



Short Breaks Statement

2024

1. Introduction

Short Breaks provide disabled children and young people with an opportunity to spend time away from their parents, socialising, gaining independence and having fun. They provide families with a 'break' from their caring responsibilities and allow parents a chance to relax or spend time with their other children.

West Berkshire benefits from a wide range of voluntary providers, offering a variety of short breaks to children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), including after school clubs, holiday schemes, youth clubs, weekend activities and support to access mainstream recreational activities. Some voluntary providers also offer overnight respite breaks, and in addition West Berkshire Council maintains its own residential short breaks service, Castle Gate, which is highly regarded by parents and has an Ofsted rating of "Good" in all areas. In our 2023 SEND Young Person Survey, 66.8% of all respondents felt they had access to some or a wide range of activities outside of school and home.

However, there is pressure on local short breaks services due to rising demand. In common with other service areas, short breaks providers are trying to meet the needs of a greater number of children, a larger proportion of whom have more complex needs. The rising costs of accommodation, staffing and energy have made it hard for services to maintain their current offer, and harder still to expand to meet the needs of a greater number of families. In some cases, providers told us during our 2023 SEND Review that they have been forced to concentrate their staffing on the needs of more complex children. These issues are likely to have contributed to results from the 2023 SEND Young Person Survey, which suggest that children with EHCPs feel they have access to a smaller range of extracurricular activities compared to their peers at SEN Support level. These are the challenges which need to be addressed.

West Berkshire Council is keen to make a distinction between a 'Short Break' and care/support interventions. Whilst eligible children and families should have access to a range of Short Breaks, these will differ from services provided as an intervention for care and support which would meet statutory need following an assessment. The two types of service can be defined as follows:

- A Short Break is designed to enable a break from caring and/or provide a social opportunity for the child/young person with a disability.
- A care/support intervention is ongoing work and/or a service provided as a result of an assessment, which you will need to enable your family to function and/or meet the basis needs of the child/young person.

If the child/young person is being supported by a Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) Plan, any short breaks allocated will be determined according to the presenting needs, taking into account Short Break eligibility.

2. Legal Framework

Under the Children Act 1989 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, every Local Authority shall provide services designed:-

- (a) To minimise the effect on disabled children within their area of their disabilities
- (b) To give such children the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible ; and
- (c) To assist individuals who provide care for such children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively by giving them breaks from caring.

In particular, the Local Authority must provide, as appropriate, a range of –

- a) Day time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- b) Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- c) Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, and
- d) Services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends, and during the school holidays

Short breaks form part of a continuum of services, which support disabled children and their families. Short breaks are provided to give:

- Children and young people with a disability enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thereby contributing to their personal and social development and reducing social isolation;
- Parents, carers and families a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities.

These breaks can include day, evening, overnight and weekend activities and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, a residential or community setting. They can last just a few hours to a few days, and occasionally longer, depending on the type of provision and the needs of the child and their family.

The Short Breaks Regulations and guidance issued by Government requires Local Authorities to publish and keep under review a Short Breaks Statement which sets out :-

- **The range of short breaks services available;**
- **The criteria by which eligibility for services will be assessed; and**
- **How the range of services is designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children within our area.**

There is also a requirement on the Local Authority to provide a 'Local Offer' which provides in one place all information about services relating to disabled children. More information can be found here:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/42837/Special-Educational-Needs-and-Disability-SEND-Local-Offer>

3. Coproduction and consultation with families and stakeholders

When reviewing our Short Breaks Statement, we must take into consideration carers' views and those of disabled children and young people. The views of those organisations working within the voluntary sector must also be taken account of.

In the spring and summer of 2023, West Berkshire Council undertook, with its partners and stakeholders, a SEND Review, in order to identify the key priorities for its next 5 year SEND strategy. The review was overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership Board which included the Parent Carer Forum and a wide range of stakeholders including short breaks providers.

