



Information For Parents & Carers - Short Breaks

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and/or Disability

Introduction

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) recognises the importance of providing high-quality support to children and young people with disabilities or additional needs and their families. Short breaks play a vital role by giving children new experiences, supporting their social and emotional development, and providing families with valuable respite from their caring responsibilities. This guide outlines Barnsley's commitments regarding short breaks, the eligibility criteria, the types of provision available, and the legal framework underpinning this service.

Relevant legislation

The provision of short breaks is supported and governed by a robust legislative framework, including but not limited to:

- The Children Act 1989: Section 17 imposes a general duty on local authorities to provide services to children in need, including disabled children, to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011: These regulations, sometimes referred to as the Short Breaks Duty, require local authorities to offer a range of short break services to support carers of disabled children.
- The Children and Families Act 2014: This Act introduced reforms to the system of support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including the introduction of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and the requirement to publish a Local Offer.
- Equality Act 2010: Protects children and young people from discrimination and requires reasonable adjustments to ensure equality of access to services.
- Care Act 2014: Places a duty on local authorities to consider the needs of carers, including those caring for children with disabilities.



Definition of short breaks

Short breaks are services and activities that provide disabled children and young people with enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers. They may take place during the day, overnight, at weekends or during school holidays and may be provided in or outside the child's home. In Barnsley your child does not need to have a formal diagnosis of a disability as our support is needs led. However, in order to access an assessment for a short break, there is an eligibility criteria in place.

Short breaks aim to achieve the following:

- Provide children and young people with disabilities opportunities to participate in activities, have fun, and develop friendships and independence.
- Enable parents and primary carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities, reducing stress and promoting family wellbeing.
- Support siblings by giving them time where parental attention can be focused elsewhere.

Barnsley's short break eligibility criteria

Short breaks are targeted at children over the age of 2 years and children and young people under the age of 18. Below is the short break eligibility criteria.

Barnsley Children's Services short break eligibility criteria:

7; Special.Educational.Needs.(SEN).or.Disabilities

Your.child.or.young.person.must.have.Special.Educational.Needs.and-or.a.Disability.
They.should.also.have.either;

- a.SEN.Support.Plan.from.their.education.setting?or
- an.Education?Health.and.Care.Plan.(EHCP).from.the.Local.Authority;

If.your.child.is.educated.at.home.and.has.SEN.or.a.disability?we.will.need.information.
from.any.previous.school.or.reports.that.describe.their.educational.needs;

8; Access.To.Universal.Services.

Short.Breaks.are.designed.for.children.and.young.people.whose.needs.mean.they.can't.
take.part.in.Local.Offer.activities.or.other.universal.services; This.might.be.because.
those.activities.aren't.suitable?or.because.their.needs.make.it.difficult.for.them.to.take.
part.safely.or.independently;

Before.a.Short.Breaks.application.can.move.forward?families.should.have.considered.or.
tried.Local.Offer.groups.or.universal.activities; If.you.haven't.been.able.to.try.them?we.
will.ask.you.to.explain.why.these.activities.would.not.meet.your.child.or.young.person's.
needs;



9. Assessments Needed

To be considered for a Short Break, your family must have had an assessment in the last 78 months. This should be completed by a Lead Professional using either;

- an Early Help Assessment (EHA) or
- a Social Care Child and Family Assessment (CTMF)

This helps us understand the needs of the whole family and whether targeted Short Breaks support is needed. This assessment is only needed for the first application – not for future reviews.

10. Information About Your Child's Needs

Parents and carers will need to share documents such as medical reports, education information or specialist assessments. These help us understand why your child or young person with SEND needs extra support throughout the day.

This may be due to physical needs or because they need close or constant supervision during the day and/or night to keep themselves or others safe. Their needs should be much greater than those of other children their age who don't have SEND.

Types Of Short Break Provision

BMBC offers a continuum of short breaks using the graduated response, ranging from universal services accessible to all, to highly specialised services for those with the most complex needs. For information regarding the continuum of support, please see the BMBC level of need bandings for short breaks document on the SEND Local Offer website.

What Is The Graduated Response?

A graduated response is a structured, step-by-step approach to identifying and meeting children's needs. It is rooted in the principle of "assess, plan, do, review"—a cycle of support that increases in intensity according to the complexity and level of need. This framework ensures that children receive the right level of support at the right time while making effective use of available resources.

