

# Short Breaks Statement

October 2024



Barnsley – the place  
of possibilities.



**BARNSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

## 1. Introduction

This document reflects the vision of the Barnsley Children, Young People's and Families Trust (CYPFT). The vision is to ensure children and young people in Barnsley, who are disabled or who have complex health care needs (including palliative), receive co-ordinated, high-quality child and family-centred services. These services are based on assessed need, provide choice, promote social inclusion and prevent social isolation. Short breaks form part of a continuum of services that support disabled children and their families.

Short breaks are provided to:

- Give disabled children and young people enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thereby contributing to their personal and social development, and ensuring they do not become socially isolated.

**and**

- Give parents and families a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities. These include day, evening, overnight and weekend activities, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or a residential or community setting.

What is the Short Break Statement?

This Short Break statement is an overview of short break opportunities available to children and young people with disabilities and their families in Barnsley. It provides information about:

- what short breaks are and who they are for
- the types of short breaks available
- how to apply for a short break
- who to contact

## 2. What are short breaks?

Short breaks are part of a variety of services which support children in need and their families. The Council will support families in the provision of short breaks where there is a clear, assessed need and where universal and community services cannot meet need. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child or young person, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting. Short breaks come in a variety of options and each one can last from just a few hours to a few days. Short breaks should promote health, independence, and inclusion, whilst recognising and valuing the child and their family's choice and preference.

Most users of short breaks are children with disabilities and their families but non-disabled children in need may also receive short breaks. Short breaks can give enjoyable experiences

for disabled children and young people with or without their primary carers, and can be a break for parents and families from their caring responsibilities.

### The Legal Context

The short breaks regulations provide further detail on how local authorities must perform their duty in the Children Act 1989 to provide breaks from caring for carers of disabled children at home and to allow them to do so more effectively. In summary, the Short Breaks Regulations require local authorities to do three things:

- to ensure that, when making short break provision, they have regard to the needs of different types of carers, not just those who would be unable to continue to provide care without a break;
- to provide a range of breaks, as appropriate, during the day, night, at weekends and during the school holidays; and
- to provide parents with a short breaks services statement detailing the range of available breaks and any eligibility criteria attached to them.

Local Authorities must:

- provide a range of short breaks services;
- give families the choice to access short breaks services using a direct payment;
- publish a statement of their short breaks services on their website;
- keep their short breaks statement under review;
- state in their short breaks service statement 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 in their area;
- consult parents as part of the review of the statement;
- consider the legal implications of the eligibility criteria they apply to short breaks services; and
- not apply any eligibility criteria mechanically without consideration of a particular family's needs

In Barnsley we have several services that provide activities for disabled children and young people to access.

Families who have two or more children or young people with a disability may choose to do activities together or separate.

They include:

- Universal activities. A leisure activity that any child or young person may attend, e.g. a sports club or play scheme.

- Specialised clubs. A group activity for disabled children and young people.
- Overnight short breaks. Either in a residential home or with a Foster Carer.
- A Direct Payment. A monthly payment in place of a service for families to arrange their own support.

### 3. Needs Assessment

There are currently 51,621 children and young people under the age of 18 in Barnsley, which is 21% of the borough's total population. Barnsley maintained 2969 Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans as of July 2024, an increase from 2752 in January 2024. There are 12.5% of all school age children identified as receiving SEN support, an increase from 11.3% in 2023.

There was a 2.5 percentage point decrease in the number of new plans issued in the secondary phase of education, although Barnsley remain above national average for this group. There was an increase in the % of new plans issued in primary and early years phases, however Barnsley remain below national average in this area.

