



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Short Breaks Statement 2026 – 2027

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Version 1.3	07.07.21	Updated FAQ section on overnight short breaks (page 22).
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Version 3	17.02.23	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).
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Version 6	30.06.26	Update and refresh of document. Content updated to reflect the 2026–27 period, including revised forward plans, a refreshed “You said we did / are doing” section following engagement with families and SEND Voices Wokingham, and minor wording and clarity changes throughout.

Context: Short Breaks in Wokingham

Over the past year, Wokingham Borough Council has undertaken a detailed and wide-ranging review of its Short Breaks offer. This review has been shaped by the views and experiences of children and young people, families, practitioners, providers and partner organisations, ensuring that future developments reflect what matters most to those who access and deliver support.

Short Breaks are an important part of the support available to children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. They provide opportunities to take part in positive activities, build confidence and independence, develop friendships, and enjoy time away from their usual caring environment. At the same time, they give parents and carers a meaningful break from caring responsibilities, supporting the wellbeing of the whole family.

Through the review, families told us that while Short Breaks are highly valued, there were areas that needed to improve. In particular, families said there was not enough choice of activities, that the system could be difficult to access, and that it was not always flexible enough to respond to individual needs.

We have carefully listened to this feedback and used it to reshape our approach.

Developing a New Short Breaks Model

The review has been delivered in two phases. Phase One focused on maintaining and strengthening existing provision, including the introduction of the Club Hub and support for current providers, ensuring continuity whilst longer-term improvements were developed. Phase Two focuses on transforming the way Short Breaks are delivered through the introduction of a broader and more flexible provider model.

The new model brings together a wider range of Short Breaks provision, including:

- newly commissioned providers delivering clubs on weekdays, weekends, and during school holidays.
- Council-run services and those arranged directly by the Children with Disabilities Service.
- Direct Payments, enabling families to arrange their own support.

This mixed model increases the overall range and type of activities available and is designed to better match different levels of need and preference.

Alongside this, there will be a focus on supporting universal and community providers to become more inclusive, helping to further expand opportunities for children and young people with additional needs to access local clubs and activities.

What This Means for Families

The new provider model represents a shift towards a more flexible and responsive Short Breaks system. These changes will be introduced gradually as new services become established and capacity increases.

During the transition period, families will continue to access Short Breaks through the Short Breaks Team. This ensures that children are matched to suitable provision and that support remains consistent while the new model is embedded.

As more services become available, many families will begin to experience:

- **Greater choice of activities** – including a wider range of after-school, weekend and holiday options.
- **Improved access** – with a clearer and more straightforward route into services.
- **Increased flexibility** – with some families able to contact providers directly and arrange support without going through a full assessment process, where appropriate.
- **Reduced waiting times** – as overall capacity increases and more providers deliver services.
- **More proportionate support pathways** – where children with lower or moderate needs may not require formal assessment, while those with more complex needs continue to receive specialist assessment and tailored packages of support.

Initially, places within new services will be limited and allocated through the Short Breaks Team based on how well activities meet a child's needs. Over time, as the market grows and capacity improves, direct access arrangements will become more widely available.

Importantly, these changes are designed to **add to existing provision rather than replace it**. Direct Payments will remain in place for families who prefer to organise their own support, and where new services are not suitable, alternative options will continue to be explored.

Moving Forward

This is the beginning of a longer-term transformation of Short Breaks in Wokingham. The Council will continue to work closely with families, providers and SEND Voices Wokingham to refine the model, address gaps in provision, and ensure that services continue to develop in line with local need.

Overall, the ambition is to create a Short Breaks system that offers **more choice, simpler access, and the right level of support at the right time**, improving outcomes for children and young people and supporting the wellbeing of families.

Should you have any questions arising from the issuing of the 2026 - 2027 Short Break Statement, please contact:

David Green
Short Break Team Manager
David.green@wokingham.gov.uk

Kelli Scott
Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO)
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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 information is for families living in Wokingham Borough who have a child with a disability who is under the age of 18.

Local Authorities are required to publish a Short Breaks Statement to explain what support is available for children with disabilities and their families.

This requirement is set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011.

