

SHORT BREAKS STATEMENT UPDATE 2023

A guide for parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities



This Short Breaks Statement provides parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-18 with disabilities who are living in Plymouth with information about Short Breaks and how to access them.

This statement gives you information about:

- What is available?
- Who can use the service?
- How to access services
- How Short Breaks can meet the needs of disabled children and young people and their families

We will be carrying out a full review of our Short Break offer and Statement in Plymouth during spring/summer 2023, and will make sure we:

- hear from children, young people and parents/carers about their experience of services;
- understand how well our existing services support families;
- learn about any gaps in what we offer;
- understand the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on our families of children with disabilities
- can plan for the future in developing our services;

Short Breaks are activities that give children and young people with disabilities or additional needs a chance to:

- have fun and try new things;
- make friends and join activities;
- gain confidence and independence;
- children and young people can enjoy a change of scene and a break from the home environment;

They also give their families and carers a break from the demands of caring for their child. This means parents and carers can have time to:

- spend with each other;
- spend individual time with their other children;
- relax;

Short Breaks promote the health, safety and well-being of children and young people with disabilities. They should be fair and equitable and provide the right level of support at the right time.

A Short Break vary from two hours, a day activity, overnight or longer depending on the circumstances and needs of the child or young person, and their family. It can be time spent away from the home, in the community, or in the home with or without the main carer. There should be choice and flexibility for families and the child or young person should be able to enjoy their time spent in the Short Break.

Short Breaks should be of a high quality and with different options available, from an evening out with friends to go to a football match or youth club to an overnight stay.

Plymouth's approach to providing Short Breaks is for services to bolster the family in caring and supporting their children. Research shows that timeliness, reliability and regularity are key to families feeling able to continue coping; having easier and speedier access to more and varied opportunities, means that families often need less support than if they have to wait for more specialist services. Short Breaks are an integral part of an early help for SEND strategy; providing a good level of provision that meets the needs of the families requiring support prevents crises arising later on.

Families have different Short Break services from which to choose depending on their presenting or assessed need.

LEGAL DUTIES

The following legislation applies to all local areas with regard to providing Short Breaks from caring for families of children who are disabled:

- Children Act 1989 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 ('CSDPA 1970')
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- NHS Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012)
- Care Act 2014 (in relation to transition to adult social care)

Details of all Short Break services in every local area must be published as part of the 'Local Offer'. The local authority has a vital role in ensuring that sufficient and appropriate Short Breaks are commissioned in their local area. This includes the decision as to the funding the local authority chooses to allocate to short breaks each year as part of setting its revenue budget.

This funding may be specifically allocated to Short Breaks or may form part of an overall budget for disabled children's services. It is essential that local authorities adopt a participatory approach to commissioning decisions in relation to Short Breaks, involving children, young people and families at every stage in the decision. Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 requires regard to be given to the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people and parents in decisions, which affect them.

Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires every local authority to provide services designed to assist individuals who provide care for children with disabilities to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively by providing them with breaks from caring.

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 (also referred to as the Short Breaks Regulations) state that Local authorities must provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a range of services which is sufficient to assist carers to continue to provide care or to do so more effectively. (Regulation 4).

This range of services 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;

Following the reforms introduced by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the primary responsibility for meeting the health needs of disabled children rests with Integrated Care Boards (ICB's), formerly Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's).

Certain specialised services (for example 'Tier 4' child and adolescent mental health services) are dealt with at a national level by NHS England.

The primary duty on ICB's is to commission services 'to such extent as it considers necessary to meet the reasonable requirements of the persons for whom it has responsibility'. This implies a duty to assess disabled children to see if it is necessary to meet their reasonable requirements for Short Breaks. All specialist health provision for disabled children must be clearly set out in each Local Offer.

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as when a person "*has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-day activities*"

Children and young people are eligible for Short Breaks when they have a profound and complex physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Where an assessment identifies that specialist services are required, the local authority has a duty to provide services designed to:

- Maximise life opportunities and participation of children and young people with disabilities;
- Give children and young people with disabilities the opportunity to lead lives which ensure they reach their potential;

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT OF SHORT BREAKS

What have we achieved so far?

