

Barnsley

BMBC Short

Breaks Policy



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

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 offering children new and enriching experiences, supporting their social and emotional development, and providing families with valuable respite from their caring responsibilities. This policy sets out Barnsley's commitments regarding the provision of short breaks, the eligibility criteria, the support available, and the legislative framework that underpins these services.

Policy Statement

BMBC is committed to ensuring that children and young people with disabilities or additional needs, and their families, have access to a range of high-quality short break opportunities. Provision will be flexible, inclusive, and responsive to assessed need, enabling children to lead fulfilling lives and enabling parents and carers to maintain their wellbeing.

Relevant Legislation

Short break provision is governed by a robust legislative framework, including but not limited to:

- **Children Act 1989:** Section 17 places a duty on local authorities to provide services to children in need, including disabled children, to safeguard and promote their welfare.
 - **Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011:** These set out the local authority's duty to ensure a range of short break services is available to support carers.
 - **Children and Families Act 2014:** Introduced reforms for children and young people with SEND, including Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and requirements to publish the Local Offer.
 - **Equality Act 2010:** Requires reasonable adjustments and protects children and young people from discrimination.
 - **Care Act 2014:** Places a duty on local authorities to consider the needs of carers, including those caring for disabled children.
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Definition of Short Breaks

Short breaks are services and activities that provide disabled children and young people with enjoyable and meaningful experiences away from their primary carers. They may take place during the day, overnight, at weekends or during school holidays, and may be delivered in the home or in community settings.

Short breaks aim to:

- Provide children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities, have fun, build independence, and develop friendships.
 - Enable parents and carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities, promoting family wellbeing.
 - Support siblings by providing them with dedicated time where parental attention can be focused elsewhere.
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Principles of Short Break Delivery

Short breaks in Barnsley will be:

- Child-centred
 - Inclusive
 - Flexible
 - Safe
 - Outcome-focused
 - Delivered in partnership
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Responsibilities

BMBC will:

- Ensure a wide range of short breaks is available
 - Train and support staff appropriately
 - Publish information annually as part of the Local Offer
 - Seek and act upon feedback
 - Review short breaks for each child annually
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Eligibility Criteria

Short breaks are targeted at children and young people aged **2 to 18 years** who meet the following criteria:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Assessments Needed

To be considered for a Short Break, your family must have had an assessment in the last 12 months. This should be completed by a Lead Professional using either:

- an Early Help Assessment (EHA), or
- a Social Care Child and Family Assessment (C&F).

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.

4. 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 support in line with the **graduated response**, ranging from universal to highly specialist services. Full details are available within the BMBC short breaks Level of Need Bandings on the SEND Local Offer website.