The purpose of this Statement is to ensure that families can clearly understand:

- what support is available
- who can access it
- how to apply
- how decisions are made

It also provides transparency about how services are delivered and helps ensure that the needs of children with disabilities and their families are clearly recognised.

It has been developed in partnership with SEND Voices Wokingham, who represent the views of parents and carers across the Borough, along with input from a range of partners. It reflects our commitment to working together with families to design and improve services.

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

The Statement is published on the Local Offer so that it is easy to access, and it will be reviewed regularly to make sure it continues to reflect the support available.

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."

Our approach to Short Breaks is underpinned by a strong commitment to fairness, inclusion and partnership working.

We recognise that every child and every family is different. Our aim is to provide support that is flexible and responsive to individual circumstances, while ensuring that decisions are made in a consistent and transparent way.

We are committed to listening to children, and families and to involving them in shaping services. We want children to feel included, to take part in activities that matter to them, and to develop confidence and independence over time.

We also recognise the vital role that families play and aim to ensure that they feel supported, understood and able to access help when they need it.

Our Vision

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to supporting children with disabilities by enhancing access to short breaks. As part of this commitment, we offer a wide range of services, from inclusive universal provision to more specialist support. These services are designed to meet the diverse and individual needs of children and their families.

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.

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.
- Feel supported as a parent and carer.

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*.

Our Levels of short break support

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.

As part of our review of Short Breaks, we are supporting universal services via a training offer to be able to support more children with disabilities.

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 have a short break assessment?

Short breaks are for children who need extra support as a result of a disability, where this support cannot usually be met through everyday activities without additional help.

This means they may find everyday activities more difficult than other children their age and need considerably more support. Their needs are ongoing and have a significant and long-term impact on their day-to-day life.

Every child and every family is different, which is why we take a needs-led approach. This means we look at the impact of your child's needs on their daily life and on your family, including:

- How your child manages everyday activities, such as personal care, communication, behaviour, or staying safe
- The level of care and supervision they need compared to other children of the same age
- The extra support they need throughout the day and night
- The impact on your family, including caring responsibilities, routines, and overall wellbeing

Your child may be considered for short breaks if they:

- Need significantly more help than their peers in daily life or to take part in activities
- Cannot access activities without additional support or supervision
- Requires a higher level of care or supervision than is typical for their age
- Needs extra support during the day or night
- Experiences barriers or additional costs when taking part in activities

To help us understand this, we may look at how your child manages in areas such as:

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

Types of needs we may consider

This is not an exhaustive list, but this may include children with:

- A physical disability
- A learning disability
- A hearing impairment
- A visual impairment
- Communication disorder, including autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), where a child is unable to access mainstream provision, even with support

- A condition affecting consciousness, such as epilepsy*
- Palliative care needs or a life-limiting condition*
- A mental health condition*

* In some cases, children with complex health needs may receive short break support through health services. Where this is not available, we will consider what support may be appropriate.

Your child does not need a formal diagnosis to be considered. However, there does need to be a clear professional understanding (for example from school, health, or other services) that their needs are linked to a disability.

When short breaks might not be the right support

Sometimes, children and families need support for other reasons. Short breaks may not be the most appropriate support where a child's needs:

- Do not require this level of specialist input
- Are not primarily related to a disability
- Could be better met in other ways

For example:

- Where there is not yet enough information to understand whether their needs are linked to a disability and what support would best help
- Life experiences such as trauma
- Social, environmental, or family challenges
- Learning needs on their own, without a wider impact linked to disability

In these situations, we will work with you to understand your child's needs and help you access the support that is most appropriate.

Not sure if this is right for your child?

If you're unsure, please get in touch. We're happy to talk things through and help you understand what support may be available for your child and your family.

 Short Breaks and Early Help Team: 0118 9746000

 ShortBreaksCo-ordinator@wokingham.gov.uk

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.

How do I apply for short breaks?

If you would like your child to be considered for Short Break support from Wokingham Borough Council, then please use our online self-referral form. 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

What happens after a referral?

Once a referral has been received by the Short Break and Early Help Team, we will look at your child's needs and your family's circumstances to consider the most appropriate support.