Education, Health, and Care Plans (as of January 2024):

Area	Barnsley	National
% plans maintained aged under 5	3.7	4.6
% plans maintained age 5 to 10	29.8	32.7
% plans maintained age 11 to 15	41.6	36.4
% plans maintained age 16 to 19	22.1	20.1
% plans maintained age 20 to 25	2.7	6.2
% educated in independent and non-maintained special schools	9.1	5.2
% educated in mainstream settings	44.4	43.3
% educated in maintained special schools	22.0	27.1
% educated in non-maintained early years settings	0.7	0.8
% educated in pupil referral units	0.4	0.8
% educated in further education settings	19.9	14.6
% educated elsewhere	3.0	3.7
% classed as not in employment, education or training	5.4	2.7
% elective home education	1.3	1.0

In line with the national picture, there continues to be an increase in the number of applications for short break support for children and their families:

	Sep 20-Aug 21	Sep 21-Aug 22	Sep 22 – Aug 23	Sep 23-Aug 24
Short Break Applications	394	411	466	404

#### 4. Consultation and Development of Short Breaks

Barnsley's Short Breaks Service will regularly seek feedback from parents and young people to review the offer and ensure it remains relevant. As part of our current short breaks review the views of parents and carers were sought via a survey throughout July 2023. 23 responses were received.

- 79% of respondents access short breaks;
- 22% via an Early Years setting, holiday club or childminder;
- 33% via a commissioned specialist short break;
- 17% via targeted youth support positive activities;
- 17% via Direct Payment (PA); and
- the remaining 17% access a residential overnight short break.

The feedback was mainly very positive with a large number (76%) confirming that short breaks are suited to their and their child's needs and 70% saying that short breaks help to reduce stress and that they help promote independence for their child.

94% of those who responded reported that they are confident that their child will be well looked after by someone who understands their needs and that the short break is age appropriate. 82% said it meets the need of their family.

Below are some of the comments shared by children and young people during the short breaks DPS tendering process:

I liked that:

*'There is opportunity to volunteer with younger members'*

*'You get to meet new people'*

*'It's good exercise'*

*'That it's all inclusive and everyone is included'*

Short breaks are important because:

*'I can be myself there'*

*'It is important to pick up new skills you don't learn in the real world'*

*'I can spend some time away from my house'*

*'It helps me socialise and meet new friends'*

*'It helps me forget about things that have happened at school'*

Whilst there was some very positive feedback, some respondents felt there wasn't enough choice or that they struggled to find anything suitable when allocated a direct payment and then funding being lost, with parents and carers expressing frustration. Issues with communication were also reported, i.e. applying for a short break but not hearing back.

47% of respondents didn't know how to find information about short breaks for themselves and 35% said that none of the professionals they have worked with gave them any information. However, only 20% said the application process was off-putting though a meeting held with parent carers reported that they have had applications deferred or declined but they weren't clear what extra information was required to meet the qualification criteria.

40% said they were concerned that short breaks would not be available at the times they need them - parents and carers would like more availability during school holidays as they are often very challenging times. Issues were reported with venues not being accessible or not having the correct facilities to meet needs (e.g. only toilets rather than changing spaces).

Location of short breaks was also a factor for some parents and carers – if they don't have transport, the length of the short break can be an issue as it means they have to stay or they have limited time to do things for themselves during that time.

Feedback from families and young people accessing commissioned community short breaks during 2023-2024 also tells us:

- They would like access to more sessions between school holidays, for example at weekends, as they love the activities, and the sessions have a very positive impact on the young people. They also have a positive impact on their parent/carers as they can have much needed respite and time to do other things.
- Sessions have allowed young people to meet new friends and develop social skills.
- Young people can't wait until the next sessions as they love them so much.
- Parents/carers have noticed a big difference in their child's confidence since accessing sessions and have said it is like picking up a different person after the session.
- Sessions help the young person to calm down and get rid of some excess energy and use it in a positive way.
- Sessions have had a positive impact on the young person's emotional wellbeing.
- Parents/carers report improvements in their child's communication after attending sessions.
- Access to short breaks contributes to parent/carer mental wellbeing and an improved home life too.

Barnsley Council will build this feedback into the design of its future commissioning arrangements, with the recommissioning of the offer due to conclude December 2025.

