

City of York Council

Short Breaks Statement for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and their families

What is the short breaks statement?

The Short Breaks Statement sets out how we support short breaks for disabled children and young people aged up to 18 years who live in the City of York. The Short Breaks Statement has been developed to meet the requirements of relevant legislation and includes information about:

1. The range of short breaks available
2. Who short breaks are for (eligibility criteria) and how needs are assessed.
3. How the range of short breaks are designed to meet the needs of families (including carers) with disabled children in York. This Short Breaks Statement has been coproduced with support from parent carer forum.

What are short breaks?

Short breaks are play and leisure opportunities which support disabled children to go places, spend time with friends, take part in fun and enjoyable activities, develop their independence and try new things.

Short breaks will support families and allow parent carers to have time out from their caring responsibilities in the same way that parents and carers without disabled children are able to.

Short breaks could be in the family home, at an activity, in the community or other residential setting. During term time, they are typically not delivered during core school hours.

The type, length and duration of a short break will vary depending on the individual needs, following an assessment of the child or young person and their family.

They can last anything from a couple of hours to an evening, overnight, weekend and can be offered during daytimes, evenings, weekends and school holidays.

York offers a wide range of local short break opportunities which can meet the needs of disabled children and young people of different ages and needs. It is important that short breaks are shared out in a fair way and that there are fair and transparent policies and pathways to services and support.

Some families may need more support than others because of the individual needs of their child, their family circumstances and/or the support they have available from their network of family and friends. In York, our aspiration is to ensure that there are sufficient and varied short break opportunities available to children, young people and families which allow them to access their local community wherever possible. We

look to promote choice and flexibility so that families can access short breaks that suit their needs and interests.

Who are short breaks for?

Short Breaks are available to children and young people who:

- Have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND)
- Are aged 0 to 18 years old
- Currently and ordinarily reside in York

Eligibility decisions are based on individual need including to what extent a child or young person's disability or impairment affects their lives and what would usually be expected for any child of the same age. Their family's circumstances will also be different and so it is important to assess how their situation impacts upon their ability to lead a fulfilling life within the community. Families could find that universal and/or targeted services readily available in the community will meet their needs, but others may find they need something different which isn't available. If your needs can't be met through universal and/or targeted services, you may be eligible, following assessment, for a specialist short break.

Local Authorities are required to publish a statement about short break services for children and young people who have disabilities and their families. This is set out in the [Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#). This statement has been developed in line with all current legislation relating to short breaks.

What are the benefits of Short Breaks?

- Families have increased choice and greater control over the short breaks services they receive, improving access to the community and reducing isolation
- Family crises can be prevented through the provision of the right level of support at the right time; this could be support for a short period of time to respond to a specific need within the family at that time, or longer-term and ongoing support
- More children and young people will remain at home with their families
- Fewer disabled children become looked after (live away from their family) either permanently or part -time because of their disability

The [government's short breaks guidance](#) identifies that short breaks give children and young people who have SEND the opportunity to join in with an enjoyable activity away from their parents/carers. Short breaks allow children and young people to take part in activities, make friends, develop independence and have fun. Short breaks also provide parents/carers with a break from caring responsibilities.

Short breaks can occur after school, during the evening, overnight or at weekends. Short breaks can take place for a few hours.

What are the different types of Short Breaks?

Short breaks can broadly be separated into three categories:

Universal Services: These are short break services that are open to all children and young people, both with and without a disability. They should be services that are accessible to anyone at any time.

Targeted Services: These are short break services that, typically, parents and carers can apply directly for their child or young person to access. They will be aimed at supporting children who have a special educational need or disability.

Specialist Services: These are short break services that can be accessed via an assessment of your child or young person's needs, carried out by a social worker. These services are for children and young people whose needs cannot be fully met through universal and/or targeted services.