This is part of Wokingham's Family Help approach, where services work together, including through Family Hubs and community support, to make it easier for families to access the right help at the right time.

A Short Break Co-ordinator may contact you to gather further information so we can build a clear picture of your child's needs and what support may help.

For more information about how decisions are made, please see our Decision-making process flowchart (page 19).

Possible outcomes

Following this, there are four possible ways forward.

Support is available at different levels, starting with community and Local Offer services, and moving to more targeted or specialist support where this is needed.

1. Support through the CAN Network, Local Offer and Family Hubs

Many children and families are best supported through the Children with Additional Needs (CAN) Network, the Local Offer and Family Hubs.

- [Wokingham Directory | CAN \(children with additional needs\) Network and CAN Card](#)
- [SEND Local Offer](#)
- [Children's Centres and Best Start Family Hubs](#)

These services provide a wide range of accessible, community-based support for children with additional needs, with or without a diagnosis. This may include:

- Advice and information
- Activities and inclusive opportunities in the community
- Support to access local services
- Courses and workshops for parents and carers
- Opportunities to build confidence, skills and local connections

This is often the best starting point, particularly where needs can be met through community and early help support without the need for more targeted or specialist services.

2. Support through the Children with Disabilities Early Help Service and wider Family Help services

Some children and families may benefit from additional support through the Children with Disabilities Early Help Service and wider Family Help services, based on the nature of their needs.

This support may be offered instead of, or alongside, short breaks, depending on what will best help your child and family.

Support within this offer may include:

- Sleep and behavioural support from the FIRST team
[Family Intervention Resources and Support Team \(FIRST\)](#)
- Autism support from the ASSIST service
[Wokingham Directory | ASSIST Team \(Autism Spectrum Service for Information Support and Training\)](#)
- Other Family Help or targeted early help support
[Children's Centres and Best Start Family Hubs](#)

These services focus on supporting specific areas of need and may include practical advice, guidance, and structured support for your child and family.

Support is provided in a co-ordinated and joined-up way, so you do not need to repeat your story and can access the help that best meets your needs.

In some situations, this may be the most appropriate way to support your child without the need for short breaks.

3. Short breaks assessment

Where short breaks appear to be the most appropriate way to support your child, a Short Break Co-ordinator will contact you to arrange a Short Breaks Assessment.

This will explore in more detail:

- Your child's needs
- The impact on your family
- What type of support may help

4. Child and Family Assessment (Assessment under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989)

Where a child has more complex or significant needs, it may be helpful to complete a Child and Family Assessment.

This allows a social worker to work alongside you and your family to make sure your child receives the right level and range of support.

A social worker will:

- Take time to understand your child's needs and strengths
- Listen to your views and experiences as a parent or carer
- Help bring together support from different services
- Work with you to develop a co-ordinated plan to support your child's development and wellbeing

This approach helps ensure that children with more complex needs receive joined-up, consistent support, particularly where different services need to work together.

The focus is on working in partnership with you, building on what is already working well, and making sure the right support is in place for your child and family.

Decisions regarding access to short breaks 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.

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

What does a Short Break Assessment consider?

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 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 detail of assessments will be proportionate to the reason that you have made the referral, for example if it is solely about support to access a club and there are no other

circumstances requiring support, this may be less in depth than an assessment where there are a number of current issues to consider. The outcome of this assessment will be shared with you and will identify an appropriate level of support.

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.

If you have questions about the decision or your child's support

We aim to make decisions in a way that is fair, transparent and based on a clear understanding of your child's needs.

If you have any questions about the decision or feel that your child's needs have not been fully understood, please contact your Short Break Co-ordinator (or Social Worker) in the first instance.

They will:

- Talk through the decision with you
- Listen to your views and any additional information you would like to share

- Review whether there is any further information needed to better understand your child's needs

Where appropriate, we can arrange for the decision to be reviewed or for your child's needs to be looked at again.

If you are still not satisfied

If you feel your concerns have not been resolved, you can request a further discussion with a manager.

You can also provide feedback or make a complaint at any stage using the council's feedback and complaints process: [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.

