



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Short Breaks Statement 2024 – 2025

UNCLASSIFIED

## Document Control Information

Title: Short Breaks Statement 2024 - 2025

Date: April 2024

Review date: April 2025

Version: 1.6

Classification: Unclassified

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Version	Date	Description
Version 1	03.12.20	Short Breaks Statement 2020-2021
Version 1.1	17.03.21	Link fixed for Short Break (Direct) Payment Guide.
Version 1.2	11.05.21	Reference to Equality Act 2010 corrected on page 7.
Version 1.3	07.07.21	Updated FAQ section on overnight short breaks (page 22).
Version 1.4	04.01.22	Added statement regarding temporary re-issue of Short Breaks Statement 2020-2021 (page 3).
Version 1.5	17.2.23	Added a statement regarding the temporary re-issue of Short Breaks Statement 2021-2022 (page 3).  Replacing “you said, we did feedback” with the Statement of Intent (page 25).
Version 1.6	16.4.24	Update and refresh of document. New sections regarding ‘continuum of need’ and ‘you said we did’. Changes to wording throughout document to improve clarity of meaning.

## Short Break Statement 2024 - 2025

Work continues on the Short Break Sufficiency Review. We are working with parents from SEND Voices Wokingham, children, and providers to carry out research and co-produce a plan, with a view to increasing the range and type of short break provision across the Borough. A big thank you to those who have contributed to this work thus far.

As the necessity to update the Short Break Statement for 2024 - 2025 comes ahead of this work being completed and given a new plan could have a significant impact on the content of this statement, we have focussed on updating the parts of statement where changes are already required and are unaffected by the review. The intent is to re look at the statement once the outcome of the review is finalised to consider and publish any additional changes.

We continue to work closely with SEND Voices Wokingham and will ensure that updates are provided to them.

Should you have any questions arising from the issuing of the 2024 – 2025 Short Break Statement, please contact:

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If you have any feedback on Short Breaks services, what is going well and where things can be improved, please contact SEND Voice Wokingham via email:  
[info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](mailto:info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk)

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## Introduction

Welcome to Wokingham's Short Breaks Statement.

This Statement has been co-produced by Wokingham Borough Council, SEND Voices Wokingham and SENDIASS.

It has been designed to provide an overview of the following:

- What a short break is.
- The types of short break services that are available.
- Who can have a short break.
- How you can access a short break.
- What Direct Payments are and what you can spend them on.
- Contact information for useful services.
- What to do if you are unhappy or wish to complain about a short break.
- How your views have shaped the Short Breaks Statement and provision, including our *"You Said, We Did"* section and our forward plans.
- How often we update the Statement and how you can contribute to this process.
- How you can get involved and find out more.
- How we work together with parents and carers (via SEND Voices Wokingham), children and young people and our partners to ensure that the range of short breaks services meets the needs of those that use them.

We hope that you find the information useful. If you wish to feedback your views on this statement, please contact the Short Break Service or Children with Disabilities Team on 0118 974 6000 or email us at [ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk) or [cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk)

We publish this Short Breaks Statement on the Wokingham Borough Local Offer.



[www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo)

## Our values and principles of working

This Short Breaks Statement is written in line with Wokingham Borough Council's vision for Children's Services:

*"Wokingham is a Borough in which all children and young people are safe and cared for, enjoy and achieve, are healthy and resilient, grow up ready for adulthood, and feel happy, hopeful and loved."*

## What is a Short Breaks Statement?

The Children and Young Person's Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks that are designed to assist individuals who provide care for children with disabilities. In addition to this, the *Short Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011* require each local authority to produce a **Short Breaks Statement**. The purpose of this statement is to ensure that children and young people and their families can know what services are available to them locally, the eligibility criteria for accessing them, and to understand how such services are designed to meet their needs.

This Statement is therefore a guide to the types of short breaks on offer at Wokingham Borough Council, and also includes important information about Direct Payments (money you can receive from the council to buy short break services) and what you can use a Direct Payment for.

Every local authority has to provide a statement and work with and listen to the views of children and young people with disabilities and their families, to ensure that a good range of short breaks is available.

### Background

This information is for families living in Wokingham Borough who have a child with a disability who is under the age of 18.

Our aim is to ensure that children and young people with disabilities and their families have the support they need and can enjoy inclusive activities. We recognise that all families are different, and that they will need different levels of support and different types of short breaks depending on the age and specific needs of their child.

### Our Vision

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to supporting children and young people with disabilities by improving their access to short breaks. As part of our continued commitment to children and young people with disabilities and their families, we provide a range of short breaks services, from inclusive universal services through to specialist provision. These are designed to meet the varying needs of children and young people.

**We aim to ensure that:**

- Short breaks are reliable, regular, and personalised to best meet need.
- We engage with a range of children and young people with disabilities and parent/carers in a range of circumstances.
- Children and young people with disabilities and their families are engaged in the design of local short breaks services.
- We aim to ensure that universal providers offer a good range of activities for disabled children and young people and that providers have the support they need including training and workforce development.
- Short breaks can build on and be offered by universal services.
- We work in partnership with health services to enable children with health needs to access the range of short breaks services.
- Short breaks promote greater levels of confidence for young people moving towards adult life.
- That those who use short breaks have the chance to shape the development of services.
- We demonstrate how the views of children, young people with disabilities and parent/carers influence the range and type of short break activity.

## **What are short breaks?**

Short breaks provide children and young people with disabilities the opportunity to spend time away from their parents and carers, relaxing and having fun with their friends. They also provide families with a break from their caring responsibilities and give parents and carers a chance to unwind, spend time with their other children or undertake leisure or training activities. Short break activities are offered during daytimes, evenings, weekends, overnight and during school holidays.

Short break services should enable children and young people with disabilities to be able to participate in family and community life, enjoy themselves with friends and be supported to make decisions about their lives.