- Children and young people with disabilities are able to access a range of Short Breaks that enable them to enjoy ordinary life activities through activity-based clubs or individual packages of care and support. These also enable families to have breaks from the responsibilities of caring in ways that work for them
- Children and young people with disabilities are becoming more 'visible' and thus more present in their local communities through accessing universal services and activities. This enables children and young people to spend time with their peers and in their communities.
- We have active participation groups that represent the views of children, young people and parents/carers and will challenge us if we aren't getting it right. The groups have seats on all SEND strategic boards and co-design our services for disabled children.
- Regular and reliable Short Breaks enable parents and carers to undertake training, leisure opportunities and self-care activities that are available widely to parents of all children and

enables them to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and maintain their own health and well-being.

CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT

What still needs to be done?

- We need to review what we currently offer families to make sure it is still what is needed and what works best, using data and qualitative information through talking to our families about their experiences, including during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- We need to particularly understand which children may need an overnight Short Break and the ways in which we can support this, as we have seen the closure of a local specialist Short Break home over the last couple of years (Wood View);
- We need to work with our local providers to make sure we have capacity in Plymouth to meet demand for services, and work with them to design new support if needed;
- We need to continue to improve access to universal services for children and young people with disabilities. This will be achieved through improvements to the communication of the Local Offer and through a renewed programme of training for all mainstream providers.
- We need to continue to ensure that the voice of children and young people and their parents is heard in the SEND Integration processes and all service design and governance structures and that Lived Experience is considered at all stages of the Commissioning cycle;

OUR OFFER: INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

General information about Short Breaks can be found on the [Plymouth SEND Local Offer](#).

The Local Offer provides information about the local clubs, groups and activities available in Plymouth.

Plymouth have an Early Help and SEND advice line through anyone can book a conversation with a Family Support Worker to talk about any worries or questions. This was launched in early 2023 and we are able to offer support around:

- education worries
- emotional wellbeing
- parenting guidance
- queries about the SEND process
- relationship worries
- school attendance
- SEND concerns
- social and emotional development

We will not be able to refer to a service or for support or speak to another agency directly on your behalf but we will be able to signpost you to what support is available to you across the city. If you are interested in attending one of the programmes available within targeted support we can discuss this further with you and support you in your nomination.

If it is felt through the conversation you require further support from a specialist within one of our teams we may need to arrange a further call back for you.

[Plymouth Early Help and SEND Advice line | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#)

[Plymouth Information, Advice & Support for SEND](#) (PIAS) provides the information, advice and support service, relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), for young people, parents and carers within the Plymouth Local Authority area

[Plymouth Information, Advice and Support for SEND](#) can be contacted by email at pias@plymouth.gov.uk or call 01752 258933/0800 953 1131

OUR OFFER: SHORT BREAKS

The range of Short Breaks available to families and children and young people with disabilities includes opportunities to take part in a range of activities that children and young people can experience.

Universal

Universal services are important in ensuring children and young people with disabilities have fun and enjoy themselves with friends, just the same as other children and young people.

In Plymouth we are committed to ensuring children with disabilities can access positive experiences and families can get the support they need in universal services, such as our newly forming Family Hubs, early year's services, extended services in schools, sport, youth and leisure services. Children and young people with disabilities will not need an assessment to access universal services, apart from any criteria operated by each organisation.

We will continue to work to promote inclusion and support universal services to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities.

Targeted

We recognise that families may have additional needs when they are raising a child with disability, and that the children and young people may need extra support, either short or long term, to be able to take part in activities. Targeted services aim to offer support to encourage children and young people to try new activities in a safe environment.

Short Break targeted services are specifically for disabled children and access is not necessarily dependent on a formal assessment. Most children will be those attending special schools or support centres, who are known to inclusion services or who are recognised as having an autistic spectrum condition, particularly with associated challenging behaviour or learning difficulties, and/or those with sensory and/or physical impairments.

Specialist

Some children and young people with disabilities are not able to access mainstream activities for a Short Break and therefore attend specialist services. Specialist services are available to children and families where the child's assessment and parent carer assessment identifies this as the appropriate support to meet assessed needs. These services are provided to children and families with the most complex needs and include services in or away from the child's home and could be with family based carers or residential services.

School holiday breaks

Offer a range of opportunities for children and young people with disabilities throughout the holidays. These include, football coaching, sailing and adventure activities.

Group based activities

There are a number of providers of specialist group activities for children and young people with disabilities. Each service has its own criteria and the support levels are much higher in order to be able to support access to the community.

Overnight breaks

Sometimes families need to have an overnight break from their caring role and Short Breaks are offered via a residential Short Break children's home or by specialist foster carers.