## **5. Safeguarding and Quality Assurance**

All the short break services are required to have regard to the local child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures. All staff and carers receive relevant child protection and safeguarding training. Any concerns reported about a child's welfare when accessing services is addressed in line with the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures. All short breaks providers are subject to contract monitoring arrangements to ensure service quality.

## **6. Access to Short Breaks Provision and Barnsley's Short Breaks Offer**

Universal services are those services that are available to all children and their families. Under the Equality Act 2010, universal providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable children with disabilities to attend. Access to universal services, such as youth clubs, extended school activities, early years setting and play schemes is key to ensuring disabled children have fun and enjoy the same opportunities as other children and young people.

For some disabled children, there can be barriers to them being able to do the same activities as their peers who do not have disabilities. Disabled children and their families commonly face social and environmental barriers to enjoying opportunities their non-disabled counterparts take for granted. Additional support is needed to ensure disabled children and young people don't miss out on these everyday experiences. Where this applies, a disabled child and family can access an activity-based short break without having to have an assessment but demonstrate need against the short breaks criteria. Early Help Assessments are also a key tool for supporting families and are encouraged by all 0-19 service providers.

A short breaks access and allocation process (Short Breaks Panel) is in place. This is a transparent and equitable process which promotes the social model of disability. The Short Breaks Panel is held fortnightly and any professional involved with the child can refer on the family's behalf or families can self-refer. Information and support on how to do this can be provided by Barnsley's Family Information Service, on the Barnsley Local Offer Website or via Barnsley's Integrated Front Door.

The Panel is chaired by the Service Manager for the Disabled Children's Team. It is attended by:

- Lead Commissioner (Children)
- DCT Service Manager & Designated Social Care Officer
- Business Development Officer (Children)
- Family Support Worker (DCT)
- Short Break Team Manager
- Representatives from Commissioned Provisions
- Children's Home Manager (Newsome Avenue)
- Children's Social Worker when required
- ICB Health Representative - DCO
- Team Manager Children's Social Care DCT

## Education representative

The short breaks core offer is:

- Up to two hours per week in term time and five hours a week in school holidays if a child cannot attend universal provision and does not receive any other short break services.

Support to access this can be through self-referral or professionals can also refer on the family's behalf. The completed application form will be presented to short breaks panel.

The next level is Tier 2 for families who need more support than the core offer:

- This is up to five hours per week term time and 10 hours per week in school holidays.

The child must have an Early Help Assessment or Education, Health and Care Plan in place. The application to panel will need to identify why the child needs this additional support and the type of activity the child would like to access. It is important that the short breaks panel have good information about what the child/young person enjoys and the type of activity they would like to access. Visits to explore the range of provision available are encouraged.

For families needing more than the second level of support a full social work assessment is needed. Tier 3 Support could include:

- Overnight stays
- Direct payment/Personal Budget
- Additional community provision
- Homecare
- A combined health and care package (Children's Continuing Care Assessment also required if a request for support from health is required).

All services provided under the short breaks provision will be subject to review by the service provider, lead practitioner or social worker within an agreed period, to identify if support is still needed and appropriate. Short breaks provision is on the basis of assessed need.

## **7. What is available in Barnsley for disabled children, young people and their families?**

### **Universal Clubs**

A universal club is a group or organised activity available to all children and young people. Clubs such as:



- swimming
- a football or climbing club
- a sports activity at a leisure centre
- a summer play scheme
- an after-school club
- a youth club
- a drama or art and craft club
- Brownies
- Scouts
- Guides

### **Barnsley's Current Short Break Provision**

- Child-minding and early years settings (family centres/nursery/play groups/holiday clubs)
- Positive Activities - specialist youth club provision across Barnsley
- Reds in the Community - weekly sports session and holiday sports programmes
- Naturewood - outdoor activities in the woodlands
- Sport Works – multi-sports, arts and crafts, and other enrichment activities.
- Stride Theatre - holiday club for children with profound and complex physical disabilities and health needs.
- Sibling Support - specialist sibling support to children growing up with a disabled brother or sister
- Fostering - overnight provision provided by the Local Authority Fostering Service
- Newsome Avenue - overnight residential provision
- Direct payments / Personal Budgets