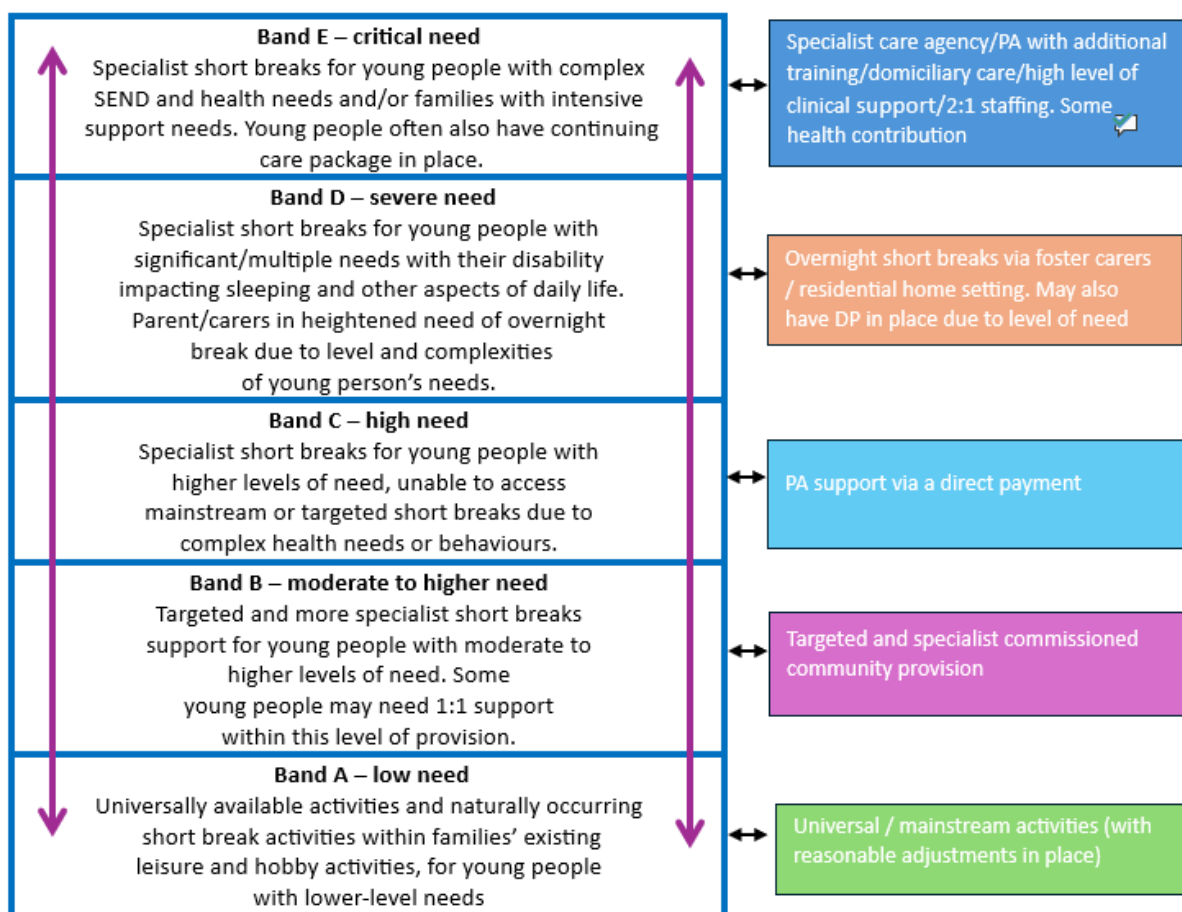
The Graduated Response

The graduated response is a structured “assess, plan, do, review” approach used to identify and meet children's needs. It ensures:

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

This approach ensures that support is equitable, tailored, and adaptable as needs change.

The below illustrates the graduated response to levels and type of support available based on assessed need.



Short Breaks Available in Barnsley

Universal Provision

Universal provision is available to children with and without additional needs, enabling shared participation in community activities. Reasonable adjustments are supported to ensure accessibility for children with SEND.

The short break team regularly attends monthly multi-agency drop-ins at the Ozone Club, Barnsley Football Ground, to assist families in liaising with providers and securing appropriate adjustments.

Examples include:

- Youth clubs
- After-school provision
- Brownies, Scouts, Boys/Girls Brigade

Commissioned Community Short Breaks

BMBC commissions a range of organisations to deliver community short breaks, typically offered weekly, at weekends or during school holidays.

Access requires a short break assessment and is generally considered where universal provision cannot meet need.

Commissioned short breaks are group activity-based sessions delivered in a community setting. Community short breaks fall into one of two categories:

- Tier 1 Specialist support – Group sessions offering 1:1 staff to child ratio for young people with complex SEND and/or behavioural needs. Personal care and/or support with medication may be required. Nursing support may be required to support children and young people with more complex medical needs within some tier 1 community short breaks provision.
- Tier 2 Targeted support – Group sessions with a standard offer of 1:3 or lower (1:4, 1:5+ etc) staff to child ratio, with the ability for some providers to offer 1:2 support where appropriate. Tier 2 support is for children and young people that do not need specialist support of tier 1 but are unable to access universal/mainstream provision.

Specialist Short Breaks

These are for children with complex or high-level needs requiring assessment by the Disabled Children's Social Work Team.

This may include day support, carer-led breaks, or overnight provision.

Direct Payments

Direct payments allow families to arrange their own support to meet assessed outcomes. They may be used for:

- Employing a Personal Assistant (PA)
- Agency care within the home
- Activity sessions
- Short break bookings

Direct payments must be used in line with assessed needs and agreed outcomes.

Support is available for families to manage payroll, recruitment and record-keeping.

Responsibilities When Employing a PA

Families employing a PA must:

- Recruit appropriately (with LA support if needed)
- Ensure DBS checks are completed and renewed
- Issue and maintain employment contracts
- Purchase public liability insurance
- Pay wages in line with legislation
- Manage tax, NI, pension, sick/holiday pay
- Sign the direct payment agreement
- Manage any employment issues

A continuum-of-need hourly rate structure is used across Barnsley and reviewed annually.

