



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Short Breaks Statement 2025 – 2026

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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.
Version 1.7	15.4.25	Update and refresh of document. New sections regarding our plans for 25 / 26 and new 'you said we did'. Changes to wording throughout document to improve clarity of meaning.

Short Break Statement 2025 - 2026

Work on the Short Break Review has progressed and we are excited to be working on the launch of Phase 1. This phase will see us work with providers who could respond quickly to increase provision of short breaks across evenings, weekend and school holidays, to respond to immediate demand arising from assessed need. Alongside this, we will be looking to work with universal providers to support them to deliver a more robust SEND offer, utilising help from existing providers and feedback from children and families.

In addition, the plan for Phase 2 is also underway. This part of the plan is a more strategically focused redesign of short breaks. 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 so far.

As the necessity to update the Short Break Statement for 2025 - 2026 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 work occurring in Phase 1 or 2. The intent is to re look at the statement once the outcome of this work 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 2025 - 2026 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

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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 or cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk

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

www.wokingham.gov.uk/lo



Visit our Local Offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.



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 2008 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 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. It also includes important information about Short Break Direct Payments (money you can receive from the council to buy short break services), and what you can use a Short Break Direct Payment for.

Every Local Authority has to provide a statement and work with and listen to the views of children 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 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 with disabilities by improving their access to short breaks. As part of our continued commitment to them, 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.

We aim to ensure that:

- Short breaks are reliable, regular, and personalised to best meet need.
- We engage with a range of children with disabilities and parents / carers in a range of circumstances.
- Children 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 children with disabilities 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 children preparing for adulthood.
- That those who use short breaks have the chance to shape the development of services.
- We demonstrate how the views of children with disabilities and their parents / carers influence the range and type of short break activity.

What are short breaks?

Short Breaks provide children 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 after school, evenings, weekends, overnight and during school holidays.

Short break services should enable children 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 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 the 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 with 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: [Short breaks and respite services](#)



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 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.

Children will be considered for our Short Breaks service if:

- They are aged between 0 and their 18th 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.
- 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; and
- A child without a disability of a similar age would not require support.

This is not an exhaustive list; however, disabilities 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 do not meet the Children and Young People's Continuing Care criteria for children with complex health care needs and are therefore unable to access short break support from health services.

The needs of the child 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 on: Tel 0118 9746000

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 children 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 national eligibility criteria for adults who have care and support needs. Typically, an adult may be eligible for Adult Services if they have 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 needs 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 process, they may discuss how your child can access support from other community resources.

Our levels of short break support

	1. Services for all Universal or community services which are available to all children and parents/carers who need low-level support .	2. Targeted Services via the 'Local Offer' Services for children and parents/carers who require some support A targeted offer could be a Short Break Direct Payment or services.	3. Specialist Services Services for children and parents/carers who require high-level support via a specialist package of care.
Children / Young Person's Development Needs	The child 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 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 consider other relevant assessments to inform eligibility.	The child 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 attends a special school to have their high level of educational needs met. They will have an Education Health Care Plan.
Parent/ Carers Caring Needs	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's needs.	The parents/carers need significant and regular ongoing support to meet the child's needs.
Parent / Carers Personal Needs	The child's needs are impacting on the parents/carers personal or social life, but the parent/carer can cope with this.	The child's needs are met but at a significant cost to the parents/carers physical / emotional health and leisure time.	Neither the child's nor the parents/ carers needs are being met and there is a serious risk of family breakdown.
Siblings' Needs	The child's brother/s or sister/s can access opportunities, but they are sometimes restricted.	The child's brother/s or sister/s personal and social lives are significantly restricted.	The child's brother/s or sister/s essential needs are not being met.
Environment	The place where the child lives and the places they go to are safe and generally meet their needs with reasonable adjustment.	The place where the child 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 lives and the places they go are often unsafe or unsuitable and need adapting; this limits their choices.
Who Pays the cost?	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 - [How to get a short break](#)



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

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 via 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.¹ 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

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 a 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 a Helping Early service for children with disabilities

Children 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.

Short Break Assessment

When assessing the level of need our assessment will consider:

¹ 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.

- 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 them, yourself 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 levels of Short Breaks Support Table](#) on page 12.

It should be noted that as part of the assessment, 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 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.**

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 discussion 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-and-complaints)

Feedback and complaints

We welcome all forms of feedback. If we're doing something well, please 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.