## **Our range of short breaks provision**

The range of our short break services includes:

- Day-time care in the homes of children and young people with disabilities or support in the community.
- Overnight care within the home.
- Overnight care within an overnight short break provision or Family Based Short Breaks
- Educational or leisure type activities for children with disabilities outside their homes, but not formal education.

- Services available to assist parents/carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

These services are provided in accordance with the *Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011*

**Services are available on a continuum of need.**

Universal services are available to all children but may not be best placed to meet the needs of some children with specific needs or who require additional support to access them.

Targeted services can take the form of clubs and activities that are more specifically set up to cater for the needs of children with disabilities or can include support (voluntary or paid) to help a child access universal services or community activities.

Specialist services are available for children with more complex needs who require more specialist support to meet their needs and / or a residential short break.

There are several ways these short breaks services can be provided. Services can be offered directly by Wokingham Borough Council but can also be accessed via a range of private, voluntary, and charitable providers within universal and targeted offer.

Simply having a disability does not mean that your child will need or receive short break support from Wokingham Borough Council. We recognise and support the fact that many children with disabilities will be able to access universal services and will want to attend activities that are not specifically designed for those with disabilities, with them placing the importance on what's on offer, and who goes i.e. friends or siblings.

We also recognise that some families will have the financial means to purchase services on behalf of their child as they might for a child without a disability and will access targeted provision from the private, voluntary, and charitable sector without involvement of Wokingham's short break services.

However, where children need support to access short breaks and there is a cost beyond:

- what a family might ordinarily pay,
- where financial hardships mean a family cannot pay, or
- where a service for a child without a disability would not ordinarily be needed,

A short break assessment can be requested.



## Where can I get more information?



Details of clubs and activities within the short break programme can be found on Wokingham Borough Council's Local Offer: [www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo)

## Who can be assessed for short break support?

The Equality Act 2010 tells us that a person has a disability if they have a *'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his / her ability to carry out normal day to day activities'*. Short break assessments are intended for children and young people who have disabilities, and it is this assessment process that will determine need.

Whilst this means that we do not necessarily require a formal diagnosis, we do expect there to be formal recognition that the challenges or difficulties a child is experiencing are attributable to a recognised disability.

This means that we won't provide a short break service to a child simply by virtue of being on a pathway for assessment and / or where other factors may offer a better understanding such as early trauma, social factors, relational factors, or learning needs for example.

Children and young people will be considered for our Short Breaks service if:

- They are aged between 0 and their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.
- Live in the Wokingham Borough.
- Have a recognised disability - that is, a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities; and
- As the result of their disability, they require support to participate fully in leisure or recreation activities.
- Opportunities to access short break support cost more than they would for a child without a disability.
- A child without a disability of a similar age would not require support.

This is not an exhaustive list but may include:

- A physical disability.
- A learning disability.
- A hearing impairment.
- A visual impairment.
- A communication disorder e.g. Autism.
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (where a child is unable to access any other type of mainstream provision, even with support).

- A consciousness disorder e.g. epilepsy. \*
- Children who have palliative care or a life-limiting or a life-threatening condition. \*
- A mental health condition. \*

\* Where children or young people do not meet the Children and Young People's Continuing Care assessment for children with complex health care needs criteria and are therefore not able to access short break support from health services.

The needs of the child or young person should usually be expected to last for **more than 12 months** and have a **substantial effect** upon their lives in more than one of the following areas:

- Physical ability
- Communication and understanding
- Awareness of risk and danger
- Behaviour
- Independence

If you are unsure if your child is eligible, please contact the Short Break and Early Help Team

Tel 0118 9746000

[ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk)

### **How can short breaks help my child and my family?**

A short break can support your child by enabling them to:

- Take part in fun activities that interest them
- Develop feelings of independence and gain more confidence
- Spend time with their friends - and make new ones
- Achieve personal goals and learn new skills
- Be as independent as possible

A short break can support you by enabling you to:

- Have some "you time"
- Spend time with your other children or together as a family
- Feel confident your child is having fun with skilled carers who understand their needs.
- To feel supported as a parent and carer

## What happens when my child reaches adulthood?

Not all young people will be eligible for support from Adult Services once they become an adult. This is because there are differences between the legislative frameworks for children's and adults' social care.

If your child is likely to be eligible for support from Adult Services once they are 18, your child's Short Breaks Co-ordinator/Social Worker will discuss the transition process with you and your child.

These discussions usually start when your child is aged 14, to enable you to know in advance if your child is likely to need or receive support on reaching adulthood.

*The Care Act 2014* sets out a national eligibility criteria for adults who have care and support needs. Typically, an adult may be eligible for Adult Services if he or she has needs:

- *Arising from a physical, mental health impairment or illness and the adult is unable to achieve two or more outcomes which will have a significant impact on the adult's wellbeing, such as:*
- *Managing and maintaining nutrition, personal hygiene, and clothing, developing or maintaining family or other personal relationships, home environment, accessing in and engaging in work, caring for a child. (This list is not exhaustive; the Short Breaks Service will discuss your child's need and help you to determine if your child is likely to be eligible for support from Adult Services).*

If your child does not need and is unlikely to receive support from Adult Services, your Short Breaks Co-ordinator/Social Worker will discuss this with you to consider how everyone can work together to enable your child to be as independent as possible. As part of this, they may discuss how your child may be able to access support from other community resources.