Who can access short breaks

All children and young people aged 0 to 18, who have a disability (as defined in section 17(11) of the Children Act 1989) and live in York, can apply for a short break. Short breaks support is based on the needs of your child. You do not need to have a specific diagnosis to get support, and children who are on an assessment pathway or waiting list can still access short breaks.

Non-Assessed Short Breaks

Universal Services

These are services that are open to all children and young people, both with and without a disability. They should be services that are accessible to anyone at any time. Some are free and for some there is a cost. These may include:

- **Early years settings**
- **Childminders**
- **Breakfast or after-school clubs or groups**
- **Holiday play schemes**
- **Swimming lessons**
- **Drama and dance groups**
- **Music / sports activities**
- **Youth groups, including Scouts or Guides**
- **Libraries, leisure centres and gyms**
- **Community and voluntary organisations**
- **Parks**

ALL services must make reasonable adjustments to support ALL children and young people to access their service, this is because they have a legal duty

under the Equality Act (2010) to ensure that disabled children are not treated less favourably than children without a disability

In York, our aspiration is to ensure that there are sufficient and varied short break opportunities available to children, young people and families which allow them to access their local community wherever possible. We look to promote choice and flexibility so that families can access short breaks that suit their individual circumstances.

For the most up to date information on services available to your child please contact them directly on:

- telephone: 01904 554444, Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm
- text telephone: 07786202241
- email: fis@york.gov.uk

Targeted Services

Some children and young people with disabilities, at different times and for different reasons, will have additional needs that cannot be met by universal services alone. Targeted services are those which families can apply to directly but are specifically suited to children and young people with a disability. This may mean that there are criteria attached to applications (for example, some sessions will only be open to children with a disability, or you may need to have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to be eligible.) These may include:

- SEND sessions at York Explore - <https://explore.york.gov.uk/libraries/york-explore/>
- SEND Sessions at SEND Central - <https://www.yorksend.org/parents/send-central/4>
- SEND Youth groups
- SNAPPY - <https://www.thesnappytrust.org/>
- York Inspirational Kids - <https://www.yiks.co.uk/>
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme - <https://www.york.gov.uk/HAF>
- Early Help Short Breaks Grant
- Portage Stay and Play Groups
- Discount cards

More Targeted Support Information

There are a range of discount cards available to families and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

MAX Card

The Max Card is a discount card for families. Simply show their Max Card upon entry to a participating venue to obtain free or discounted admission. Children and young people will be eligible for the Max Card up to the age of 25 years.

[Buy your max card online](#)

CEA Card

The CEA Card is a national card scheme developed for UK cinemas by the UK Cinema Association (UKCA).

The Card enables a disabled cinema guest to receive a complimentary ticket for someone to go with them when they visit a participating cinema.

To apply for the card, you will need to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a) be in receipt of the disability living allowance or attendance allowance.
- b) be a registered blind person.

Read more about [subtitles and audio description for cinemas](#).

[Apply for the CEA Card](#) online.

York Carers Discount Card

York Carers Centre have a free discount card for carers in York. The card gives the holder discount at a variety of shops, gyms, restaurants and other services. Discounts vary but range between approximately 10% and 30% off. To get the card all you need to do is register with [York Carers Centre](#).

HAF programme

In addition, children who receive benefit-related free school meals can access the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which offers free activities in the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays. For more information see: <https://www.york.gov.uk/HAF>

Portage Stay and Play

[Portage Support - Early Support \(was little stars\) -](#)

Parent groups run across 3 locality areas open to all focussing on sleep, inclusive groups, play, communication and diet.

Contact <https://www.york.gov.uk/early-talk-york-2> for more information

Early Help Short Breaks Grant

Early Help Short Breaks are part of the City of York Council's Early Help offer to provide disabled children and young people with opportunities to take part in enjoyable activities and develop vital skills, while giving their families a chance to rest from caring duties. This is a one-off grant provided to eligible families who have been unable to access universal and other targeted offers due to the complexity of their child's needs.

Support provided is dependent on available resources during each application window. It is also based on the needs of the child and the impact the funding could make.