Focus groups for parents were set up which included questions on availability of short breaks. A survey of young people with SEND was also undertaken. Feedback from parents / carers and young people about short breaks is set out below:

Views of parent and carers

Focus group 1 - 23.3.23 (extract from minutes)

- The need for more information about out of school activities and holiday provision was raised by families.
- A lack of holiday provision in the Brookfields area was raised. Brookfields used to run a holiday club but no longer do so. Mencap holiday provision in Newbury was felt to be too far away.
- Some parents raised the fact that they can't access short breaks provision in neighbouring Authorities such as Reading because they live in West Berkshire. Parents could not access Reading Mencap for this reason. One parent had used holiday provision at The Avenue school but felt it was very expensive.

- Swings and Smiles did a couple of sessions at Brookfields during the holiday but parents felt more is needed.
- More weekend activities are also needed in the East of West Berkshire.
- One parent had set up a support group for parents called West Berkshire Parents & Carers Together. Information is shared via Facebook and a number of events have been held for families of children with SEND which have been very successful. The organisation has worked with various providers to persuade them to offer some SEND friendly sessions.

Focus group 2 - 6.3.23 (extract from minutes)

- There was some agreement by parents that work to improve this resource (the Local Offer) could address some of the concerns about the lack of available information locally.

Focus group 3 – 24.2.23

- The lack of access to short breaks and respite for children was identified as a problem by all parents. One parent noted that access to respite was a particular problem for children under 8. All attendees emphasised that they were entitled to a life alongside parents of children without additional need and the lack of respite undermined this right.

Focus group 4 – 8.2.23

- Two parents had both brought a child under five to the stay and play and were both enthusiastic about the opportunity for their children to access short respite activities through Swings. Both were positive about the impact of support which Swings and Smiles provided to them.
- Another parent expressed frustration at lack of additional short respite activities locally.

Views of children and young people

A survey of young people with SEND was undertaken in spring 2023 to inform the revised SEND Strategy. 264 responses were received.

Young people were asked:

“What is your access to activities outside of school or home like?” 235 young people responded to this question.

The following responses were given:

	Number	Percentage
<i>I have access to a wide range of activities</i>	63	27%
<i>I go to some things</i>	93	39%
<i>There is very little available for me</i>	79	34%
Total	235	

Of the 79 young people who responded that very little was available to them, 42 had EHCPs and 30 were at SEN Support. (7 young people were not sure whether or not they had an EHCP). This may be an indication that less is available for children with more complex needs.

Comments from young people (and from parents completing the survey on their behalf) included:

Swings & Smiles is amazing and allows me to access youth club. Also Thatcham Tornados inclusive football team allows me to play a team sport

Newbury and Thatcham hockey club are very inclusive and supportive, also Sea Cadets are very inclusive and provide many varied opportunities for all.

I access swimming and a dance school

I attend Beavers and swimming. Which I enjoy when I'm there

I go to a street dance class every week ... it helps me learn how to overcome my hypersensitive sight and hearing

I go to Interact

I have enjoyed going to the waterside centre, paddle boarding and boxing there for a while.

I don't like going out causes too much anxiety

Don't go anywhere as not a lot available for my age or don't have the confidence to try different clubs.

SEND Strategy 2024-29

As a result of the feedback set out above from parents / carers and young people, short breaks were identified as a priority for the SEND Strategy and a Short Breaks workstream was set up which met twice in the summer term 2023, involving all relevant stakeholders including the Parent Carer Forum.

The short breaks workstream gathered further information and identified the following specific gaps in local short breaks services:

- Provision in the east of West Berkshire, particularly for families whose children attend Brookfields School
- Provision for young adults aged 16 to 25
- Provision for children with very complex health needs
- Provision for children with autism / SEMH who do not have learning difficulties
- Support to access mainstream leisure and youth activities

The SEND Strategy was drafted to include a section on Short Breaks as a key priority, including the need to address the gaps identified by the Short Breaks workstream over the next 5 years. A formal 6 week consultation on the draft SEND Strategy took place in summer 2023. Respondents to the survey on the draft strategy were asked whether they agreed with these areas of priority in relation to short breaks. The majority of respondents were in agreement.

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
72%	22%	6%

These priorities were therefore incorporated into the SEND Strategy 2023-28.

Since this work has been undertaken, due to changes on how corporate strategies should look, Short Breaks is no longer a separate priority within the new SEND Strategy 2024-29 however it has been included in Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support, and a task group dedicated to Short Breaks remains and will meet six times per year.