## Our levels of short break support

	<b>1. Services for all</b> Universal or community services which are available to all children/young people and parents/carers who need <b>low-level support</b> .	<b>2. Targeted Services via the 'Local Offer'</b> Services for children/young people and parents/carers who require <b>some support</b> A targeted offer could be a Short Break Direct Payment or services.	<b>3. Specialist Services</b> Services for children/young people and parents/carers who require <b>high-level support</b> via a specialist package of care.
<b>Children / Young Person's Development Needs</b>	The child/young person has some additional needs because of their disability but this doesn't prevent them from generally making friends and accessing local services and activities such as the youth club and leisure centre.	The child/young person has additional needs because of their disability and needs some support to help them make friends and access some local services and activities.  Sometimes they might need specific activities designed for their needs.  We will take into account other relevant assessments to inform eligibility.	The child/young person has significant and/or multiple needs because of their disability which prevents them from making friends and/or accessing local services and activities without high levels of support.  It is highly likely that the child/young person attends a special school to have their high level of educational needs met. Children and young people will have an Education Health Care Plan.
<b>Parent/ Carers Caring Needs</b>	The parents/carers sometimes might need help, but they know where to go to get it using resources available to them, such as grandparents, neighbours, wider family or the community.	The parents/carers need additional help to meet the child/young person's needs.	The parents/carers need significant and regular ongoing support to meet the child/young person's needs.
<b>Parent / Carers Personal Needs</b>	The child/young person's needs are impacting on the parents/carers personal or social life, but the parent/carer is able to cope with this.	The child/young person's needs are met but at a significant cost to the parents/carers physical / emotional health and leisure time.	Neither the child/young person's nor the parents/ carers needs are being met and there is a serious risk of family breakdown.
<b>Siblings' Needs</b>	The child/young person's brother/s or sister/s can access opportunities, but they are sometimes restricted.	The child/young person's brother/s or sister/s personal and social lives are significantly restricted.	The child/young person's brother/s or sister/s essential needs are not being met.
<b>Environment</b>	The place where the child/young person lives and the places they go to are safe and generally meet their needs with reasonable adjustment.	The place where the child/young person lives and the places they go to may need some changes to ensure they are safe and can better meet their needs.	The place where the child/young person lives and the places they go to are often unsafe or unsuitable and need adapting; this limits their choices.
<b>Who Pays the cost?</b>	Families routinely pay the cost of the service.	Families routinely pay no more that they would for a child without a disability in a mainstream setting.	Costs vary considerably depending on the child's needs and the settings used. WBC pays the cost of the service.

## How do I apply for short breaks?

If your child meets the eligibility criteria and you wish to access funding towards short break support, then our Short Breaks and Early Help Team for Children with Disabilities will carry out an assessment.

To try to simplify the assessment process, we ask families to start with a self-referral. A copy of the Self-Referral Form can be downloaded from the short breaks section of the Local Offer; [Short breaks and respite services \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/short-breaks-and-respite-services)

As well as providing us with some basic details, the self-referral form will help us gain a better picture of your child's needs, the support you feel you need and the outcomes you are hoping to achieve by making this referral.

Our Short Break Co-ordinator can be contacted on (0118) 974 6000 to help with any aspect of completing the self-referral.

Completed self-referral forms should be sent to [triage@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:triage@wokingham.gov.uk)

Once a referral has been received by the Short Break and Early Help Team, a decision will be made about the best way to support your child and family. In order to make this decision a Short Break Co-ordinator may contact you to find out some further details. For more information on how we make these decisions, please see our [Decision making process flowchart](#) on page 17.

This process has four potential outcomes:

**1. Not eligible for Short Breaks from Wokingham Borough Council.**

In this instance a Short Break Co-ordinator or the Children with Additional Needs (CAN) Network Co-ordinator will offer advice and signposting to services that are available on the Local Offer.

**2. Support via an Early Help Service for children with disabilities.**

Where it is felt that another service would be best placed to meet your child's needs, (for example, sleep support from our FIRST team or Autism support from our ASSIST service, with your consent the referral will be passed to the relevant Wokingham Borough Council team for consideration.

**3. Eligible for Short Breaks from Wokingham Borough Council.**

A Short Break Co-ordinator will make contact with you to organise for a Short Breaks Assessment to take place.

**4. Complex needs/circumstances that meet threshold for assessment under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989.**

The referral will be passed to a Social Worker who will contact you.<sup>1</sup>

We will contact you to acknowledge receipt of the referral within 5 working days.

**What happens if my child is not eligible for short breaks?**

If your child is not eligible for short breaks from Wokingham Borough Council, we will ensure that our decision is clearly explained to you. In most cases where a child has a disability, even if it is not substantial, there will be services available at the Universal level via the Local Offer which they can engage with. You do not require input from the Short Breaks and Early Help Team for your child to be able to access these, although our Short Break Co-ordinators can offer initial advice and signposting. Further support with this can be obtained from the CAN Network Co-ordinator, who can be contacted by email: [can.network@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:can.network@wokingham.gov.uk)

If you are not eligible for short breaks from Wokingham Borough Council, the service will inform you of this in writing.

Decisions regarding eligibility are not applied mechanistically and will take account of individual familial needs. In unusual or exceptional circumstances, there will be scope for discretionary provision of funding or services that do not fit the standard decision-making process.

In the case of an inappropriate referral where the child/family are not eligible for any short break services, we will explain to the family the reason for this and try to direct them to the appropriate support services.

**It is important to note that if your needs change at any time, you can re-refer for a short break.**

**Support via an Early help service for children with disabilities.**

Children, young people, and their families may be eligible for direct work or support around wider needs such as sleep, behaviour or autism, even if they are not eligible for short breaks. If this is the case, we will discuss this with you and provide further information.

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<sup>1</sup> Some children with disabilities have very complex needs which can have a significant impact on family life and adequate support may not be in place. Social Workers who are experienced in working with disabled children are best placed to work with their families to determine what support is required, coordinate and involve other agencies in this activity and monitor the effectiveness of the provision. Children and young people who access overnight short breaks outside of the home, either at an overnight short break provision or in an overnight Family Based short break provision, will be allocated a Social Worker due to the complexity of need this denotes. The care plan and provision will be reviewed within the Child in Need framework.

### Short Break Assessment

When assessing the level of need our assessment will consider:

- Your child's needs and abilities, including focusing on what your child can do and what they enjoy doing.
- The severity of your child's disability, and how it affects your child, you, and your family.
- If you have more than one child with a disability.
- The number of other children or caring responsibilities you may have.
- If you or a partner have a disability.
- The level of support within your social and wider family and friends' network.
- If your child is in care or looked after by Wokingham Borough Council.
- If your child has been adopted by you. You do not have to tell us this information, however, if you do choose to tell us we can ensure that you know about other services and activities that could support your child.
- If there are concerns about a child's safety.
- Your personal financial circumstances.