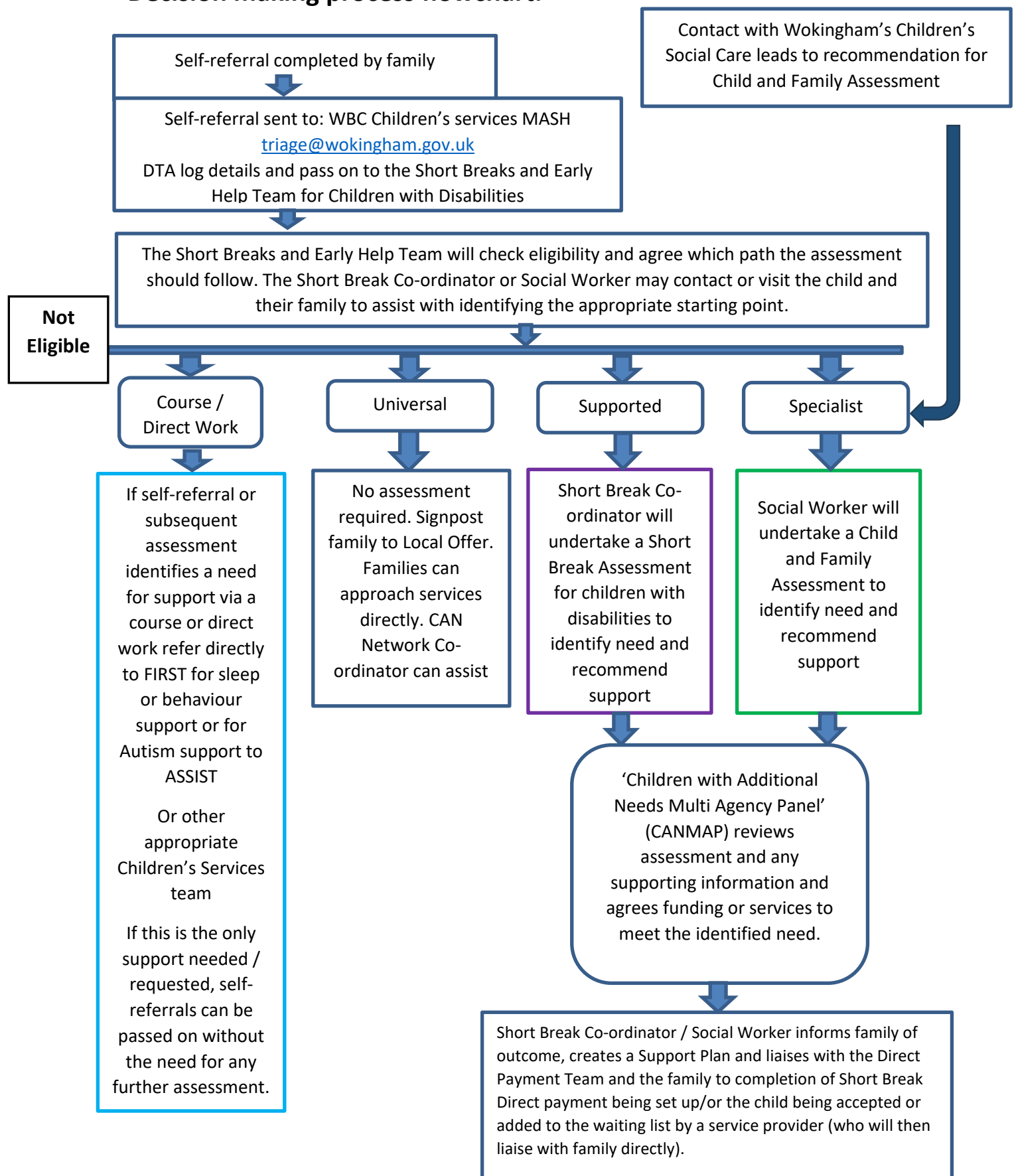
A complaint is a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the actions, decisions or apparent failings for which you want a response.

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). This may include access to a space at a Council run or commissioned service.

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 at our resource panel, CANMAP (Children with Additional Needs Multi Agency Panel) for consideration. Following the meeting, the family will be informed of the outcome.

What can I spend Short Breaks Direct Payments on?

Short Break Direct Payments allow parents or carers to arrange care and services themselves, instead of receiving them directly from a Local Authority. You can use Short Break 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 Short Break Direct Payments to enable their child(ren) to:

- Access organised group activities.
- Access to 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 Short Break 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.

Further, the funding **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 Short Break 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. [How to get a short break](#)

How much do short breaks cost Parents / Carers?

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.

Parents / Carers are not expected to pay for some short break services, such as specialist services required due to the complex nature of their child's disability or services that would not routinely be required for a child of a similar age without a disability. For example: overnight short breaks at Bridges; short breaks provided to a child of an age and maturity who might otherwise be left at home on their own for short periods without requiring a sitting service; or adult supervision in the community, are often provided without cost.