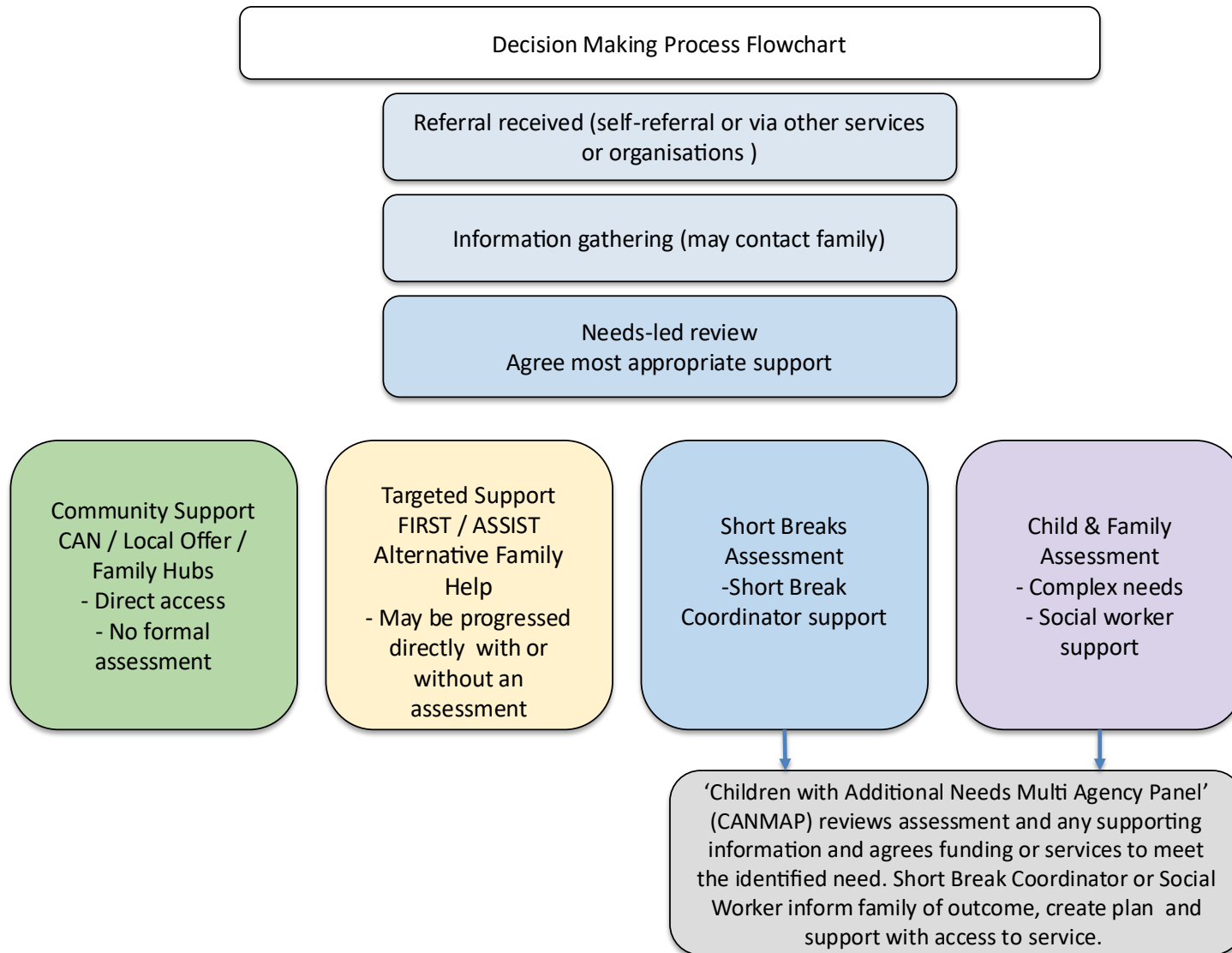
A complaint is a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the actions, decisions or apparent failings for which you want a response.

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

Can you give examples of different types of short breaks supported by Wokingham Borough Council?