The outcome of this assessment will be shared with you and will identify an appropriate level of support in line with our eligibility criteria and the [Our levels of Short Breaks Support Table](#) on page 12.

It should be noted that as part of the assessment that not all children and families will be eligible for or need the same level or type of short break; some will need more than others because of the impact of their child's disability. Some may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. Recognising that families may have similar needs but manage these in different ways, our assessments seek to gain a full picture of the child and family, considering the child or young person's development, the family circumstances, and any relevant environmental factors.

### Complex needs and circumstances - Care / Support Interventions

Wokingham Borough Council is keen to make a distinction between a 'short break' and care/support interventions. Whilst eligible children and families should have access to a range of short breaks, these will differ from services provided as an intervention for care and support, which would meet a statutory need following an assessment.

These two types of service can be defined as follows:

- **A short break is designed to enable a break from caring and/or provide a social opportunity for the child or young person with a disability.**

- **A care / support *intervention* is ongoing work and/or a service provided as a result of an assessment, which you will need to enable your family to function and/or meet the basic needs of your child or young person.**

If your child is supported by a Child in Need plan or Child Protection Plan, any short breaks allocated will be determined according to the presenting needs, taking into consideration the short break eligibility.

### **What if I disagree with the eligibility decision or believe my child or family has a higher level of need than the assessment has determined?**

If you feel that the needs matrix has not been applied fairly, or that important factors have not been taken into account, please contact the Short Break Co-ordinator (or Social Worker) in the first instance. They will work through your queries with you, and if warranted will arrange for a review of the decision or reassessment of the need. If you remain dissatisfied, you can request a meeting with a manager.

If through this process the matter cannot be resolved, or you wish to provide feedback or complain at any time please use the following procedure. [Feedback and complaints \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/feedback-complaints)

### **Feedback and complaints**

We welcome your feedback, both good and more critical. If we're doing something well let us know as it helps us to do more of the things that are working well.

However, if something hasn't gone so well, we need to know so that we can put it right and learn from our mistakes.

A complaint is a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the actions, decisions or apparent failings for which you want a response.

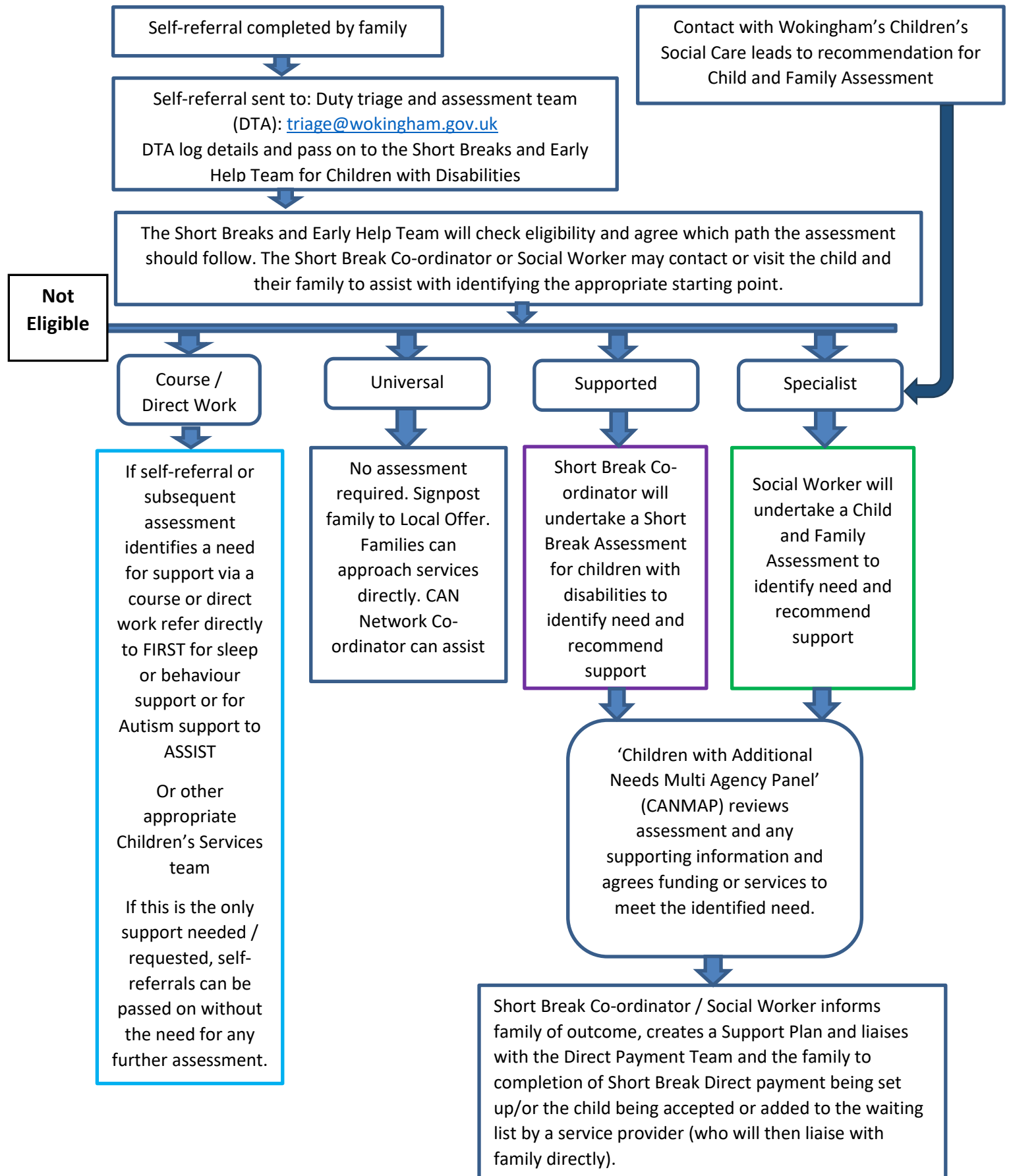
### **Making a complaint**

To make a complaint about a service you're receiving you can:

- Use our online complaints form [Complaints \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/complaints)
- Write to Children Services Complaints, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1EH.
- Hand your letter of complaint to a member of staff at Wokingham Borough Council, clearly addressed to Children Services Complaints, Wokingham Borough Council.



