

# SHORT BREAKS STATEMENT 2024

CHILDREN'S SERVICES





# INTRODUCTION

Swindon's Short Breaks Statement is for families with a child or young person with a disability living in Swindon.

This statement has been revised following public consultation in Autumn 2023, having worked closely with Swindon SEND Families Voice (Swindon's SEND parent carer forum) and STEP (a local organisation commissioned to collect and represent the views of disabled children and young people) who provided considerable support in making the consultation happen.

This statement will be released in September 2024.

Many families with children with disabilities use the same services as all families for short break activities.

Children and young people may access local children's centres or youth clubs, which are examples of this. Some children and young people may need more specialist provision to access short breaks. This statement sets out the types of short breaks and how families can access them.



## OUR VISION

At Swindon Borough Council our aspiration is for every child and young person who lives here to be safe from harm and abuse, enabled to reach their full potential and develop skills for life, enjoy healthy lifestyles, and be happy and active members of the community.

We recognise that all children, whether they have additional or complex needs or not, should be supported to aspire to a life without stigma where they are supported to be and become as independent as they can be.

Our services are designed to be inclusive and we want children to be able to enjoy fun activities amongst their peers wherever that is possible.

Short breaks play a key role, alongside other services, in realising our vision for children and young people with disabilities in Swindon.



## WHAT IS A SHORT BREAK?

Short breaks provide children and young people with disabilities opportunities to have fun, to share experiences and socialise away from their family, and give their parents and carers a break from their caring responsibilities. Put simply, a short break is time spent apart, more specifically it is leisure time spent apart i.e. outside the school day.

**A short break can be for any length of time.**

**A short break can be provided during the day, evening, weekend, or overnight.**

**A short break can be provided in the child or young person's home, in a care setting, or in the community.**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SHORT BREAKS?

**Children and young people may be eligible for short breaks if they:**

- have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment must have adverse effects which are substantial i.e. more than minor or trivial
- the substantial adverse effects must be long-term i.e. 12 months or more
- the long-term substantial adverse effects must be effects on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- are living in Swindon
- are under 18 years of age and in the age-range of the short break provision on offer.



## THE LAW

Local Authorities are required by law to have a range of short break services for children and young people who have a disability.

**This statement has been prepared in accordance with the:**

- Children's Act 1989
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010



## HOW THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED

In 2023/24, Swindon Borough Council undertook a public consultation, working with Swindon SEND Families Voice (the SEND parent carer forum) and STEP (collating and representing the views of disabled children and young people). The consultation ran for six weeks with information shared widely by key partners and providers as well as two online consultation sessions and the delivery of six focus groups for children and young people by STEP.

This statement represents an initial re-design of the provision of short breaks in Swindon and takes into account feedback from the public consultation.

## WHAT THE LAW MEANS

**The following key principles demonstrate the combined impact of the various legal requirements on Swindon Borough Council for delivery of short breaks:**

- Short breaks should be preventative, rather than a response to a crisis
- Short breaks are personal to individual need and take into consideration a wide range of factors which may impact the disabled child's lived experience and that of other children living with them
- Short breaks are considered alongside any universally available provision e.g. childcare and education entitlements
- Short breaks should improve outcomes for children and young people with a disability and their families, in line with Swindon Borough Council's aspiration for every child
- Short breaks are regularly reviewed in line with statutory timeframes to ensure that they are effectively meeting individual need and enabling progress towards outcomes.

## TYPES OF SHORT BREAK

Swindon Borough Council offers a range of short break services, expressed as three levels: community, inclusion and specialist.

**Children and young people with disabilities, and their families, are encouraged and supported to use community and inclusion services before accessing any specialist services.**

**This may not be possible or appropriate for everyone. In general, the type of short break a child or young person needs depends on the level of needs arising from their disability and desired outcomes.**

**However, many children and young people with severe and complex needs are successfully accessing community and inclusion services and this has provided the right level of support for them and their family.**

**This enables them to have fun and enjoy activities with their peers, which supports a positive self-image.**





## COMMUNITY

Children and young people with disabilities should be able to access social and leisure activities that are available in the community for all children and young people.

**The following are examples, but not an exhaustive list:**

- leisure and sports services
- after-school and holiday clubs
- youth services
- public spaces such as parks

These facilities and services have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children and young people with disabilities receive the same services, as far as this is possible, as those without disabilities.

One of the approaches used by Swindon Borough Council is to work directly with activity groups and providers, including businesses, to help them meet their responsibilities under Equalities Act 2010 to support access to their services and develop activities for disabled children. In this way it is hoped that children and families will be able to access social and leisure activities – providing a short break without needing any assessment or involvement from the Council.