Toby is 14. He has autism and wants to take part in sport. His mum looked on the Local Offer and found an inclusive club that she thought might be appropriate. It cost no more than other sports clubs she'd been looking at for Toby. Toby's mum saw that this club was based in Reading and she wanted to know if there were any closer to Wokingham. She contacted the CAN network who got further information about Toby and were able to provide details of other clubs that might be suitable. This enabled Toby's mum to make an informed decision, and Toby went for trials at two of them. Both were suitable but Toby realised his friend went to one so picked that one. His mum pays the membership cost and uses his Disability Living Allowance to buy his kit.

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 commissioned play scheme during the summer, whilst it would be more expensive than the mainstream club his older brother attends the fact it is commissioned means his parents pay roughly the same.

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 Down's Syndrome. He is fiercely independent and wants to go to a Youth Club 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.

Priya is 10 years old and has Retts Syndrome and epilepsy. Priya has complex needs and requires care and support from a specialist team. Her epilepsy means that she has to be monitored through the night, and her disability also means she experiences increased sleep disturbance. Following assessment by a Social Worker in the Children with Disabilities Team Priya accesses an overnight short break at Bridges. This is delivered without cost to Priya's family.

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 services that can be used and how the Short Break Direct Payment should be used.

Consequently, this document can be updated at any point to reflect an agreed change. 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 are the new commissioned services?

The Council is introducing newly commissioned short break services delivered by approved providers. These services can form part of your child's support plan and are designed to meet a range of needs. They offer a variety of club-style activities with a mixture of focuses, including drama, singing, dance, sport, arts and crafts, and holiday

playschemes. Sessions are designed to be fun and engaging, helping children to build friendships, socialise, and try new experiences in a supportive environment.

Sessions are typically available during weekday evenings after school, at weekends, and during school holidays, providing regular and flexible opportunities for children to take part while giving families a break.

What are the benefits of using commissioned services?

Using a commissioned service can be simpler and more convenient than arranging your own support. Providers are selected by the Council and are expected to meet agreed standards, offering reassurance around quality and safeguarding.

There is less responsibility for parents and carers, as you do not need to manage employment tasks such as recruitment, contracts, or payroll. This reduces the time and administration involved in organising support.

Commissioned services also provide structured opportunities for children to take part in group activities, build confidence, and develop social skills alongside their peers. As these services are included within the support plan, they offer a coordinated and consistent approach to short breaks at key times, such as after school, weekends, and school holidays.

While some families may prefer to arrange their own support, commissioned services provide a practical option with reduced administration and regular opportunities for children to enjoy a range of activities.

What are Short Break Direct Payments?

What you can use it for:

- Arranging care and support instead of using commissioned or Council-provided services

This includes:

- Funding the additional costs of support for activities such as clubs, sports, and group sessions to make them accessible
- Paying for a Personal Assistant
- Services from agencies, voluntary organisations, or nurseries

What you cannot use it for:

- Everyday living costs (rent, bills, household items)
- Childcare to enable work
- Food (except agreed expenses for carers)
- Alcohol, tobacco, gambling, or anything illegal
- Clothes, personal items, gifts, or toiletries

- Transport, holidays, or long-term care
- NHS-funded equipment or Council services

Costs and contributions:

- Parents/carers will need to pay standard activity or entrance costs
- Direct Payments should cover any additional support needed due to disability
- Specialist services are often provided without charge

How payments are made:

- Payments are provided through a prepaid **Wokingham Card** (Mastercard)
- The card can be used to pay for services, make purchases, and set up payments (e.g. bank transfers or Direct Debits for support workers)
- Funds are usually added to the card monthly, although smaller allocations may be paid as a lump sum
- You can top up the card with your own money if needed
- Before receiving the card, you will sign an agreement outlining how it should be used
- Alternative options are available if the card is not suitable, including a managed account (e.g. payroll support for employing a Personal Assistant) or the Council paying providers directly

Is 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.

Further support:

- More information, including guidance on using Direct Payments, employing staff, and managing your account, is available in the Short Break Direct Payment Guide: [How to get a short break](#)

How can I choose a short break provider?



Organisations on the Local Offer

As well as the services we provide and commission, the Local Offer [Short breaks and respite services \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk) 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)



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?