The graduated response approach is underpinned by key principles:

- Support is proportionate to need
- Children and families are involved in decision-making
- Provision is outcome-focused and regularly reviewed
- Resources are managed equitably and transparently



The graduated response ensures that short breaks for disabled children are allocated fairly, tailored to individual needs, and adaptable as those needs change, balancing the needs of children and families with the effective stewardship of resources.

Short Breaks Available Within Barnsley

Universal Short Breaks

These short breaks are for children and young people with and without additional needs. It allows them to take part in fun activities together. Most short break need can be supported through a universal offer of support. We understand children with SEND may require reasonable adjustments to support their child's individual needs.

Our short break team here in Barnsley attend the monthly multi agency short break drop in held at the Ozone Club within Barnsley Football Ground. Staff can help you speak with universal providers to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place, so you feel reassured your child feels safe, happy and well supported accessing provision. For example, this could include going to Base 71, youth club, family hubs, after school and holiday club or attending Brownies, Scouts or Boys/Girls Brigade.

Commissioned Community Short Breaks

The council supports several community providers to deliver a range of services to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. These are usually in the form of clubs that are held weekly, at weekends and/or during the school holidays.

To access commissioned short breaks a referral for a short break assessment is required to understand your child's needs and that of your family.

Commissioned short breaks will generally only be considered if your child's needs can't be met within Barnsley's universal offer. This will be explored through the short break assessment we complete with you.

Examples are as follows:

- Child-minding and early years settings (family centres/nursery/play groups/holiday clubs)
- BYouth Services – Ozone specialist youth club provision in Barnsley
- Reds in the Community - weekly sports session and holiday sports programmes
- Nature Wood - 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.
- Nexus MAT (pilot scheme) - sensory play, sports, arts and crafts, baking, inflatables, mobile zoos etc.
- Endorphins Group (pilot scheme) - creative crafts, sensory play including slime and experiments, singing, dancing, games, life skills, and baking. Supports young people from 4 to 17 years of age.
- Base71 (commissioned short break) - climbing wall, music/recording studio, arts/crafts, cooking, sports/gym, media, sensory room and a dance studio.
- Human Assist (pilot scheme) - arts and crafts, baking, sensory play, themed activities, numeracy and literacy activities and yoga.
- Imagination Gaming (pilot scheme) - engaging tabletop games/Lego type construction activity. Tabletop games and a range of board games and card games from across the world.

Specialist Short Breaks

This level of short breaks is for children and young people with complex and specialist needs. To access these services, you need to be assessed by the disabled children's social work teams because it involves a child or young person for example, spending time with carers or having an overnight break.

Direct Payments

A direct payment is money from your local authority to allow you to source the care your child needs instead of having services organised by us. Some of the ways direct payments can be used include:

- employing a personal assistant
- employing an agency to care for your child in your own home
- an activity club session
- booking short breaks

This list is not exhaustive. Direct payments can be used flexibly providing they are used to meet the assessed need and agreed outcomes for your child.



This may be daunting for some families; however, support is available relating to managing accounts, payroll and recruitment. More information on these providers can be found on the links below:

Information To Consider Before Applying For An Assessment For A Direct Payment

Your Responsibilities

You must:

- Be willing to receive direct payments and only spend the money on services to meet the agreed assessed needs
- Keep records of how the money is spent and agree for these to be checked by the Council
- Follow good employer practice (if you choose to employ your own carer)

If you Employ Personal Assistants

If you choose a Direct Payment to meet your families assessed short break needs, and have a personal assistant through this, you will also become responsible for the following:

- You will need to identify a PA. The Local Authority can assist with the recruitment.
- You will become an employer if you choose to use a PA.
- You will need to ensure the PA has a current police check (DBS check) and this is renewed as needed.
- You will need to set up a contract with your PA.
- You will have to arrange and purchase public liability insurance.
- You will be responsible for paying your PA the agreed rate of pay, in line with employment legislation.
- You will be responsible for tax, National Insurance, sick/holiday pay and pension for your employee.
- You will need to read, understand and sign an agreement as the direct payment will not be released without this.
- You will be responsible for dealing with any issues concerning your PA.

The above can sound daunting, but don't worry, we can support you in the process, so you feel confident in managing arrangements moving forward.