## Decision making process flowchart.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is a Support Plan and how does it work?***

The assessment that has been agreed with you will have identified outcomes that the provision of Short Break Direct Payments or services will be designed to help meet.

The Short Break Co-ordinator or your child's Social Worker will work with you to develop a bespoke Short Break Support Plan / Child's Plan, which will articulate how these outcomes will be met.

Where a service has been identified to meet one or more of these outcomes, this will simply be listed against the relevant outcome(s).

Where a Short Break Direct Payment has been provided to meet a need, the Short Break Co-ordinator (or Social Worker) will work with you to arrive at an agreed way in which the funding will be used to meet the outcome.

The intention of the Short Break Support Plan is not to limit flexibility and choice but to ensure that at any given point in time both the family and Children's Services are clear and in agreement about how the Short Break Direct Payment should be used.

Consequently, this document can be updated at any point to reflect a change in the way the funding is to be used. In some instances where the change is not significant, this may be possible through agreement with the Short Break Co-ordinator (or Social Worker). For cases which involve more significant changes being proposed, especially those where there is a need to alter the level of funding, a review will be arranged to discuss the changes.

Where the change can be agreed without a change in the level of funding, this will be done by a manager within the team. Where a change in the level of funding is required, the recommendation of the review will be presented to our resource panel, Children with Additional Needs Multi Agency Panel (CANMAP) for consideration. Following the meeting the family will be informed of the outcome.

### ***What can I spend Short Breaks Direct Payments on?***

Direct Payments allow parents or carers to arrange care and services themselves, instead of receiving them directly from a local authority. You can use Direct Payments to buy services from an organisation that provides care, such as a private agency, a voluntary organisation, or a nursery. Some people use Direct Payments to enable their child(ren) to:

- Access organised group activities.
- Access a variety of sports or clubs.
- Pay for a worker to support their child to attend day trips/activities.
- Directly employ a Personal Assistant. If you choose this option, you will need to ensure that you employ someone carefully and in line with employment law.

***Are there any items that I cannot use the Direct Payment for?***

The funding cannot be used to supplement your income; for example, the funding cannot be used to contribute towards your mortgage or rent and cannot be used to pay for day-to-day household items such as a vacuum cleaner; nor can they be used to enter into a loan or hire purchase agreement.

The funding also cannot be used to pay for childcare costs to enable you to go to work. If you need help to pay for the cost of childcare to enable you to work, you can access help and information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>

In addition, Direct Payments cannot be used for:

- Alcohol, medicines, cigarettes, and tobacco products including e-cigarettes and vaping.
- Gambling
- Anything illegal
- Food, however, if you employ a carer to support your child to attend an activity, the carer can claim reasonable expenses if you agree this with them. This would be funded from your Direct Payment.
- Routine transport
- Long term residential/nursing care
- Household bills and utilities
- Clothes
- Aids and equipment that should be provided by the NHS.
- Toiletries or holiday supplies such as post cards, cameras, towels, souvenirs etc.
- Arrangements to look after your pets.
- Duty-free goods
- Gifts
- Personal items
- Any unsafe activities
- Council services

This list is not exhaustive. If you have a query about what you can use a Direct Payment for, please contact the Short Break Service or download our Short Break (Direct) Payment Guide.<sup>2</sup>

***How much do short breaks cost?***

Some short break services such as specialist services or services that would not routinely be required for a child of a similar age without a disability. For example, a child of an age and maturity who might otherwise be left at home on their own for short periods, without

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<sup>2</sup> To access this guide, please click the ***Read our short breaks direct payment guide*** icon at the foot of our *Short breaks and respite care services* [website](#).

requiring a sitting service, or similarly adult supervision in the community are often provided without cost.

However, Parent/Carers are expected to contribute towards the costs they might have to pay for activities or services that their child would attend if they did not have a disability (unless on income related benefits). Funding in the form of a Short Break Direct Payment should be used to pay for any increase in the cost of the activity or service, resulting from the additional support that is necessary to make the activity or service accessible and inclusive.

### ***How do I pay for short breaks?***

The funds to purchase this support will be provided through a pre-paid card - the Wokingham Card - which can be used to purchase short breaks support from any provider that accepts MasterCard payments. Your Wokingham Card can be used to make transactions and BACS payments (e.g. Direct Debits). You will be able to top up your card from your own finances, including via online banking.

Before you get your card, you will first be asked to sign an agreement setting out the terms and conditions of the card. Your short breaks funds will normally be credited to your card each month, although smaller amounts may be given as a lump sum to make them of more use.

If you think that using a short breaks payment card will be difficult for you then you should discuss this with whoever is assessing or reviewing your support needs, as we can help to co-ordinate the Short Break Direct Payments for you.

Short Break Direct Payments cannot be used to purchase services provided directly by the Council. This includes any voluntary contributions.

Should you decide that the Wokingham Card (direct payment account) is not the best option for you, there are other ways that the Council can support you. These include a managed account option, where the payroll company manage your account and you submit timesheets. Alternatively, the Council can pay invoices directly where support is offered via an agency or organisation.

### ***Where can I find out more information about how to use Short Break Direct Payments?***

Further details about Short Break Direct Payments, where to get support with recruitment, using the Wokingham Card, payroll, insurance etc. can be found in our Short Break (Direct) Payment Guide which can be downloaded from the Local Offer<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>To access this guide, please click the ***Read our short breaks direct payment guide*** icon at the foot of our Short breaks and respite care services [website](#).