3. Range of short breaks services available / Eligibility criteria / Assessment

Short breaks are available for all children with disabilities regardless of whether they are assessed by the Children with Disabilities Team (Social Care) as requiring a service. Many mainstream and specialist short breaks services can be accessed by children who are not known to Social Care as part of the universal offer. Families do have to pay to access these services, but as most services are provided by the voluntary sector, fees are often subsidised by the charity and some providers can offer reduced fees for families in financial hardship.

Where children are assessed by the Children with Disabilities Team, and consideration is being given to the need to provide access to short breaks, the following principles will be taken into consideration:

- Promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of disabled children and young people, ensuring they can participate in family and community life
- Preventing family crisis through the provision of the right level of support at the right time
- Ensuring the child can reach his/her potential and be cared for safely and appropriately

Not all children and families will need the same level of support and short breaks; some will need more than others because of the nature and severity of their child's disability. Some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances.

The Short Break Services in West Berkshire and how these are provided and available to families can be categorised as follows:-

	Universal or mainstream Services Community or youth-based activities such as youth clubs, sports and leisure groups, weekend activities, holiday activities etc. These take place outside of the school day and are directly accessible with no assessment necessary. Children and young people would require a low level of support to access these activities and providers should make reasonable adjustments to enable children and young people with disabilities to access their activities.	Supported Services Specific services for disabled children and young people which are directly accessible; including services offered by the Voluntary Sector. Children and young people may require some support to access these activities.	Specialist Services Specific services for disabled children and young people following an assessment by a Social Care practitioner. Following assessment, Short Breaks are allocated at a Resource Panel chaired by a Service Manager. Children and young people will require a high level of support .
Child/Young Person's Development Needs	The child/young person has some additional needs because of their disability, but this doesn't generally prevent them from making friends and accessing local services e.g. youth clubs.	The child/young person has additional needs because of their disability. They need some help to make friends and access some local services and activities.	The child/young person has significant and/or multiple needs because of their disability which prevents them from making friends and/or accessing the local services and activities without a high level of support.

		Sometimes, they might need specific activities designed for their needs. Other assessments will be taken into account to inform eligibility.	Children/young people will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
Parent/Carers Caring Needs	The Parent/Carer may sometimes need help, but they know where to go and use resourced available to them e.g. grandparents, wider family, community etc.	The Parent/Carers need additional help to meet the child/young person's needs.	The parents/carers need significant and regular ongoing support to meet the child/young person's needs.
Parent/Carers Personal Needs	The child/young person's needs do impact on the Parent/Carers personal or social life, but the parent/carer is able to cope with this.	The child/young person's needs are met, but at a significant cost to the parent/carers physical and/or emotional health and leisure time.	Neither the child/young person's needs, or the parent/carers needs are being met and there is a serious risk of a family breakdown.
Siblings' Needs	The child/young person's brother(s)/sister(s) can access opportunities, but they are sometimes restricted.	The child/young person's brother(s)/sister(s) personal and social lives are significantly restricted.	The child/young person's brother(s)/sister(s) essential needs are not being met.
Environment	The place where the child/young person lives and the places they go to are safe and generally meet their needs with reasonable adjustments.	The place where the child/young person lives and the places they go may need some changes to ensure they are safe and can better meet their needs.	The place where the child/young person lives, and the places they go, are often unsafe or unsuitable and need adapting; this limits their choices.
Who Pays the Cost?	Families routinely pay the cost of these services.	Families routinely pay no more than they would for a child without a disability in a mainstream setting.	Costs of these services will vary depending on the child/young person's needs. West Berkshire Council would be responsible for the costs of these services and may do so by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Direct Payment to allow the family to employ a Personal Assistant to take their child/young person to appropriate activities. • Help with the cost to access Supported Services provided by the Voluntary Sector or day or overnight breaks

			<p>with a Foster Carer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overnight stays at Castle Gate; West Berkshire Council's Residential Short Breaks service.
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If your child/young person is not eligible for specialist Short Break services, we will ensure that our decision is clearly explained to you. In most cases, there will be services available at a universal level (see above table) which your child/young person can engage with.