Direct Payments & Personal Budgets

Some families choose to obtain their own services through a Direct Payment or Personal Budget, which enables them to provide a Short Break for the family in a variety of ways including employing their own carers. The Council has a contract with a support service to provide advice to families to set up the payment and take on employment responsibilities.

HOW CAN FAMILIES ACCESS A SHORT BREAK?

In Plymouth we recognise that caring for a child or young person with a disability may place additional requirements on your caring responsibilities. All parents and children should have the opportunity to have a break and need to know what services are available according to their level of need. Our eligibility for services is based on being fair and open and treating everyone equally. We are committed to making sure children and young people with disabilities are able to enjoy opportunities which promote their wellbeing and development. We also want to make sure that we are able to help families access the right level of support at the right time.

Direct Access

Families can '*directly access*' many of the activities and groups available across the city without the need for a full assessment from the local authority. Families can contact our Short Breaks brokerage service, which is delivered by [Routeways](#), who will support you to find either a mainstream activity or an activity that provides extra support for your disabled child. If your child needs additional support to attend a holiday activity then the brokerage service will talk to the organiser of the activity and arrange extra funding for up to ten days of holiday activities without the need for a full assessment.

Assessment of Need

When it is indicated that more support is needed for a family than that which direct access Short Breaks can provide, an assessment of needs can be carried out by the local authority. An assessment gathers information from the family about what is happening for them and helps to reach a decision as to what support is required. The type of assessment carried out will depend on the individual level of need.

Most of the city's children and young people with disabilities do not require an assessment from a social worker to determine the level of Short Break they need. In Plymouth these assessments are carried out by the Short Breaks Team. This involves a member of the team visiting you to discuss Short Breaks and establishing with you what support is best to meet the needs of you and your family.

A Single Assessment is a more in-depth assessment from a social worker which addresses the central or most important aspects of the needs of a child and the capacity of his or her parents or carers to respond appropriately to these needs within the wider family and community context.

The aim of a Parent/Carer's assessment focuses on you as a parent and your needs. It will also consider your wellbeing, including health and safety issues, and important commitments like relationships and employment. This assessment will be taken into account when deciding what, if any, services to provide to support the child and the family.

Following assessment, if there is a need for an individual care package and specialist services, a request is submitted to the Disabled Children's Resource Panel. This is a group of professionals from various services that support children including health and social care professionals. This multi-agency approach ensures that a balanced decision can be made when deciding how public monies are spent. Plans are then reviewed on a regular basis with the family to ensure that they continue to be appropriate to the assessed need.

PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

We want all of our services to support young people with disabilities as they prepare for adulthood. As children get older and become young adults, it is important that they are provided with opportunities to take more control over their lives and become directly involved with making their own choices. Universal, Targeted and Specialist Services should provide opportunities for young people with disabilities to develop their independence and life skills, including decision-making skills and how to manage risk.

Preparing for adulthood means preparing for:

- Higher education and/or employment;
- Independent living;
- Participation in society;
- Being as healthy as possible;

We want the transition to adulthood to be an exciting and optimistic time for young people. We want to support them as they become young adults and take their place in the world. More information about Preparing for Adulthood can be found on the SEND Local Offer here:

<https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/plymouthlocaloffer/adulthood>

Young people who are preparing to leave school and take the next steps towards their adult life are supported with age appropriate Short Breaks across universal, targeted and specialist services.

All young people who are assessed as eligible to meet the threshold for services from Adult Care are likely to be assessed for an individual budget.

Services have been established to support families through the transition process.

These include:-

- Short Break services to provide opportunities for Person Centred Planning with the young person to encourage them to be actively engaged with decisions affecting their future. To achieve this goal, the service uses creative activities to engage the young person in exploring their likes and dislikes and what their aspirations for the future might be;
- An independent advocacy service for disabled young people who are in transition to adult services;

The [Disability Advocacy Service](#), delivered by the Highbury Trust works with, and on behalf of, disabled young people to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are known; that they are included in decisions being made about them, and that children's rights, dignity and equality of opportunity are promoted at every opportunity.

Review of the Short Break Statement

We plan to review this Short Breaks Statement annually. We do this by consulting with our partners and schools, Parents, Carers and young people.

The updated Short Breaks Statement is approved by the SEND Strategic Group before publication on the SEND Local Offer.

We welcome feedback on the Short Breaks Statement at any time, and feedback is considered in the annual review. You can do this by completing a comment/feedback form on the [Local Offer](#)