You can apply for Early Help Short Breaks grant funding twice a year, in April and October, by completing and submitting the application form from the Local Offer page. Applications can only be submitted and accepted during these times.

For more information please see: <https://www.yorksend.org/homepage/21/short-breaks>

You can also get in touch by email: earlyhelpshortbreaks@york.gov.uk.

If you need support with completing this application, you can contact SEND Central-
sendcentral@york.gov.uk

The Early Help Short Breaks Grant is currently under review as part of the wider Short Break Review in York. This is taking place from September 2025 and due to be completed by August 2026.

Assessed Short Breaks

Specialist Services

Some children and young people with disabilities whose needs are more complex may require specialist short breaks and/or significant additional support from another person to enable them to participate in enjoyable activities and stay safe. They may already be receiving support through universal and targeted services, but this may not be sufficient to meet their needs, or it may be that they require the support of a carer or carers to access these services safely.

Children and young people in York are eligible for specialist short breaks if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the child's ability to carry out normal daily activities.

The team operates a needs-based, not diagnosis-led model.

Who are these services for?

These services are for families with the most complex needs who require more support than is offered by other services. This may be because of changes in the family's ability to support their child or because the child or young person's needs are, or have become, greater. Some families will have a wider network of support, however, if you find you don't, or your family would benefit from extra support from City of York, you can request an assessment of need.

How can you access these activities and find more information?

To see what you and your child might need from an assessed short break you will need to have your child and family's needs assessed. You and/or your child will be at the heart of the assessment, and it will consider your family needs as well as your child's needs.

The team will take your details and consider, if an assessment is appropriate and if so, which team is most appropriate to conduct an assessment. Within the assessment the worker will consider:

- The severity of your child's disability and how it impacts on both their life and yours
- If you have more than one disabled child
- The number of other children or caring responsibilities you may have
- If you or your partner has a disability
- How short breaks will improve the quality of your child's life
- The level of support within your social / family network
- Your child's wishes and feelings
- If there are concerns about a child or young person's safety
- Support needs during the school holidays
- If your child is accessing a suitable, full-time education, and if not what the barriers are to this
- If your child has complex health needs (In some cases it may be necessary for a Continuing Care assessment to be completed to determine how those needs should be met by health)

Any requests for specialist short breaks will need to be discussed by the local authority's Short Breaks Panel called Resource Allocation Panel. The Short Breaks Panel meets on a fortnightly basis to discuss requests for short breaks, considering recommendations by social workers who have worked with you and your family.

If you and your child need a high level of support, or if the support is needed to keep your child or your family safe then this may need to be discussed at a subsequent panel called Children's Resource Panel which considers support outside of Short Breaks.

An assessment is required to help determine whether there is eligibility for specialist support.

If you would like to be assessed for these services, contact the MASH team:

- email: mash@york.gov.uk
- telephone: 01904 551900

If you're already involved with any professional from education, health or social care, they can make a referral on your behalf.

How could a Specialist Short Break be delivered?

There are several different ways in which a specialist short break could be delivered. How this happens in practice is very much determined following discussions between you and your social worker. Examples of how this can be facilitated include

Direct Payments – Direct payments are an alternative means of providing families with short breaks. A sum of money is provided rather than a direct service. This means a family can buy their own short breaks, for example, by employing a personal assistant.

Community based Short Breaks – this is where the local authority commissions a specialist provider to deliver the short break. This could be with a short break’s provider such as SNAPPY or YIKS.

Residential and Family based Short Breaks – The Beehive is a residential short breaks centre that provides overnight short breaks for children aged 5-18 with complex disabilities in a specialist setting. Short Breaks Foster Care provides overnight short breaks for children and young people up to age 18 with disabilities in a family setting, providing them with new experiences and enabling their families to have a short break from their caring responsibilities.

Bespoke Short Breaks

Sometimes for children with the most complex needs specialist providers and care agencies are contracted by City of York Children’s Services to meet their needs and enable them to continue to live at home with their families safely.