Decisions regarding eligibility are not applied mechanistically and will take into account individual family's needs.

When assessing the level of need, the assessment will consider:

- Your child's needs and abilities, including focusing on what your child can do and what they enjoy doing.
- The severity of your child's disability, and how it affects your child, you, and your family.
- If you have more than one child with a disability.
- The number of other children or caring responsibilities you may have.
- If you or a partner have a disability.
- The level of support within your social and wider family and friends' network.
- If your child is in care or looked after by West Berkshire Council.
- If your child has been adopted by you. You do not have to tell us this information, however, if you do choose to tell us we can ensure that you know about other services and activities that could support your child.
- If there are concerns about a child's safety.
- Your personal financial circumstances.

The outcome of this assessment will be shared with you and will identify an appropriate level of support in line with our eligibility criteria.

Further information can be found on the SEND Local Offer here:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/42837/Special-Educational-Needs-and-Disability-SEND-Local-Offer>

4. Short breaks services commissioned by West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council provides a residential short breaks service at Castle Gate, a 6 bedded unit offering a homely environment for children with disabilities aged between 8 and 18. Children will need to be known by the Children with Disabilities Team and be referred by their social worker in order to access the service. Children usually start with one overnight per month and then build up to a suitable package of care which can range from 2 to 4 overnights per month.

In addition, West Berkshire Council supports the provision of specialist short breaks in the area by offering grants on an annual basis for which services providers can bid. In 2023-24 West Berkshire Council provided grants to West Berkshire Mencap, Swings and Smiles and Partners in Active Leisure (PALs) to support the provision of after school clubs, holiday play schemes and access to other activities during school holidays.

5. Applying for Short Breaks

All families can access universal short break services without the need for an assessment from the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT). There would be a cost associated with accessing these services.

If families feel they require further support to meet the needs of their child/young person, they can self-refer to the CWDT via our Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS). More information on CAAS and how to make referrals can be accessed via the below link. CAAS will respond to all contacts within 24 hours:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/39705/About-the-Contact-Advice-and-Assessment-Service-CAAS>

Following referral, if it is agreed that the child/young person/family meet the threshold criteria, a single assessment is completed, and a Social Worker will assess the child/young person/family's needs for support and will bring the case forward to the CWDT Resource Panel if additional resources are needed. The package of support may include access to services like Mencap, Swings & Smiles etc. or provision may be made within a Direct Payment for families to access a set number of sessions per year. Alternatively, it might be agreed that services will be directly commissioned from providers.

Parents/Carers can also request a Parent/Carer Needs Assessment (PCNA) through CAAS (see above link), unless the family already has an Occupational Therapist or Social Worker with the CWDT allocated – in this instance, a PCNA can be requested through the allocated worker.

Once a request for a PCNA is made, the family are sent a form to complete and a Family Support Worker considers the application/assessment and makes a recommendation for hours to be agreed through a PCNA.

6. How services are designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children in our area

Castle Gate is a long established provision in West Berkshire which supports children with the most complex disabilities, whose families require overnight short breaks in order to be able to continue caring for their children at home. In recent years Castle Gate has adapted its offer to take children with more complex physical and health needs, working closely with the specialist nursing team from the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. The staffing has been extended to include a part time occupational therapist to ensure that children's physical and equipment needs are met.

In terms of day short breaks activities, feedback from parents has shown that the services which families need the most are after school clubs and holiday schemes. Annual grants to short breaks providers given by the Council therefore continue to prioritise these types of short breaks.

Grant applications for 2024-25 required providers to state how they would offer a service in the east of West Berkshire, given that this has been identified in the 2023-28 SEND Strategy as a gap in provision.

In addition, a SEND Providers Forum was established in 2016 with the aim of ensuring that providers are working closely together to sustain and improve services within our area and that they are providing a co-ordinated offer which meets local needs and avoids duplication. The Local Authority is a member of the SEND Providers Forum. Short breaks providers gather their own data on need and share data within the forum, allowing a collective response to meeting need. Areas where shortages have been identified are starting to be met by providers, for example, Swings and Smiles is extending its offer in the east of West Berkshire and Mencap has increased its overnight short breaks provision for young adults.

