and craft activities, picnics, evening barbecue and bonfires, storytelling, and performance also offer further opportunity to share time together.

Children can also spend time quietly together in a less structured way.

Each child will have the opportunity to create a personal photo album of their time together to take away with them.



### Staffing

The camps are staffed by a combination of volunteers and paid staff employed by SYP. There is a rigorous vetting process for all staff who are CRB checked and reference checked.

Immediately prior to each camp is a weekend training and induction programme covering a whole range of issues, including child protection.

Some Social Services and other childcare agencies and organisations are considering seconding staff to participate in these camps as part of the package to support their young people.

Volunteers are recruited from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and from educational institutions including social work training courses.

## LONG TERM BENEFITS OF THE CAMPS

The camps help in developing a sense of belonging and identity for siblings. Spending valuable time with one another in the positive context of an adventure holiday and building upon fun and 'good' memories together should be part of a 'positive life story', happening within their current lives.

Siblings United will assist carers and social workers with the creation of a clear shared contact plan for the siblings for the coming year.

The camps can become part of a longer term regular plan for siblings to have some leisure or activity contact with shorter weekend or half term breaks as well as the annual holiday.



### Cost

A place at a siblings camp in summer 2008 costs £300 per child.

This price **includes** all accommodation, food and activities. It **does not include** travel to and from the centres.

### How to make a referral

**Contact us** - For further information, or to discuss a possible referral

**Phone:** Kate Haley or Delma Hughes on 020 8875 2386

**Email:** [siblingsunited@shaftesbury.org.uk](mailto:siblingsunited@shaftesbury.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.shaftesbury.org.uk](http://www.shaftesbury.org.uk)

**Or complete the documents with this brochure**

For all referrals please complete the referral form, medical information form and risk assessment form and return to Shaftesbury Young People.

## ADVISORY GROUP

The project is supported by an advisory group brought together for their specialist knowledge. Members are providing guidance on, amongst other things, how research and evaluation can be integrated into the model.

The group comprises:

Ann Baxter	Stockton, representing ADCS
David Holmes	BAAF
Roger Morgan	CSCI
Professor June Thoburn	University of East Anglia
Christine Smart	CAFCASS
Professor Mike Stein	University of York
Maxine Wrigley MBE	A National Voice

### *Support*

"I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to strongly endorse this project. The quoted evidence of the research tells its own story. I have no doubt that it will have a big impact on us all. Few of us can even imagine what it must be like not only to be separated at a young age from our parents, but also from our brothers and sisters. No matter how justified the decision to admit a child into public care from the perspective of the child it must be a traumatic experience. The continued presence of siblings offers some comfort and support. When that also is denied the result can be profound. This project offers siblings the opportunity to meet on neutral ground and in a safe and secure environment. In addition it is hoped they will have fun together and with other children and young people in similar circumstances. Everyone associated with this imaginative and very exciting project deserve our congratulations and support. I certainly offer it my warmest good wishes." **Lord Laming**

## Siblings United is run by Shaftesbury Young People

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