What is a Parent Carer’s Assessment?

The council has a duty to assess the needs of any carer who requests a parent carers assessment, or who appears to need to support. The Assessment will support you to consider your own support network and any universal services that you and your family could be accessing. It will support you to access advice and information specific to your needs.

The Council works on the principal that parent carer’s needs are looked at as part of a holistic assessment and this gives a clearer picture of any support required. However, parent carers can ask to just have their own needs assessed.

Support provided is dependent on available resources.

The Parent Carers Support Grant is currently under review as part of the wider Short Break Review in York. This is taking place from September 2025 and due to be completed by August 2026.

What factors are discussed?

- Your child’s needs and any support that is already in place from Short Breaks
- Own physical health and mental health
- Family factors (such as single parent/any relationship difficulties)
- Amount of support available from wider family or friends
- Caring for others
- Being employed, in education/training
- Housing situation
- Support during school holidays

There are no eligibility criteria for a parent of a child with SEND to request a parent carers assessment. Initial enquires will determine which team complete the assessment and whether you may benefit from a full assessment of your child and family’s needs.

Short Breaks Development

We are currently entering a consultation period for the delivery on short breaks in York and a review of Short Breaks will be undertaken between September 2025 and August 2026.

The review hopes to increase families understanding around eligibility and ensure that the right variety of short breaks are being delivered across Universal, Targeted and Specialist groups.

Our aspiration is to ensure that all children in York have access to short breaks services that are inclusive and flexible to meet families individual needs.

We are committed to undertaking this review thoroughly and in partnership and collaboration with parents, children, and young people. We will be working with York Parent Carer Forum and parent carers to understand the specific requirements and develop our offer accordingly.

Preparation for Adulthood

As your child grows their short break may need to change. This is to support them to prepare for adulthood. Professionals supporting you child in education, health and care will start to talk to you and your child from age 14 about how you can support them with things like accessing the community, independent travel, self-care, work, and post 16 education options.

We recognise that the transition for children and young people into adulthood can be daunting. We aim to ensure that there is a robust and seamless transition for young people when they reach adulthood. Practitioners working in children's services liaise regularly with colleagues in adult services to ensure that sufficient planning and preparation can be undertaken. For young people with a specialist short break, the identified social worker or child and family support worker will work alongside you and your family to support the transition to adulthood.

This may include making a referral to adult social care who will undertake an assessment of your young person's needs to enable the right support to be in place when they turn 18. If your child does not have a social worker and you think they may need support from Adult Service's you will need to contact them to request a Care Act Assessment. Each person's short breaks or support provision are agreed based on individual need and in line with their assessed personal budget. This varies depending on need and can include weekly overnight stays or full weeks to enable parents/carers to have a break from the caring role. More information is available on the preparing for Adulthood section of the Local Offer

<https://www.yorksend.org/homepage/8/preparation-for-adulthood> and on <https://www.york.gov.uk/adult-social-care/support-age-18-preparing-adulthood>.

One major difference between services available via children's services and adult services is the need for a financial assessment to determine if there is a contribution that needs to be made towards the cost of care. Adult social care has information

around financial contributions for care. More information about Paying For Care can be found here - <https://www.york.gov.uk/personalisation-care/paying-care>

Further information.

[Find out more about how local authorities should provide Short Break care.](#)

If you would like to share feedback about short breaks, please contact Have Your Say at:

<https://www.york.gov.uk/4Cs>

Short Breaks Common Questions and Answers

What are the criteria for me to apply?

Short Breaks are for children/ young people who:

- Have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND)
- Are aged 0 to 18 years old
- Currently and ordinarily reside in the City of York.

Does my child need a diagnosis to apply for short breaks?

No, your child does not need a diagnosis to get short breaks. The level of support is based on the needs of your child. In the past a medical model was used which did not include ADHD. This is no longer the case. Your child can still access short breaks if they are on an assessment pathway, waiting list, or if they have ADHD.