The Local Authority will continue to work with short breaks providers and families through the Short Breaks Workstream meetings to address other shortage areas identified in the SEND Strategy.

7. Transition from Children’s to Adult’s services

Not all young people will be eligible for support from Adult Services once they become an adult. This is because there are differences between the legislative frameworks for children’s and adult’s social care.

If the young person is likely to be eligible for support from Adults Services once they are 18 years old, the Social Worker will discuss this transition process with the family and young person. These discussions will usually start when the young person is 14 years old so families know in advance whether support from adult services will be provided.

The Care Act 2014 sets out the national eligibility criteria for adults who have care and support needs. Typically, an adult may be eligible for Adult Services if he, or she, has needs:

- Arising from a physical, mental health impairment or illness and the adult is unable to achieve two, or more, outcomes which will have a significant impact on the adult’s wellbeing such as (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - Managing and maintaining nutrition
 - Managing and maintaining personal hygiene and clothing
 - Developing or maintaining family or other personal relationships
 - Managing and maintaining engagement in work

If the young person is unlikely to receive support from Adult Services, the Social Worker should discuss this with the family and the young person to consider how everyone can work together to enable the young person to be as independent as possible. Part of this will be discussing how the young person may be able to access support from other community resources.

8. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQ	Response
<p>What can I spend Short Breaks Direct Payments on?</p>	<p>Direct payments allow families to arrange services for themselves, rather than receiving them directly from the Local Authority. They can be used to buy services from organisations who provide care, a voluntary organisation or a Nursery. Some people use Direct Payments to enable their child/young person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access organisation group activities. • Access a variety of spots or clubs. • Pay for a worker to support the child/young person to attend day trips/activities. • Directly employ a Personal Assistant (<i>this option requires the family to ensure someone is employed carefully and in line with employment law</i>).
<p>Are there any items a Direct Payment cannot be used for?</p>	<p>The funding cannot be used to supplement income e.g. it cannot be used to put payments towards mortgage or rent and cannot be used to pay for day-to-day household items.</p> <p>The funding also cannot be used to pay for childcare costs to enable families to work. If help is needed to pay for childcare costs you can find more information</p>

	<p>here: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/40501/Financial-help-for-childcare</p>
How can I choose a Short Breaks Provider?	The Local Offer lists a number of organisations and services that you might choose. It is your choice about which type of provision you use in order to meet your child/young person's needs.
What are Personal Assistants?	Personal Assistants are workers who are employed directly, or through an agency. They routinely work both within the family home and/or by taking children/young people to community-based activities.
What are Overnight Short Breaks?	Some parents/carers of children with complex needs will be offered overnight short breaks support. In most cases, residential short breaks are provided through West Berkshire Council's facility at Castle Gate.
How often will my child/young person's short break be reviewed?	Every package of support (for those accessing specialist services) will be reviewed at least once per year at the Resource Panel. Single Assessments are also updated annually.
Who provides transport for accessing short breaks?	<p>Parent/Carers are routinely expected to transport their child to and from short break activities. It may be the case that some providers offer transport as part of the activity, but this would need to be checked with providers directly.</p> <p>We are unable to fund transport for short break activities except in exceptional circumstances, which is entirely discretionary.</p>
What if I have a problem with a short break activity?	<p>If you experience problems in accessing a short break activity, or problems while your child is attending, please discuss this with the activity provider in the first instance and ask for a copy of their complaints policy if needed.</p> <p>If it is a safeguarding concern, then contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Advice Assessment Service (CASS) on 01635 503090 during office hours (08:30-17:00 Monday to Thursday and 08:30-16:30 on Fridays) • Emergency Duty Service on 01344 35199 outside of office hours.
What other benefits might be available to me and my family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – you may be eligible for DLA to help with the extra costs of looking after your child if they are under 16 years of age and have difficulties with walking or need much more looking after than a child of the same age who does not have a disability. The eligibility criteria for DLA can be found here. • Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – if your child receives DLA, they will need to

	<p>apply for PIP when they reach the age of 16. PIP can help with some of the extra costs if your child has long term ill-health or a disability. If you make an application on behalf of your child, your child will be assessed by a health professional to determine if they are eligible. More information can be found here.</p>
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