Families choosing to pay above the assessed rate will need to fund the difference unless otherwise agreed.

Specialist Overnight Short Breaks

Newsome Avenue, located in Wombwell, provides overnight short breaks for children aged 5–17 with disabilities and complex health needs.

The home is Ofsted-registered (rated “Good”) and offers a warm, supportive environment where children engage in positive activities and build friendships.

Parent and child feedback reflects high satisfaction and positive experiences.

Short Break Foster Care

BMBC currently has two short break foster carers offering family-based overnight care. Work is underway to expand this offer through a targeted recruitment plan.

Short Break Assessments

Short break assessments are undertaken by short break support workers, or by social workers where a Section 17 assessment is required.

Section 17 Assessment

Section 17 assessments determine what help and support a child and family require, completed by a qualified social worker. The assessment includes:

- Exploration of the child's needs
- Desired outcomes for the short break
- Parent/carer experiences and needs (with Parent Carer Needs Assessment where appropriate)
- Child's voice
- Home visit
- Consent-based liaison with education and other key professionals
- Analysis using the graduated response

The assessment considers:

- Health
- Education
- Social activities
- Family life
- Existing support

It typically takes up to 9 weeks and includes home visits and direct work with the child.

Parent Carer Needs Assessment

As outlined in the Children and Families Act 2014, this assessment identifies the support needs of parent carers, focusing on health, wellbeing, employment, and wider life impact.

It may be completed:

- alongside a short break assessment
- alongside a Section 17 social care assessment
- as a stand-alone assessment

Outcomes may include signposting, short breaks, overnight respite, or other services.

Allocation of a Short Break

Completed assessments are presented to the Multi-Agency Short Break Panel, which determines whether a short break is required and, if so, the most appropriate provision.

Short breaks are reviewed:

Community commissioned short break – 12 monthly.

Direct payment package and/or overnight stays - after 6 months and annually thereafter.

This in line with the graduated response.

We encourage families to take part in the review process, as this helps us make sure the right support is in place. If we're unable to complete a review due to a lack of engagement, support may need to be paused or brought to an end, following appropriate notice.

Multi-Agency Short Break Panel

The panel meets weekly, alternating between:

- **Play & Leisure Panel** – for commissioned community provision
- **Specialist Panel** – for direct payments, personal budgets and overnight short breaks

Membership includes:

- DCT Service Manager & DSCO (Co-Chair)
- DCT Social Care Team Manager (Co-Chair)
- DCT Short Break Team Manager (Co-Chair)
- Business Development Officer
- Family Support Worker
- Newsome Avenue Manager
- Children's Social Worker (as required)
- ICB Designated Clinical Officer
- Continuing Care representative
- SEND Service representative

Referrals for assessment are made via the Integrated Front Door (IFD).

Disabled Children's Social Work Teams

The DCT works collaboratively with children, young people and families to prevent crisis and provide appropriate support.

The team prioritises children:

- with disabilities requiring Section 17 support
- at risk of significant harm
- who may require care or protection
- in private fostering arrangements
- aged 16+ leaving care

- where court involvement requires social care participation

The IFD triage process determines the most appropriate assessment route.

Exploring Family Networks

BMBC values the strengths of family and connected networks and explores:

- who is within the family's support network
- the support they can offer
- opportunities to work together

Support may include Family Group Conferencing or facilitated family meetings.

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

All staff delivering short breaks must have enhanced DBS checks and up-to-date safeguarding training.

Providers are monitored to ensure high-quality, safe provision for children and young people.

Funding

BMBC will allocate and review resources to ensure short break services remain sustainable, equitable, and responsive to local needs.

Compliments and Complaints

Feedback is welcomed. Compliments, concerns and complaints can be made through BMBC's standard processes, available via the Council's website and the SEND Local Offer.

Review of Policy

Document developed by Laura Johnson – Designated Social Care Officer.

This policy will be reviewed in June 2027, or sooner if changes in legislation, guidance or local need require.

Contact Information

Information on short breaks, eligibility and access is available via the BMBC SEND Local Offer or by contacting:

 ShortBreaksECS@barnsley.gov.uk