Where can I get help completing an application for the Early Help Short Breaks grant?

You can request a printed application or further support from the early help short breaks coordinator: earlyhelpshortbreaks@york.gov.uk or from SEND Central:

sendcentral@york.gov.uk

Where can I get help finding activities for my child?

For the most up to date information on activities for your child please contact the Family Information Service: fis@york.gov.uk

How do I request a social care assessment?

- A Parent, carer or professional can submit a request for an assessment to determine if a child/ young person has needs that can not be met through universal or targeted support.
- The request will be considered by a MASH Social Worker who will determine which team are best placed to undertake your child's assessment. Your allocated social worker will work with you and your child/ young person to conduct a thorough assessment of need. This assessment will consider if there

is eligibility for a specialist short break and how the universal and targeted services could meet your needs.

- If the social worker determines that there are unmet social care needs that require a specialist short break, they will make a request to the Short Breaks Panel, your social worker will discuss and explain the outcome from the panel discussion including any next steps or what you can do if you are dissatisfied
- You can contact the MASH team and ask about an assessment at mash@york.gov.uk

How long will it take to access?

The assessment conducted by the social worker must take no longer than 45 days. Timescales following presentation to Short Breaks Panel will vary depending on what was agreed, what questions were asked by panel and what support, if any, is agreed to be put into place.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs associated with the assessment. If the local authority agree that you require a specialist short break, any contributions will be discussed with you. This will typically be to cover the cost of activities and food and drink for your child or young person while accessing their short break, although there are a range of free and low-cost activities that we often signpost families to access.

Is it flexible?

A specialist short break can offer great flexibility. If you are receiving direct payments, for example, there is flexibility as to when you can use these hours to suit the needs of your family (i.e., on a weekday evening or weekend). We recognise that families do not live static lives and are often faced with circumstances which require them to be flexible to meet the needs of their children, and we encourage short breaks to be used this wherever possible.

How can I be sure that it is safe?

All our agency short break providers, our residential short breaks workers, and our short breaks foster carers are fully quality assured and go through a rigorous onboarding and monitoring process to ensure suitability.

What involvement do health services have and are social workers aware of health needs?

Social workers will consider the health needs of your child or young person as part of their assessment. They may want to speak to health professionals involved with your child and may ask them to contribute to the assessment to ensure that this is holistic and considers all your child's needs. There has been a commitment made from local health services that professionals involved with children and young people with a health need will provide appropriate competency training to support access to short breaks. If your child has complex health needs they may require an assessment from the Children's Continuing Care Team. This may contribute to the overall package of

support for your child and will need to be accessed to maintain the short breaks for them if they are eligible for this support.

Preparation for Adulthood Common Questions and Answers

What age does transition to adult services begin?

Schools and colleges are expected to support children and young people to make the transition to adulthood as early as possible, but certainly no later than Year 9 (ages 13-14). A young person will continue to have their needs met by children's services until they turn 18, at which point they will transition to adult services.

Will someone contact me, or do I need to self-refer my young person?

If your child or young person is already open to a service, such as the Disabled Children's Team or another team within Children's Services, the practitioner will support you to make a referral to adult services.

You can self-refer at any point, with referrals accepted from the age of 16 onwards.

If you and your family are not currently open to Children's Services you will need to make this referral yourself.

More information is available here -

<https://www.yorksend.org/homepage/8/preparation-for-adulthood> and on <https://www.york.gov.uk/adult-social-care/support-age-18-preparing-adulthood>

Will the short break my young person receives change?

A social worker from the adult services will complete an assessment of your young person in preparation for them turning 18; this will be to explore their existing short break / package of support, and they will be able to answer any questions you may have.

What impact will this have on benefits, and will I need to pay for services?

You can visit the Paying for Care information online for information about financial contributions and paying for care here - <https://www.york.gov.uk/personalisation-care/paying-care>