Personal Assistant Support

Here in Barnsley, when a short break assessment supports the need for personal assistant support, we base our hourly rates of pay on a continuum of need. We have worked with local PA agencies to develop this continuum of need, and it will be reviewed and updated annually.

If you choose to employ a personal assistant outside of the assessed level of need identified in the short break assessment, you will be responsible for the top up of the financial payments unless otherwise agreed with Barnsley Council.

Specialist Overnight Short Breaks

Newsome Avenue is an overnight provision 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.

Quotes from parents about Newsome Avenue:

“they.understand.our.son• they.just.›get.him‹;

›the.time.he.spends.at.Newsome.Avenue.provides.our.family.with.a.much_needed.breaks.and.we.can.relax.knowing.he.is.having.a.good.time?and.he.is.well.looked.after‹

›he.begins.to.smile.and.laugh.when.we.get.near.Newsome?and.he.is.always.happy.to.see.the.adults.at.the.home‹

I.don't"know.what.we.would.do.without.the.support.from.Newsome.Avenue?staff.are.open.to.discussion.and.accept.constructive.criticism‹

Quotes from children:

“I.wanted.to.play.with.flour?the.staff.helped.me.to.do.this?and.I.played.in.it.with.my.trains‹

›I.asked.if.I.could.do.a.jigsaw?staff.gave.me.a.choice.so.I.could.pick.my.own‹

›I.used.my.PECs.symbols.to.tell.staff.I.wanted.to.bake; .Staff.supported.me.to.do.this.and.I.enjoyed.doing.the.mixing‹

›I.asked.if.I.could.update.the.staff.notice.board; .Staff.supported.me.to.design.this.and.make.a.new.board.which.I.am.really.proud.about‹

Short Break Foster Care

Some children would benefit from experiencing a short break within a family home setting. Currently the Local Authority have two short breaks foster carers. However, we



are working hard to develop a recruitment plan to develop this offer over the next 12 months, so watch this space, we will keep you updated!

Feedback From Parent Accessing Overnight Short Break Foster Care

“My.daughter.goes.to.stay.with.T.twice.per.month?she.loves.going?she.smiles.when.she.sees.T.and.I.know.she.likes.being.with.T.and.at.her.home;.For.me.I.finally.get.to.relax?it.has.changed.my.life?I.can.go.to.the.snooker.club.and.recharge.ready.for.my.daughter.the.next.day< ;

What Is a Short Break Assessment?

The short break assessment is undertaken by a short break support worker, or on occasion a social worker or other practitioner within social care. S17 assessments are always undertaken by a qualified social worker. A Direct Payment is an option following the completion of both short breaks needs assessment, or a S17 assessment.

The short break assessment will explore your child's needs and what outcomes you hope to achieve through a short break experience. The Local Authority will do this by meeting with you as parents or carers and gathering information from you in relation to your child. We also want to understand what it is like for you, as the parent or carer (a parent carer needs assessment will also be offered to run alongside the short break assessment). Your child's voice and what they would like from the short break experience is important to us, so with your consent we will ask to speak to them too.

The worker undertaking the short break assessment will need to see your child at home and will seek your consent to speak to your child's education setting and any other key professionals working with you and your child, along with seeking agreement to view their SEN support or education health and care plan. All the information gathered helps us gain a thorough understanding of your child's needs, as well as yours as their parent or carer. This information is analysed and using a graduated response, forms a recommendation of support for your child and where appropriate your family.

The Parent Carer Needs Assessment

The parent carer needs assessment is outlined within the Children and Families Act 2014. The assessment is to identify and evaluate the support needs of parents/carers who care for a child with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Its primary purpose is to ensure that carers receive appropriate support, both for their own well-being and in their caring role. The assessment explores the impact of caring on the parent/carer's physical and mental health, social life, education, and employment.

It also considers the carer's aspirations, and any support required to maintain relationships or pursue personal interests. The assessment is undertaken by the Local Authority and involves a discussion between the carer and an assessor, focusing on daily routines, challenges, and the support already in place. Outcomes can include a range of



services, such as signposting to other agencies, short breaks, overnight respite and other interventions available.