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 child's Wokingham Card can be used to make transactions and BACS payments (e.g. Direct Debits). You can also choose to top up your child's Wokingham card from your own finances, including via online banking.

Before you get the card, you will first be asked to sign an agreement setting out the terms and conditions. Your child's short breaks funds will normally be credited to your child's account 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 (which are usually free). This includes any voluntary contributions you wish to make.

Should you decide that the Wokingham Card (Short Break 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 a 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: [How to get a short break](#)

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 or with your child's Social Worker.

Examples of how to use a Short Break 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 Short Break 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 Short Break 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. Whilst Barnie's dad pays the membership cost, the additional costs required for the higher staffing level is paid for by a Short Break 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 Short Break Direct Payment to help towards the cost of a specialist play scheme during the summer, which is more expensive than the mainstream club his older brother attends.

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 doesn't have a network of support to call upon for help. She 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 Short Break Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant to care for Pablo on one 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, to ensure that it meets need, 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 that you must take responsibility for employee screening, such as employee references and DBS checks. We can assist with the latter. 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 must be approved in advance by the Service. Please discuss with your child's Short Break Coordinator or Social Worker in the first instance.

Full details regarding your responsibilities and who to contact for advice can be found the Short Break Direct Payment guide: [How to get a short break](#)

What are overnight short breaks?

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, 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 Bridges, 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, which is spent

directly on activities and treats for the children. 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 informally via a phone call within three months of their start date, to ensure they are working effectively. A subsequent formal 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 child's 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 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 element will be reviewed in line with the overall plan.

Who provides transport for accessing short breaks?

Parents / 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, so 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 child's transition from Children's to Adult Services should be a positive experience, where they are encouraged to make the most of the opportunities presented to them by adult life.

Children usually begin their transition towards adulthood anywhere between the ages of 14 and 25. Children 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

If they have a Social Worker, contact them -

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk

Or if neither of the above apply:

If your child has a SEND case officer -

By phone: 0118 974 6000 (option 5)

By email: 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

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 there is a safeguarding concern, then contact the MASH, Wokingham Children's Services on **(0118) 908 8002**.

What is the CAN Network?

The CAN Network is an information and support service for children 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 Register of Children with a Disability and CAN (Children with Additional Needs) Card?

Keeping a register of children with a disability is a statutory duty placed on Local Authorities. However, the purpose of the register is to assist us with gathering information that we can use to help us plan better services for your child(ren). If your child has a disability, please do take the time to register.

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 have joined the register. It can act as proof of disability for concessionary rates. We are expanding the number of places this is accepted locally.

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
- Post: CAN Network, Children with Disabilities Service, Ambleside Close, Woodley, RG5 4JJ

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 is eligibility criteria associated with DLA. You can view the criteria at;
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, a health professional will assess them 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 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 is 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 after school, weekends and over the school holidays. These are areas that we intend to focus on, alongside establishing what support services are currently available to all children, and how to make them more accessible to children with disabilities.

Our plans for 2025/2026

- The Short Break Steering Group (which includes children's and parent representatives and providers), has agreed that the Short Break Review will have two phases.
- **Phase 1:** Based on the information we have already received from children, parents and providers, we are using Phase 1 to increase the number of short breaks available in the short term. This will be achieved through two mechanisms 1) Developing provision via our in-house Club Hub team, who also oversee the HAF program. Club Hub will be setting up weekend, after school and holiday provision and will focus on meeting unmet assessed need. This will be in lieu of offering a Short Break Direct Payment for that element of service; and 2) Supporting mainstream providers to make their provisions more inclusive, through the delivery of a training offer. Opportunities to bid to deliver this training will be made available to the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- **Phase 2:** In conjunction with Phase 1 activity, we will carry out further consultation with families to develop a more detailed understanding of the types of service that children and families would like as part of the Phase 2 redesign. SEND Voices Wokingham have kindly produced a survey (as parents requested) which we hope many families will take the time to complete. This will be followed by some focussed workshops, where we hope to have opportunity to further coproduce the vision for

short break services, which we will then aim to deliver via a mix of services funded by Short Break Direct Payments and commissioned services.

- 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.
- Promote the new online version of the CAN application process to make this more accessible.
- Share the updated Direct Payment Guide following changes to the rates of pay for Personal Assistants in April 2025

You said we did / are doing.

You said...

44.7% of you said that you were happy with the short breaks services that they could purchase for their child using direct payments. This is a decrease on the previous two years. (56.3%, 52%)

We recognise that it has become an increasing challenge to purchase short breaks, as many clubs and activities have developed waiting lists and PAs are becoming harder to secure. We also recognise that providing a direct payment is not the same as providing a short break. To address this, we have been agreement to split the work arising from the review of Short Breaks into two phases. Phase 1 is the immediate provision of additional short break services. Following engagement with local internal and external providers, we will be utilising an internal service 'club hub' to provide additional short breaks, after school, at weekends and in school holidays, as well as supporting provider to make their services more accessible. This is a short-term arrangement (approximately 1 year) to allow time for phase 2, which involves a co-produced redesign of short break service to take place. Work on this is already underway and there will be opportunities to get involved in the redesign through a survey and workshops in the coming months.