**This will be achieved through Swindon Borough Council undertaking the following activities:**

- Creating a **network of approved providers** who meet minimum inclusion standards and that have been reviewed as inclusive by our disabled young people, to improve parent carers and young people's confidence in providers.
- Hosting an online **Local Offer platform** in which providers share information on their offer and promote activities aimed at disabled children and young people, so that parents and carers, children and young people have increased knowledge of services that can meet their needs.
- Providers will have access to **support, resources, and training** to improve inclusive practice.
- Approved providers may be able to **access funding** to extend their offer of targeted activities which they may use to employ additional staff or purchase additional resources, so that a disabled child or young person can access activities alongside those without disabilities.
- Families will be able to use their **Activities Budget** (a type of personal budget for short breaks) to access any inclusion or specialist services offered across the network. The Council will track usage of activities and through a commissioning plan respond to patterns of use in deciding how many of each type of group to make available.

This will be addressed fully in the Commissioning Plan which Swindon Borough Council want to co-produce with users of these services.

## INCLUSION

Swindon Borough Council are committed to enabling children and young people with disabilities to access social and leisure activities in the community alongside their peers where this is possible.

**To this end, Swindon Borough Council's Short Break Service offers four packages for disabled children and young people aged 5 to 18th birthday:**

### Space within community activity

The Local Authority intend to commission additional capacity within the network of approved providers to enable children and young people with a disability to be fully included within social and leisure activities within the community.

### Inclusion Funding

Inclusion Funding is available to children and young people who require more than reasonable adjustments to access community services. Inclusion Funding is ring-fenced for a child or young person with a particular need and is provided directly to an approved provider to employ additional staff or purchase additional resources, to enable the child or young person to access activities alongside those without disabilities. Parents cover the cost of the activity.

## Transition Support

Some children and young people with a disability require a short-term intervention to build their skills and confidence, followed by direct support to join a social and leisure activity in the community. Some children and young people with a disability may have previously accessed specialist services and are now ready for supported transition into the community. Transition Support may be directly delivered by the Short Break Service and other approved providers. The duration of the intervention will depend on the frequency of sessions offered by each provider. There will also be other variables such as location or group size.

### Outreach

Some children and young people may require short-term intervention to overcome barriers posed by their disability in leaving the family home and accessing the community. These children will require one-to-one support by experienced practitioners. Any short breaks package will require an assessment of need and an agreement by the Council's Short Breaks Panel. Parents/carers may be provided with an Activities Budget to access their preferred provider. It is intended that wherever possible families will be able to choose how to use their budget and book directly on a first come first serve basis.





## SPECIALIST

Swindon local authority offers specialist short breaks for children and young people with disabilities who have severe and complex needs.

**Specialist social and leisure activities** are available for children and young people aged 5 to 18th birthday who are assessed as being unable to access community groups and activities despite reasonable adjustments and where it is identified this is best for them. Activities are available mid-week evenings during term-time, weekends and school holidays.

**Other specialist short breaks** are available to children and young people with severe and complex needs aged 0 to 18th birthday. These include overnight short breaks, only available following an assessment by a Social Worker.

Specialist short breaks are directly delivered by the Short Break Service and other approved providers. Given that children and young people with severe and complex needs benefit from settings that know them well, parent carers can consider using their Activities Budget with their preferred provider.



## PERSONAL BUDGETS

Swindon Borough Council offers two types of personal budget for short breaks.

### Activities Budget

An Activities Budget that subsidises the cost of inclusion or specialist short breaks delivered by approved providers. Parents pay a contribution based on Swindon Borough Council's Fees and Charges Policy, with the Activities Budget making up the difference.

An Activities Budget is a nominal budget, which means that no money changes hands. It is effectively an allocation of short break hours that are accessed via a virtual booking system.

### Individual Support Budget

An Individual Support Budget used to employ a Personal Assistant to support your child to access activities at home or in the community. Parents cover the cost of activities.

An Individual Support Budget is provided to parents or a young person (aged 16+) as a direct payment into their bank account. Parents or the young person are responsible for spending the money in line with an agreed plan to deliver the intended outcomes.



## PARENTAL FEES AND CHARGES

**Activities delivered or commissioned by the council are usually free to attend but may ask for a contribution towards entry fees or travel for some activities.**

**However, no child is excluded from activities because of the family's financial situation and providers will consider each family according to their individual needs and circumstances.**

**Activities delivered by other providers may have a charge but these will be clearly communicated to parents carers prior to booking.**

## TRANSPORT

**Help with transport is available for families where the child's assessment of needs identifies that they could not access their short break without it.**

**Parents and carers are expected to transport their children to and from short breaks in all other circumstances.**

**The Council provides transport only in exceptional circumstances and there may be a charge. If transport is a barrier, please raise this with your Lead Professional.**





# ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW PROCESS

## HOW CAN I ACCESS A SHORT BREAK?

Social and leisure activities in the community can be accessed directly without a short break assessment or allocation. Please see the Local Offer website for a wider range of activities and for our approved list of providers who are making adjustments to enable disabled children to access their services or activities.