In most circumstances, to access a commissioned or specialist short break offer an assessment of your child/ young person's needs will be required to run alongside the parent carers needs assessment. This is to ensure that your child's needs are well understood, and any provision put in place for them can safely meet their individual needs.

The parent carers needs assessment will be undertaken alongside a short break assessment or a Section 17 assessment. In Barnsley it cannot be undertaken as a stand-alone assessment.

Please see the five minute easy read guide on the SEND Local Offer website.

Allocation Of A Short Break

In Barnsley, we use a graduated response to assess family's needs. Once the assessment has been completed, the worker who completed the assessment will present the information gathered from the assessment to the multi-agency short break panel, where a decision will be made regarding if the allocation of a short break is appropriate to meet need and what would be most appropriate to meet your child/young person's needs.

All short breaks in place will be reviewed within the first 6 months of the package being developed and then on an annual basis thereafter. This review assessment, like the initial short break assessment, will be undertaken using the graduated response. This may mean the package will be increased, remain the same or be reduced in line with assessed need at the time of the assessment.

Barnsley Council have a duty to review all short break packages on an annual basis. Not supporting the reviewing process may see the short break package you and your child receive suspended or ended. We will of course give you fair warning and opportunities to engage before action is taken.

What Is A Section 17 Assessment (Section 17 Children Act 1989)?

A Section 17 Children Act Assessment is a way for your Local Authority (the council) to find out what help and support your child and your family may need. The assessment is carried out by a social worker. They will talk to you, your child, and sometimes other people who support your child, such as teachers or doctors. The aim is to understand your child's needs, what support you already have, and what extra help could make life easier.

The assessment looks at things like your child's health, education, social activities, and family life. After the assessment, the social worker will write a plan about what support your family needs and will make recommendations around how to best support your child



and your family. This might include help at home, equipment, short breaks, or signposting to other services.

The assessment is about working together with you and your child to make sure your child is safe, happy, and has the right support to develop and thrive. The assessment may identify that your child/young person can be supported by universal or early help services or may require more specialist intervention leading to social work support. The assessment usually takes around 9 weeks to complete and will involve the social worker visiting you at home several times during the assessment timeframe and speaking with your child. The social worker will need to see your child at home (please see eligibility criteria on the Barnsley Local Offer website).

The Multi-Agency Short Break Panel

The multi-agency short break panel considers requests for short breaks and considers how best a short break is going to assist the child/young person and their family. The panel is a decision-making panel that agrees and allocates short break resources.

The Panel is a multi-agency panel, attended by agencies such as health, SEND education and Children's Continuing Care and is chaired by the Service Manager for the Disabled Children's Service (DCT), or by the DCT Team Managers. In the event the panel is chaired by a DCT Manager, the Service Manager will be present as the agency decision maker and will provide senior manager scrutiny & oversight to the panel.

The panel will explore:

- Brief background information
- Child/young person's SEND needs
- Support in place & services previously or currently accessed.
- Assessment of child's need for short break
- Demonstrate how a short break will support the child/young person & their family
- Outline how a short break support the child/young person to achieve & develop their independence & other skills
- Child/young person & parents views
- Assessment recommendation/request for short break service

The panel will look at the information that has been provided and decide whether a short break can be offered. In some cases, the panel may decide not to agree to a short break if the information does not show that the need is



clear. If this happens, we will explain the decision and offer advice where possible.

Sometimes, the panel may agree a different type of short break than the one recommended in the assessment. This is to make sure the support offered is the best fit for your child's needs.

If you are not satisfied with the decision made about your child or young person at the short break panel, there is a short break panel appeal process in place and is outlined below.

Short break panel decision outcome appeals process

Stage 1 - Informal resolution

Following assessment and panel decision, you will be notified of the outcome by your allocated worker, and you will also receive an outcome letter from the short break panel with the decision outlined. If you don't agree with the short break offer, we have made to your child or young person, or you feel that you are eligible for a short break, but your request was declined, please **get in touch with us within 10 working days** by contacting the worker who undertook the assessment to discuss with them, or email shortbreaksecs@barnsley.gov.uk.

At this stage, we will try to resolve the concern raised informally by gathering information from you and reviewing everything provided to us. This may, or may not lead to a change of offer, which would be communicated to you in writing by the Short Break Team Manager within 20 working days.