**Reds in the Community** provide multi sports sessions for children and young people aged 8-18 with a disability. Sessions are delivered in school holidays and weekends during term time. Children are encouraged to take part in small group activities and team sports and make new friends to develop social skills and interactions. All the staff have experience of working with children with a disability and they employ support staff to assist with meeting any additional needs. The project manager is always happy to look at new programmes of activity and plans to develop the service offer in line with the interests of the children and young people who already access or would like to access the service.

**Naturewood** provides outdoor activities that aim to offer children with additional needs access to the outdoors and to enjoy the wonders of nature. Activities include: - BBQ's, games, fire building, den making, tree climbing, camping, crafts and treasure hunts.

**Sportworks** provide multi sports sessions, arts and crafts and other enrichment activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Children and young people aged 5-18 can access these sessions. Sessions provide opportunities for children and young people to improve fitness, gain new friends and enhance independence.

**Positive Activities** provide a targeted short breaks programme for children and young people aged 8-25 with mild to moderate learning difficulties or disabilities. There is a weekly

timetable of youth group activities for different age ranges which run at different venues in the Borough. Activities can include computer games, physical activities, arts and crafts, cooking, or just relaxing with friends.

The group aims to:

- Promote positive social interaction.
- Build confidence, self-esteem, independence and resilience.
- Provide opportunities to learn new skills and develop friendships.
- Provide sibling support groups.

**Early Years Short Break Provision** enables children in the early years age group (0-5) to access their short breaks via a childminder or an early years setting such as a nursery. If they already access such a setting it is possible, for continuity, to arrange for them to access their short break there too. All settings providing short breaks will receive the relevant training or support to ensure all children feel fully included and all their needs are met.

Children over the age of 5 can access holiday clubs and schemes, out of school clubs and childminders where appropriate. The Family Information Service can support finding a suitable setting.

**Stride Theatre** encourages personal development in a safe space for young people to express themselves and have fun. They use Theatre and Creative Arts, tailoring activities so that the young person is at the heart of everything they do. Due to the complex needs of the children and young people who attend Stride Theatre, the activities are person centred and focus on the individuals wishes and needs; this ensures that they benefit fully from their experiences

**Some short break opportunities require an assessment undertaken by a Family Support Worker in the Disabled Children's Team. These include:**

**Direct payments and personal budgets** are cash payments to parents which are used to meet need. The payments are an alternative to having services provided or arranged by the local authority or the local Integrated Care Board. Parents can use their budget to purchase the support their child needs against an agreed set of outcomes. Needs and resource are determined by a health, social care, or education assessment (or a variation of all depending on the needs of the child). The Disabled Children's Team, ICB or EHC Service can provide more information. The personal budget will be subject to planning, agreement and review of outcomes, they are not provided to purchase existing commissioned service provision. You can ask for the Local Authority or ICB to:

- manage your personal budget for you
- pay the money to another organisation – such as a care provider

For large and complex packages, a full social care assessment may be required. Your Family Support Worker will be able to discuss this with you.

**Some short break opportunities only available to children who have been allocated a social worker after a full social care assessment. These include:**

**Newsome Avenue** overnight provision is in Wombwell. It provides short break packages of care to children and young people, aged 5-17 years, who have disabilities and complex health needs. Newsome Avenue is a warm friendly environment where children and young people have the opportunity to engage in positive activities and spend time with friends. The home is registered with Ofsted, its overall rating of good and it is managed by Barnsley Council.

**Respite Foster Carers for overnight short breaks.** The Fostering Service have a small number of dedicated foster carers with experience with children with complex needs who can offer overnight short breaks in a family setting this is generally allocated to foster carers for the children that they look after on a permanent basis.

Details of how to apply for a short break, and who to contact can be found on [Barnsley's Local Offer website:](#)

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