The “Front Door” for all services in Swindon Borough Council Children’s Services is Children and Families Contact Swindon.

**Referrals or enquiries can be made by Telephone 01793 464 646 or Email: [contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk)**

For targeted and specialist short breaks, a Request for Help and Support should be sent to Children and Families Contact Swindon using the contact details above.

### Please include the following:

- Evidence that the child or young person has a disability. This could be a health letter or report detailing the child or young person’s diagnosis.
- An Early Help assessment or review, a statutory social care assessment or review, an Education Health Care Needs Assessment or annual review, evidencing the impact of the child or young person’s disability.

Please note, parents or carers of a disabled child or young person can request an assessment directly from Swindon Borough Council by contacting Contact Swindon.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The request for help and support is triaged to determine that the child’s or young person’s needs meet the eligibility criteria for a short break. Children and young people may also be disadvantaged because of other environmental or circumstantial factors, such as parental health, poverty, or social exclusion. These factors alone do not entitle them to be considered for a short break service. If necessary, you will be signposted to the appropriate service. If safeguarding concerns are identified, the information will be passed to our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub for further triage to determine the appropriate pathway for assessment.

Appropriate requests are allocated to an Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional. The Inclusion and Outreach Officer will contact parents/ carers or the young person (16+), once they have read the current assessment or plan and attached evidence, to gather any further information required. They will also gather evidence from other professionals involved with providing care and services to your child.



## HOW ARE NEEDS ASSESSED?

**The Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional will work with you to determine the following:**

## THE RECOMMENDED TYPE OF SHORT BREAK

The type of short break a child or young person needs largely depends on the severity of the impact of their disability. Where possible and appropriate, children and young people with disabilities and their families will be encouraged and supported to use community and inclusion services before accessing any specialist services.

If it is identified that the child or young person’s needs can be met through community provision, then the family will be signposted to the Local Offer which families are encouraged to access to discover what might be available that they would like to use.

[www.swindon.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer](http://www.swindon.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer)

If it is identified that the child or young person’s needs require inclusion or specialist short breaks, the Inclusion and Outreach Officer (Family Worker or Lead Professional) will discuss the range of appropriate services and personal budget options available.



This grid sets out some of the types of short breaks services available according to need:

Community
<p>Children and young people with disabilities require reasonable adjustments to ensure that they receive the same services, as far as this is possible, as those without disabilities.</p> <p>The community offer is available to all children and young people and an assessment is not required.</p>
Inclusion
<p><b>Children and young people with disabilities who are assessed to require:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct support to attend social activities</li> <li>• guidance and prompting to tend to their personal care needs</li> <li>• support to communicate their needs and wishes</li> <li>• supervision to prevent harm to themselves or others during activities</li> </ul>
Specialist
<p>Children and young people with disabilities who are assessed as being unable to access community groups and activities despite reasonable adjustments.</p> <p><b>These children and young people are likely to require:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• significant levels of direct support to attend social activities</li> <li>• practical help to tend to their personal care needs</li> <li>• specialist interventions to maintain their physical health</li> <li>• have dependence on a carer to interpret their needs and wishes</li> <li>• require high levels of supervision to prevent harm to themselves or others</li> <li>• may include a joint package with health</li> </ul>



## THE RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SHORT BREAKS

Information gathered by the Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional is entered into a Decision Support Tool that generates an indicative number of the short break hours required.

The number of short break hours is then adjusted to take into consideration the impact of any early years or Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) entitlements (up to December 2024) that facilitate a short break.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

An outcome is the benefit or difference that the child, young person, or their family will experience as a result of receiving short breaks. Desired outcomes are agreed as part of the needs assessment to ensure that short breaks will be impactful.

## ANY BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SHORT BREAKS

Any barriers should be discussed with the Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional supporting you. When ready, they will prepare a recommendation for the Short Breaks Panel.



Appropriate outcomes may be based on any of the following:

### For the child or young person with a disability:

- Have safe and stable home lives
- Improved physical health through physical activities
- Improved emotional health and well-being
- Try doing new things
- Access to the community
- Reduced social isolation
- Engaged in constructive activity
- Less dependent on their parent or carer
- Develop skills that help towards independence in adulthood

### For the parent carers and families of the child or young person with a disability:

- Improved emotional well-being
- Parent carer has more time to spend with other children
- Family is able to lead a more ordinary life
- Family environment is less chaotic and more sustainable
- Improved quality of life for parent carer and family







## WHAT IS THE SHORT BREAK PANEL?

The role of the Short Break Panel is to ensure that the allocation of short breaks hours and type of support is based on assessed need, will meet the needs of the child or young person, and will enable them to progress towards desired outcomes. Decisions are made by application of the Decision Support Tool applied to the thresholds set out above. The panel will also consider any concessions to charges or transport requests.