We are aware from feedback from SEND Voices Wokingham that there is dissatisfaction with the length of time it is taking for referrals for short breaks to reach allocation and assessment.

There has been significant increase in the number of referrals for short break services and alongside supporting children already in receipt of a service, the Short Break and Early Help Team reached capacity in terms of the numbers of children each Co-ordinator could work with. We are seeking to address this and currently have an advert out for an additional Short Break Co-ordinator. Once appointed, they will help to reduce the waiting time.

In addition, as part of the outcomes of the review, it is intended to increase the number of commissioned services and to create some easier pathways to access them.

We are aware from feedback from SEND Voices Wokingham that some families are not aware of the Short Breaks Service.

We are hopeful that over the coming months that more and more families will be aware of the short break service as we reach out to coproduce our new short break offer. We will use the opportunity to launch the new co-produced offer as a way of highlighting the service. In the interim we will use the Local Offer, CAN network, attendance at local disability focussed events and ask other disability focussed organisations such as SEND Voices Wokingham to help publicise the service.

We would also like to thank the children and young people who took part in the “Annual Young Person’s Survey for Wokingham and Reading” facilitated by Me2 Club.

Feedback received indicted that whilst young people were all happy with their activities/short breaks, they would like more activities such as:

- **Basketball**
- **Climbing**
- **Trampolining**
- **Swimming**
- **Fortnite tournaments**

We will look to see if there are any immediate ways we can increase access to such activities but where this isn’t possible, we will feed this information into Phase 2 of the Short Break review and use this information as part of the co production of new opportunities.

It was also clear that young people welcome a variety of activities. Young people identified a number of things that they needed to make short breaks accessible:

- **Clubs at weekends were slightly more popular than after school.**
- **About half wanted a quiet environment and about the same number wanted activities for young people with additional needs so that they could socialise with other young people like them.**
- **Volunteer buddies to take them to mainstream activities was also a popular option.**
- **A few said that they needed transport to access short break activities.**

Again, we will feed this information into Phase 2 of the Short Break review and where we are able, take account of these considerations in the design of services.

Frequently Asked Questions

In previous versions of this short break statement there were points raised within the 'you said we did' section which are still relevant today. We have and will continue to develop these into this FAQ section for continued reference.

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

We have a guide to direct payments available on the web [How to get a short break](#). 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.

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

Whilst Direct payments work well for some, it is acknowledged that there can be a lot of paperwork, in particular, where Personal Assistants are used as the family become the employer. This is a reality of receiving support for your child in this way, but we are always happy to discuss any difficulties as there are alternative means of accessing short breaks.

Through the Short Break review we are exploring if there are ways that children can attend clubs and activities 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.

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 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

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

Website: 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
- 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



Visit our Local Offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.



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.

[Wokingham Directory | Children under 5 with special educational needs and/or disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

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: [Childcare, pre-schools, and nurseries](#)

Children's Centres

Children's centres are free to use for all children under the age of 5 and their parents and carers. We provide groups that focus on early years development through play opportunities for children and their parents/ carers.

We provide a friendly environment, confidential advice and help on matters ranging from child development and to parenting.

Health visitors and midwives also provide services within Children's Centre, that include antenatal and post-natal services such as health and development reviews. To find your local children centre go to the families section of the council's website: [Children's centres](#)

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 up to their 18th 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

Email: assist@wokingham.gov.uk

Telephone: Please email and request a call back

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

Support with Sleep and Behaviour.

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. The intent of this activity is 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

Web: [Family Intervention Resources and Support Team \(FIRST\)](#)

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.

MASH

By phone: (0118) 908 8002

By email: triage@wokingham.gov.uk

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

Direct Payments Officer

By phone: (0118) 9746000 (option 6)

By email: DPWokinghamCard@Wokingham.gov.uk

Short Breaks and Early Help Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk

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

Children with Disabilities Team

By phone: (0118) 974 6000

By email: cwdduty@wokingham.gov.uk

Web: [Children with Disabilities Team](#)

ASSIST - Autism Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training

By phone: Please email and request a call back.

By email: 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

Web: [Family Intervention Resources and Support Team \(FIRST\)](#)

CAN Network

By email: 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 Equality 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.

Children with Disabilities Service
Ambleside Close,
Woodley,
Reading
RG5 4JJ



Visit our Local Offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