These options can be discussed with the Short Break and Early Help Team, who can be contacted by phone (0118 974 6000) or email [ShortBreaksCoordinator@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ShortBreaksCoordinator@wokingham.gov.uk) or via your child's Social Worker.

### **Examples of how to use a Direct Payment**

**Annie** is aged 13 with a visual impairment affecting both eyes. Annie loves to be outside and loves sporting activities but needs help to be able to access activities safely. Annie's parents are keen for Annie to be able to live her life to the full, and promote her independence, particularly in running as this is something that Annie excels at.

Annie's Mother's friend is a member of the local running group, she has agreed to run with Annie at the local park that has a running track. Annie's parents have researched how to employ a Personal Assistant to take Annie to the track and run with her. The Direct Payment works really well as Annie is supported by someone she knows and trusts.

**Barnie** is 15 and has a significant learning disability, however, he is fiercely independent and likes to go to Youth Clubs to be with young people of his own age. Barnie's Father was keen to consider using the Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant to support Barnie to go to the Youth Club, but Barnie would not agree to this, saying that he is 15 and is grown up! Barnie's Father found a Youth Club that has additional staff members to support young people. This is paid for by a Direct Payment. Barnie attends regularly and is progressing his skills in playing pool.

**Kacper** is 7 and has mobility needs that affect his movement on a daily basis. Kacper requires aids to help him to walk and tires easily, however, he is always on the go and loves spending time with his friends. Kacper's parents feel able to take Kacper to activities as part of their family life. School holidays can be boring for Kacper as he does not get to see his school friends that much. In addition, parents find it more difficult to support Kacper at activities whilst also trying to spend time with Kacper's siblings. Kacper's parents use a Direct Payment to pay for him to access specialist play schemes during the summer.

**Pablo** is 10 years old and has autism. More recently Pablo has started to become much more anxious about going out of the home other than to school and seeks constant attention and comfort from his mother. Pablo's Mother is a single parent and is finding it hard to care for Pablo on her own. Pablo's Mother feels isolated and wants to be able to visit her friend on an evening. Pablo's Mother feels anxious about how Pablo will respond if he were to go to activities, therefore, she uses the Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant to care for Pablo on an evening in the family home.

### ***How can I choose a short break provider?***

#### **Organisations on the Local Offer**

The Local Offer [Short breaks and respite services \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/short-breaks-and-respite-services) lists a number of local organisations and services that you might choose to use. It is your choice about which type of provision you use in order to meet your child's needs. The Council monitors how and where payments are made in order to ensure that this meets needs, in line with the support plan.



### ***What are Personal Assistants?***

Personal Assistants are workers that you either employ directly (with you becoming their employer) or through an agency. Personal Assistants routinely work both within the family home and/or taking children to community-based activities.

Where this is included in your child's support plan, you may choose to use a Personal Assistant. There are a number of local agencies who can provide a Personal Assistant. These can be found on the Local Offer [Short breaks and respite services \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/short-breaks-and-respite-services)

Alternatively, you may choose to employ someone directly. If choosing this route, you must comply with all relevant employment laws and regulations. This means you must take responsibility for employee screening, such as employee references and DBS checks. We can assist with the latter. Full details on your responsibilities can be found in the Direct Payment Agreement. You must provide the Council with a copy of any employment contract you enter into with a Personal Assistant.

Family members of persons living in the same household cannot be paid as a carer except in exceptional circumstances. If you want to employ a family member or someone who lives in your household, this has to be approved in advance by the Service. In the first instance please discuss with your child's Short Break Coordinator or Social Worker.

There is lots of advice available and details on who to contact for support in our Short Break (Direct) Payment Guide<sup>4</sup>

### ***What are overnight short breaks?***

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<sup>4</sup> To access this guide, please click the **Read our short breaks direct payment guide** icon at the foot of our [Short breaks and respite care services website](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/short-breaks-and-respite-care-services).

Some parents and carers of children with complex needs, will be offered overnight short breaks support. In most circumstances residential short breaks are provided through the Council's own short breaks facility at Bridges Resource Centre, although in some circumstances an alternative provider (in a neighbouring authority) may be considered.

Alternatively, Family Based Short Breaks, where the child stays overnight with a short break carer and their family may also be an option.

Services that are provided directly by the Council - for example the Bridges Resource Centre, Family Based Short Break or Saturday Club - will be named in the Support Plan. Short Break Direct Payments cannot be used to pay for services provided directly by the Council, therefore no attempt should be made to pay the (up to) £5 voluntary contribution for Saturday Club. Directly provided services will be taken into consideration in the decision-making process in relation to additional requests for short breaks funding.

### ***How often will my child's short break be reviewed?***

Whilst you are welcome to ask for your family's short break needs to be reviewed at any time, we will hold a review at least annually to ensure that the short breaks are meeting the needs of your child, yourself, and your family.

All new packages of support will be reviewed within three months of their start date, to ensure they are working effectively. A subsequent review will be held six months following and then annually moving forward. If there is a need to review more regularly, this will be discussed with you. You can also request a review at any time. Reviews will be conducted by a Short Break Coordinator or your child's Social Worker.

A financial review of the Short Break Direct Payment will occur at both the 6-month mark and on the anniversary of the Short Break Direct Payment; this will be undertaken by the Direct Payment Team. This is a systems review of the accounts and does not involve a meeting. If there is a build-up of money in the account at the six-month mark, they will notify the Short Break and Early Help Team or your Social Worker, who will then contact you to find out why the money has not been spent. If you are finding it difficult to spend the money, we will hold a review to explore this with you and look at different options.

If the funding is not surplus but has been saved for a specific purpose i.e. a summer play scheme, please inform us and the funding will not be reclaimed. If it emerges that the funding is surplus, arrangements will be made for this to be reclaimed so that it can be used to support other children and their families.

Likewise, any unspent funding on the anniversary of the Short Break Direct Payment Team is routinely reclaimed. You will be written to in advance of the money being reclaimed. This may mean you need to advise us of any money that has been saved for a particular purpose.