The panel meets to assess new referrals and also to regularly review existing provision. There is no guarantee of any provision until approval has been received via Panel. The Panel is chaired by the Director of Corporate Parenting (or their delegate) and is attended by key professionals.

We will write to you within 10 working days to confirm the outcome of the Panel decision.

## HOW CAN I USE MY SHORT BREAK ALLOCATION?

### **Duration of package**

The length of a short break package is determined by Panel. Short breaks packages will not usually be provided for longer than a year before review. It is likely that the first short break package will be agreed for a shorter period, to enable the review cycle to come into line with the review of a child or young person's Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), if applicable.

Previously, the number of short breaks available to Swindon families who were not open to a Social Worker was capped at 78 hours per year. This cap has been removed as a result of the consultation, so that families can receive the right amount of support without requiring statutory intervention.

### **Frequency of use**

The annual allocation of short break hours (as determined by the Decision Support Tool and approved by panel) is broken down into either a weekly, fortnightly or monthly allocation.

For example, 6 hours per fortnight. Short break hours must be used within the frequency described. It is the responsibility of the parents to keep track of used / unused hours.

It is not permissible to accrue hours. Short break packages are regularly monitored and any underused hours will be queried and possibly deducted from your remaining balance. If a short break allocation is not used for 6 months, it is likely that a decision will be made to reduce or entirely cancel the allocation. Similarly, it is not permissible to use short break hours on a more frequent basis than allocated.

Any overused hours will be queried and a review may be instigated. Should a family use up their allocated hours, they will not be able to access short breaks services until the package has been reviewed; unless there is an urgent, unavoidable change in a family's situation. Overusing hours will not lead to the allocation of more. It is likely to mean that you are asked to compensate using hours left in your allocation.



## REVIEWS

It is recognised that children and young people's needs may fluctuate over time and therefore, in order to ensure that disabled children and young people continue to receive the right support at the right time, short break packages are regularly reviewed (at least annually) in line with statutory plans. If your circumstances change suddenly, or urgent needs arise, please contact your child's allocated Social Worker, Family Worker or Children and Families Contact Swindon as soon as possible. A review will be instigated.

Both the type and number of short breaks may change as a result of a review, to reflect the child or young person's current need. There is no guarantee of any ongoing provision until approval has been received via Short Break Panel decision. This stage exhausts any informal routes within the short break service.

## TRANSITIONS INTO ADULTHOOD

From age 14 onwards, reviews will focus on a young person's preparation for adulthood. If, during a review, social care needs are identified that are likely to require support once a young person turns 18, a referral will be made to Adult Services. Once involved, collaboration and coordination between Children's and Adult Services is essential to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood.

## APPEAL PROCESS

**You can raise concerns in an informal or formal way as follows:**

### Review:

Please contact your Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional and request a review of the Short Breaks Panel decision. The Panel will consider any additional information that you can provide that might impact on the decision made. We will write to you to let you know Panel's reviewed decision. We will also inform you about your right to appeal.

### Appeal:

Should you remain unhappy about the reviewed decision, you have the right to appeal. Please contact your Inclusion and Outreach Officer, Family Worker or Lead Professional and request an appeal which will be considered by a senior manager, who has not previously been involved in decisions around your short break. They will consider all information available. We will write to you to let you know their reviewed decision. This stage exhausts any informal routes within the short break service.

### Formal process:

**If you would rather pursue a formal process, you can log a formal complaint here:**  
[www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20022/contacting\\_us/463/complaints\\_and\\_feedback](http://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20022/contacting_us/463/complaints_and_feedback)

### Informal process:

This is a two-stage process consisting of a review of the initial decision made and then further appeal.

## CONTACTS

### Children and Families Contact Swindon, Children's Services:

Telephone: 01793 466 903

Email: [contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk)

### SEND Service:

Email: [SENDservice@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:SENDservice@swindon.gov.uk)

### Transitions Team, Adult Services:

Telephone: 01793 445 500

OPTION 2 (Priority Line)

### SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SIAS):

Telephone: 01793 466 515

Email: [SIAS@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:SIAS@swindon.gov.uk)  
[www.swindonsias.org.uk](http://www.swindonsias.org.uk)

### Swindon SEND Families Voice:

Email: [swindonSENDfamiliesvoice@outlook.com](mailto:swindonSENDfamiliesvoice@outlook.com)