Stage 2 - Formal appeal

If you still disagree with the decision and wish to appeal, please contact the Short Breaks Team Manager by emailing shortbreaksecs@barnsley.gov.uk, stating that it is formal appeal for the attention of the Short Break Panel.

The relevant manager will review the assessment, speak to the assessing officer as required, and present the appeal to the next available Short Break Panel for consideration. We will aim to respond to your appeal within 20 working days or let you know if that isn't possible and set a new timescale. You will receive a written response to your appeal.

Next stage if your appeal has not been resolved

At Barnsley Council, we always strive to resolve any complaints outside of the formal complaints process. However, if your complaint cannot be resolved at stage 1 or 2, then you are able to make a formal complaint via the Council website [Make a complaint -](#)



Requestry

Disabled Children's Social Work teams

Children's Social Care (DCT) works with parents, carers and young people in partnership to offer advice and support before a situation reaches crisis point.

The team aims to work in partnership with, and may refer to, other services and community groups, including education, health, housing, benefits agencies and the police.

By law, Children's Social Care must give priority of service to children with specific categories of need including:

- Disabled children in need of Section 17 services
- Those at risk of serious harm and who may need a plan of protection
- Those who are, or may need to be, looked after by Children's Social Care and are unable to remain living at home
- Those in private fostering arrangements
- Those aged 16 or over who are leaving the care of Children's Social Care or have previously left care and are eligible for Leaving Care service.
- Where children's social care involvement is required by the Court.

When making a referral for a Section 17 social care assessment undertaken by the Disabled Children's Team, a triage process will take place within the Integrated Front Door (IFD) to explore which service would be most appropriate to assess your child's needs. Not all children and young people will require a Section 17 assessment and there are circumstances when an early help, short break assessment or parent carers need assessment (completed alongside child's assessment) would be more appropriate to understand need and achieve desired outcomes for you and your child.

There may also be circumstances where your child's needs do not meet the criteria for the disabled children's team. This may mean that your child will be supported via an Early Help assessment or Section 17 assessment from an alternative department instead.

Exploring The Support Available In Your Family Network

Here in Barnsley, we believe in the importance of understanding a child and their parent/ carers family and connected people networks. We know families have lots of skills and experience we can draw upon that can help meet needs and outcomes for your child and family networks can often offer practical and emotional support to you as a parent/ carer too.



In all assessment work we do with children and families we invite conversations to explore:

- Who is in your network and their relationship with you and your child
- How could your network support you and your child
- How we can come together with your network to explore the support available

We understand that reaching out for support can sometimes feel difficult. We are here to help. We can do this in two ways:

- Referring to our Family Group Conferencing service
- The lead assessor organising a meeting with you and your family

Principles Of Short Break Delivery

Short breaks in Barnsley will be delivered in accordance with the following principles:

- **Child-centred:** Services will be designed around the individual needs and interests of children and young people.
- **Inclusive:** Wherever possible, children with disabilities will have access to mainstream activities alongside their non-disabled peers.
- **Flexible:** Provision will be responsive to the changing needs of families and children.
- **Safe:** All services will meet statutory safeguarding requirements and promote the welfare of children.
- **Outcome-focused:** Support will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is achieving positive outcomes for children and families.
- **Partnership-working:** We will work closely with families, schools, health services, voluntary and community organisations, and other partners to deliver integrated support.

Responsibilities

- BMBC will ensure that a wide range of short breaks are available and accessible, as stipulated by the 2011 Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations.
- Staff working with children and families will be appropriately trained and supported.
- Information about short breaks will be published annually as part of the Local Offer.
- Feedback from children, young people, and families will be actively sought and used to shape future services.
- Short breaks will be reviewed for each child and young person to ensure it continues to meet need.

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance



All staff involved in the delivery of short breaks will be subject to enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and will receive regular safeguarding training. Providers will be monitored and quality assured by BMBC to ensure high standards and the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Funding

BMBC will allocate resources to ensure there is a sufficient range of short break services. The Council will regularly review the level of funding and the demand for services to ensure sustainability and responsiveness to local needs.

Contact information

Details of the range of available short breaks, eligibility criteria, and how to access services can be found on the BMBC Local Offer website or by contacting Children's Services directly at ShortBreaksECS@barnsley.gov.uk

Document developed by Laura Johnson – Designated Social Care Officer. To be reviewed in June 2027.