For example, if the anniversary of the Direct Payment is July and you have been saving an amount each month to cover a more significant cost in the summer holidays, when you

receive communication from the Direct Payment Team about reclaiming the funds in July, simply alert them to this and earmarked funds will not be reclaimed.

The Direct Payment Team also periodically monitor the accounts to ensure there is no inappropriate spend. Should inappropriate spending be discovered, the Short Break Co-ordinator (or Social Worker) will contact you to discuss this in the first instance. If the discussion determines that the spend was not appropriate, you will be expected to reimburse the account. Whilst we hope that formulating a clear Support Plan will prevent this from happening, if you are unsure about a spend, please contact the Short Break Co-ordinator, your Social Worker or Direct Payment Officer first.

Any technical issues to do with making payments or use of the Wokingham Card should be directed to the Direct Payment Team in the first instance.

Should your child be subject to any other type of plan i.e., a Child in Need, Child Protection or a Child in Care plan, the short breaks will be reviewed in line with the overall plan.

### ***Who provides transport for accessing short breaks?***

Parents and carers are routinely expected to transport their own children to and from short break activities. It may be the case that some providers offer transport as part of the activity, please check with them directly.

We are unable to fund transport for short break activities except in exceptional circumstances which is entirely discretionary.

Please contact the Short Break and Early Help Team for Children with Disabilities or your child's Social Worker for further discussion and advice if required on (0118) 974 6000

### ***What happens when my child is approaching adulthood?***

At Wokingham Borough Council we believe that a young person's transition from Children's to Adult Services should be a positive experience, with the young person encouraged to make the most of the opportunities presented to them by adult life.

Young people usually begin their transition towards adulthood anywhere between the ages of 14 and 25. Young people with disabilities and additional needs may need advice and additional help during this time to enable them to be ready to enter the adult world.

If your child is approaching adulthood, and you would like to discuss their future needs, please contact one of the following:

If in receipt of short breaks, contact the Short Break and Early Help Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000 or via email: [ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk)

If they have a Social Worker contact them

By phone: (0118) 974 6000



By email: [cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk)

Or if neither of the above apply,

If your child has a SEND case officer

By phone: 0118 974 6216

By email: [sen@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:sen@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Education and special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

Or

Contact the Preparing for Adulthood Team

By phone: 0118 974 6832

By E-mail: [PfAduty@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:PfAduty@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Preparing for adulthood section of the Local Offer](#)

***What if I have a problem with a short break activity?***

If you experience any problems in accessing a short break activity, or problems while your child is attending, please discuss this with the activity provider in the first instance and ask for a copy of their complaints policy if needed.

If it is a safeguarding concern, then contact the Duty, Triage and Assessment Team, Wokingham Children's Services on **(0118) 908 8002**.

***What is the CAN Network?***

The CAN Network is an information and support service for children and young people with additional needs and their families.

You can register with the network to receive regular email contact about local activities and short breaks, or you can contact the network to ask for information on specific activities or organisations.

***What is the Wokingham Borough Council CAN (Children with Additional Needs) Card?***

The CAN Card is a key component of the CAN (Children with Additional Needs) Network. The card is available to children and young people aged 0-25 who have a diagnosed disability and can act as a proof of disability for concessionary rates.

To find out more about the CAN Network please visit: [Wokingham Directory | CAN \(children with additional needs\) Network and CAN Card](#)

**CAN Network contact details:**

- Email: [CAN.network@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:CAN.network@wokingham.gov.uk)

- Post: CAN Network, Woodley Airfield Centre, Hurricane Way, Woodley, RG5 4UX

***What other benefits might be available to me and my family?***

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Children.**

You may be eligible for DLA to help with the extra costs of looking after your child if they:

- Are under 16
- Have difficulties walking or need much more looking after than a child of the same age who does not have a disability.

There are eligibility criteria associated with DLA. You can view the criteria at;

[www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children](http://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children)

- **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)**

If your child receives DLA, then they will need to apply for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) when they reach the age of 16. Personal Independence Payment can help with some of the extra costs if your child has long term ill-health or a disability. If you make an application on behalf of your child, your child will be assessed by a health professional to determine if they are eligible. You can view more information about this at; [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\) for children: When your child turns 16 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children)

## **Statement of Intent**

Following the completion of the Short Break Sufficiency Review, our intent is to focus on using this information to improve the range and choice of short break options available to children and families. We are aware that there is currently an over reliance on support from personal assistants which is not only making it more difficult to find them but preventing children from having opportunities to socialise with peers that a wider range of clubs and other group activities might provide. We are also aware that there needs to be greater access to short breaks at weekends and over the school holidays. These are areas that we intend to focus on alongside establishing what support services currently available to all children need to make them more accessible to children with disabilities. In addition, we intend to review our preferred provider scheme.

## **Our plans for 2024/2025**

- Finalise the Short Break Sufficiency review and use this information to develop a plan to increase the type and range of short break provision.

- Work together with providers and the voluntary and community sector, to look at how we can increase the type of activities on offer.
- Review our arrangements for the Preferred Provider List.
- Establish what support mainstream providers require to enable their services to be more accessible.
- Update the Short Break Statement to reflect the changes.
- Encourage current and new providers to update their information on the Local Offer, to increase ease of access to universal, targeted and specialist short break provision.
- Launch an online version of the CAN application process to make this more accessible.
- Review the Direct Payment Guide.

## **You said we did / are doing.**

**You said...**

**56.3% of you said that you were happy with the services you could purchase for your child using direct payments. This was slightly up on the previous year (52%).**

We are aware that the range of short break services is an area for development. We are undertaking a review of short break services to identify gaps in provision and consider how we can increase the opportunities available.

### **There is a lot of administration involved in managing a direct payment.**

Whilst Direct payments work well for some, for others whose children attend a club or activity, through the Short Break review we are exploring if there are ways that children can attend without the need for a direct payment.

If you have particular challenges with the administration of a Direct Payment please contact your child's Short Break Co-ordinator, Social Worker or the Direct Payment Officer who will be happy to assist you with your query.

