



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST

Interim Short Breaks Statement

2024-25

Short Breaks are services that provide support for the carers of disabled children and allow young people to spend time away from their families and have fun, develop skills, and make friends. Short Breaks support delivery of our vision and commitment to children and families

Our vision for disabled children's services in Birmingham is that:

“Every child and young person with additional and special educational needs or disability will have a great life in their local community, with the same life opportunities as those available for the wider population. We want them to fulfil their potential and to move successfully into adulthood”

Our key principles are:

- **Outcome focused** – a clear focus on outcomes including well-being and participation in meaningful life activities such as employment
- **Person centred** – via placing the child and young person at the centre of our process and providing them with a voice and co-production
- **Asset based approach** - building on strengths in children, young people, families, schools, and local communities
- **Promoting independence** - via access to information using our local offer, encouraging self-help and self-sustaining support
- **Building resilience** - to withstand and adapt to challenges via early intervention, capacity building, peer support and trading
- **Complete care for the most vulnerable** – via coordinated teams around the child to maximise living well in the community
- **Collaborative approach** – supported by relationships, partnerships and multi-agency learning and development across the workforce

BACKGROUND

Paragraph 6(1) c of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide services to assist carers of disabled children to continue to be able to do this or do so more effectively by giving them breaks from caring.

“*The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children*” Regulations 2011 came into effect in April 2011. This places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the needs of carers who would be unable to continue to care for their disabled child unless breaks from caring were given to them without a short break,

and

To have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care more effectively if breaks are given to allow them to,

- undertake training, education, or any regular leisure activity,
- meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively or
- or to carry out day to day tasks they must perform in running the household.

The range of services to be provided sufficient to assist care or to do so more effectively must include:

- day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, and
- services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

The Regulations also require each local authority to produce a *Short Breaks Services Statement* which must include the range of services available, the criteria by which eligibility for these services will be assessed, and how the range of services is designed to meet the needs of carers of disabled children in their area.

Publication and review

Our Short Breaks Statement is reviewed annually and published on Birmingham City Council’s Local Offer website:

<https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/>

The review will continue to reflect the views and choices of disabled children, young people, and families.

What are Short Breaks?

Short Breaks are essential in supporting enablement for disabled children, to develop skills for independence and supporting children and families to create and manage their own short breaks.

We know that Short Breaks benefit both disabled children and their parents. Children benefit from new interests, relationships, and activities, while parents can care more effectively and can attend education and training or catch up with 'everyday activities' (sleep, cleaning, shopping), attend to their physical and psychological wellbeing, and maintain and develop social networks.

Short Breaks can be from a few hours to a few days. They can take place in the child or young person's own home, the home of an approved carer, a residential or a community setting. This could include, for example, taking part in a universal activity for all children (e.g. after-school club) or participating in a specialist service for children with complex need (e.g. specialist holiday scheme)

What we know about children, young people, and their families' needs

Birmingham has a population of 323,300 children and young people aged 0-19 based on 2021 census figures. A proportion of these children have special educational needs and disabilities.

- According to data released by the Office for National Statistics in March 2023, there are 43,701 children and young people living with a disability or long-term condition.
- At the end of 2023, the total number of SEN pupils was 29,668 and with 10,720 with active Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans in place. The largest concentration of plans was amongst 5–15-year-olds (64%).
- The largest primary need for those children and young people with Education and Health Plans is autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) which is 42.7%, 11.8% have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), 9.5% have social, emotional and mental health needs, 8.1 % have moderate learning difficulties, 7.7% have severe learning difficulties and 6.3% have physical disabilities. The number of children and young people with EHCP's is projected to continue to increase over the coming years.

Key messages from consultation with families

Throughout the consultations conducted with disabled children, young people, and their families there has been a consistent message of what we should consider when planning and commissioning short break services. This includes:

- ✓ Provision of services in the local area
- ✓ Activities covering all the school holidays, including half-term holidays
- ✓ Weekend activities
- ✓ After school and evening activities
- ✓ Outdoor play space
- ✓ Opportunities for disabled children and young people to develop friendships
- ✓ Opportunities to take part in inclusive activities with non-disabled children
- ✓ Support through outreach workers or befrienders to enable disabled young people to access social and physical activities.
- ✓ A flexible range of residential Short Breaks
- ✓ Family-based provision allowing parents and siblings to take part in activities as a family with their disabled child such as supported day trips, weekend breaks and holidays
- ✓ Confidence that disabled children's needs will be met by appropriately trained staff in all settings
- ✓ Flexible services and timely support to meet changing family needs
- ✓ Support for siblings and young carers
- ✓ There is a high demand for Short Breaks services for carers of children with autism and challenging behaviour as well as for children with severe disabilities and complex needs