### **It is difficult to find information about how direct payments work.**

We have a guide to direct payments available on the web [Short Breaks direct payment guide.pdf \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/short-breaks-direct-payment-guide.pdf). Should you require a paper copy please ask your child's Short Break Co-ordinator or Social Worker.

If the guide does not have the answers that you are looking for, please contact your child's Short Break Co-ordinator, Social Worker or the Direct Payment Officer who will be happy to assist you with your query.

**A small number of people in receipt of Direct Payments for their child's short breaks noted that there was not enough flexibility or creativity in how they could be used.**

Provided the Direct Payments are spent on short breaks there can be flexibility and creativity in how they are used. However, we ask that you discuss this in advance with your child's Short Break Coordinator or Social Worker.

## Designing this statement together

We continue to work with SEND Voices Wokingham and providers to co-design and produce this Statement.

We will also undertake a collaborative annual review of this statement.

### How can I get involved in influencing services?

SEND Voices Wokingham is the independent parent carer forum for the Borough. It was set up to ensure that the families and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) between 0-25 years of age in the Wokingham Borough, can have a voice and participate fully in the development of services.

SEND Voices Wokingham sends regular updates to its members with information about events, training courses, participation and consultation opportunities, (including surveys on short breaks in the Wokingham Borough) More information about what they do is available on their website [www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](http://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk)

SEND Voices Wokingham invites all parents and carers of children and young people with SEND between 0-25 years of age in Wokingham Borough to get involved with their work. By doing this they are able to ensure that they represent a wide range of families from across the Borough when working with education, health and social care to improve SEND services in the Borough.

Email: [info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](mailto:info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk)

Website: [www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](http://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk)

## Useful contacts and further sources of information

Where can I find out more about what other support is available for my family?



The Wokingham Borough Local Offer lists a number of local organisations and services that provide support to families.

Go to:

- [www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo)
- [www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo-directory](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo-directory)

Please read our website disclaimer: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/disclaimer/>

To give us feedback about what is available locally for 0 to 25 year olds with special educational needs and disabilities or help to find information on our SEND Local Offer please use our [online contact form](#):

email: [localoffer@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:localoffer@wokingham.gov.uk)

## **Under 5s**

Short break activities are sometimes held for this age group by short break activity providers - these might be occasional activity days or a more regular provision.

[www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo-directory](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo-directory)

## **Where can I find out about suitable childcare?**

The short breaks scheme is not designed to provide the childcare working parents might need. It is designed to give parents and carers a short break. Finding suitable childcare is important to working parents and you can find further information by searching the services directory:

[www.wokingham.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/childcare)

## **Children's Centres**

Children's Centres aim to give every child the best possible start in life. They are places where any family with a child under the age of five can easily access a range of different services to support them, including information and advice, drop-in sessions, access to early education and childcare services and more. Children's Centres also offer services specifically suited to children with disabilities and additional needs. To find your local children centre go to the families section of the council's website: [www.wokingham.gov.uk/families](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/families)

## **Help for autistic children and young people.**

The aim of the Wokingham Borough Council's [ASSIST](#) (Autistic Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training) family support service is to work in a proactive, supportive and preventative way with families and providers so that autistic children and young people up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, living in the Wokingham Borough can be the best they can be. Their approach to intervention is holistic, creative, and directed by the needs of the individual and those around them. The service provides information, support, and training, especially supporting families' pre and post diagnosis offering the National Autistic Society Early Bird, Early Bird Plus, and Teen Life programmes, plus many individual workshops and family support opportunities.

Who to contact:

Contact Name: Pam Breslin

Contact Position: Manager of ASSIST

Telephone: 0118 908 8053

Email: [assist@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:assist@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | ASSIST Team \(Autism Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training\)](#)

### **Support with Sleep and Behaviour, issues.**

The Family Intervention Resources and Support Team (FIRST) aims to provide targeted, time limited early help interventions that focus on addressing the bespoke needs of the child and family to reduce or resolve issues they are experiencing.

The aim is to work with children, families, and other relevant people to increase knowledge and skills or by providing direct support, to build resilience within families. Thus, helping to prevent difficulties from escalating, enabling children to remain at home and reducing the need for access to specialist short break settings.

Who to contact:

Contact Name: Simone Hall

Contact Position: Assistant Manager of FIRST

Telephone: 0118 974 6000

Email: [First@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:First@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | Family Intervention Resources and Support Team \(FIRST\) - supporting families with sleep and behavioural issues](#)

### **Summary of contact details**

For more information or if you would like this information in another language or format, such as Braille or large print please contact the Children with Disabilities or the Short Break and Early Help Teams.

Duty Triage and Assessment

By phone: (0118) 908 8002

By email: [triage@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:triage@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | Wokingham Children's Services](#)

Direct Payments Officer

By phone: (0118) 237 8790

By email: [DPWokinghamCard@Wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:DPWokinghamCard@Wokingham.gov.uk)

Short Breaks and Early Help Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: [ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | Short Breaks and Early Help Team](#)

Children with Disabilities Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: [cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | Children with Disabilities Team](#)

ASSIST - Autism Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training

By phone: (0118) 908 8053

By email: [assist@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:assist@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | ASSIST Team \(Autism Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training\)](#)

FIRST - Family Intervention Resources & Support Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: [First@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:First@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | Family Intervention Resources & Support Team \(FIRST\) - supporting families with sleep and behavioural issues](#)

CAN Network

By phone: 07599 103 384

By email: [can.network@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:can.network@wokingham.gov.uk)

Web: [Wokingham Directory | CAN \(children with additional needs\) Network and CAN Card](#)

## **The Public Sector Equality Duty**

This statement has been checked for its compliance with the Public Sector Equalities Duty under the Equalities Act 2010. If any individual or group should have reason to believe that it does not comply, they are invited to write to the Service (address below) setting out why they feel the statement does not comply.

Short Break and Early Help Team

Wokingham Borough Council

Shute End

Wokingham

RG40 1BN