Range of Short Breaks and how to access them

Short Breaks in Birmingham consist of the following:

- Home Support Services (including Direct Payments)
- Overnight Short Breaks
- Out of school activities – during the holidays, after school and at weekends

Open access community-based play and leisure activities are delivered by the providers shown below. No social work assessment is required for families to access these services

- **Dens of Equality**
- **Midland Mencap**
- **Resources for Autism**
- **Sutton Coldfield YMCA**

A key element of the Trust's Short Breaks offer for children with additional needs is a brokerage service to help families access those holiday schemes and weekend clubs which are part of the community-based services

This brokerage is delivered by Midland Mencap and further details are available by calling them on **0121 442 2944** and asking to speak to the Short Breaks Project Worker

or by emailing shortbreaks@midlandmencap.org.uk

The Trust can also offer a range of services that are only available via direct referral following assessment.

- **Residential Services** – in one of our homes
- **Home Support** – from one of our contracted providers
- **Fostering People** – Overnight short Breaks*
- **Barnardos** – Intensive family support*

Our residential services short breaks offer is provided by the following homes

Warwick House in Acocks Green and Charles House in West Heath provide short breaks for children with a range of learning disabilities including Autism; they may also display associated challenging behaviour and have health conditions that need management and support. The children also receive support with emotional wellbeing, keeping healthy and managing their behaviour through a range of fun, socially inclusive activities.

Edgewood Road in Hawksley provides short breaks for children with a learning disability, physical disability, and some health conditions. The unit has adaptations to enable children who require hoisting and specialist sleep systems to safely stay overnight. The children also receive support with emotional well-being, health, and social needs.

The Trust's community-based play and leisure services are currently available for up to 3,000 children and their carers. To ensure that as many children access short breaks as possible and to maximise the limited available resource, Birmingham Children's Trust has commissioned short breaks that offers individual children a minimum of one hundred hours. Providers monitor the number of hours to enable as many young people as possible to access their services.

For those children and young people receiving overnight short break support, this is offered in line with their assessed needs.

Eligibility Criteria

For those services that are only available following assessment by the Trust's Children with Disabilities Team or other social care teams, we apply eligibility criteria. This is to ensure that services are prioritised for those disabled children with the highest levels of need.

For details of our eligibility criteria, please [click here](#) to go to our 'Children With Disabilities Policy', found on our website. The full document name is '*How we assess the needs of, and deliver support to, disabled children and their families living in Birmingham (including eligibility criteria)*'.

Direct Payments

Families have a choice about the Short Breaks Services they receive. A personalised service via a Direct Payment is one way of receiving a Short Breaks service. It is accessed following an assessment of needs. Direct Payments offer families flexibility, choice and control and can be used for example, to employ a Personal Assistant. Parent/carers directly manage the recruitment and invoicing arrangements, however, where required support can be provided through a support organisation. Birmingham Children's Trust has recently reviewed its direct payments policy and it is now possible to use a pre-paid card where the allowance is preloaded directly to the Card.

For more information go to our 'Direct Payments guidance', found on our website, by [clicking here](#) or contact the Children with Disabilities Service on 0121 303 1888.

Transport

Transport is not routinely provided to access short breaks. Parent/carers are expected to transport their child to and from Short Breaks. If this is not possible, and it would be detrimental to the child or family not to receive their short break, consideration will be given to providing funded transport

Charges

Parent/carers have told us that they are willing to pay a reasonable cost for their Short Breaks activities. Providers have told us a higher value is placed on those services where parent/carers make a financial contribution, and they are less likely to cancel or not send their child. Both parents and providers agree that no activity should cost more because of a child's needs

Outcomes: Monitoring and Measuring Impact

We work with all our Short Breaks providers to ensure they develop positive activities for young people that will allow them to take part in local community activities and reflect their needs as teenagers, ensuring friendship and activity groups are supported to continue beyond the school years. They will also provide opportunities for them to extend their independence and life skills including:

- learning how to manage risk, whilst keeping themselves safe in the community
- developing decision making skills
- learning aspects of money
- learning to travel independently
- improving their social interaction skills through modelling by their peers
- leading ordinary lives enjoying and contributing to everyday activities

We ensure that our short break services focus on improving life opportunities and outcomes for both those caring for disabled children and the children themselves, through continuing to develop our participation strategy with disabled children, young people, and their carer's. We know that the views of families and disabled children are essential to support positive outcomes

We continue to monitor and review the views of disabled children, parents, and providers so that everybody feels involved and included. This will assist us with developing a cycle of continual improvement

We hope you have found this information useful.