These are the current review arrangements. As we move towards direct access to commissioned services, we will introduce more flexible approaches to reviewing support.

You are welcome to ask for your child's short breaks to be reviewed at any time. If your child is supported through another plan, such as a Child in Need, Child Protection or Child in Care plan, the short breaks element will be reviewed as part of that wider plan.

We will also review support at least once a year to make sure it continues to meet the needs of your child and family.

For new packages of support, we will:

- Carry out an informal review (usually by phone) within the first three months to check that the support is working effectively
- Arrange a formal review after six months
- Continue with annual reviews after this

If your child's needs change, reviews can take place more frequently. This will be discussed with you, and you can request a review at any time.

Reviews will be carried out by a Short Break Co-ordinator or your child's Social Worker.

Financial reviews of Direct Payments

We will carry out a financial review of your child's Short Break Direct Payment at around six months and again at the annual anniversary. These checks are completed by the Direct Payment Team and are based on reviewing the account rather than holding a meeting.

If there is a build-up of funding at the six-month point, the Direct Payment Team will let the Short Breaks and Early Help Team or your child's Social Worker know, and you will be contacted to understand why the funding has not been used. If you are finding it difficult to use the funding, we will arrange a review with you to look at how things are working and consider other options. If it is agreed that funding is no longer needed, it may be returned so it can be used to support other children and families.

At the annual review, any unspent funding may be reclaimed. You will always be contacted in advance before this happens. If you are saving money for a specific purpose, such as higher costs during school holidays, you should let the Direct Payment

Team know when they contact you. Funding that has been clearly set aside for an agreed purpose will not be reclaimed.

The Direct Payment Team will also carry out regular checks to make sure funding is being used appropriately. If there are concerns about spending, your Short Break Co-ordinator or Social Worker will contact you to discuss this with you. If it is agreed that spending was not appropriate, you may be asked to repay the amount. If you are unsure whether something can be paid for using Direct Payments, you should contact your Short Break Co-ordinator, Social Worker or Direct Payment Officer before making a purchase.

If you have any technical issues with making payments or using the Wokingham Card, you should contact the Direct Payment Team.

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 from the age of 14. 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. Please also seek support from your child's Short Break Co-ordinator or Social worker if required.

If there is a safeguarding concern, then contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (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-dla-for-children-when-your-child-turns-16)

Our plans for short breaks in 2026/27

In 2026/27, Wokingham Borough Council will continue to develop a short breaks offer that is accessible, flexible, and responsive to the needs of children, young people, and their families.

We will expand commissioned short break services

We are growing our commissioned offer so that it can be included as part of support plans. This will increase the range and availability of club-style activities, with opportunities to introduce new provision and expand activities that are working well. These will take place after school, at weekends, and during school holidays, supporting children to have fun, build friendships, and take part in positive experiences.

We will improve how families access services

During the transition to the new model, access to commissioned services will continue to be managed through the Short Breaks Team, with places matched to children's needs. As capacity increases, we are planning to move towards a system where many families will be able to contact providers more directly, reducing paperwork and making access simpler and more straightforward.

We will maintain choice and flexibility

We will continue to offer a range of short break options, including commissioned services, Personal Assistants, Direct Payments, and community provision. This will ensure families can choose the approach that works best for them. Direct Payments will remain an important part of the offer.

We will ensure sufficient and appropriate provision

We will keep the availability of short breaks under review and continue to identify and address any gaps in provision. This includes ensuring there are suitable opportunities for children with more complex needs and that services are available at times that meet family needs.

We will build capacity and support providers

We are working with providers to increase capacity where there is demand and support the development of a skilled workforce to deliver high-quality, consistent support.

We will monitor quality and involve families

We will continue to gather feedback from children, young people, and families to understand what is working well and where improvements are needed. Any changes to a child's support will be discussed and agreed with families.

We will improve information and communication

We will provide clear, up-to-date information through the Local Offer and direct communication with families, including updates on new services, availability, and how to access support.

We will work in partnership

We are and will continue to work with children, young people, families, and providers to shape and develop the short breaks offer over time.

Overall aim

Our aim is to deliver a short break offer that increases choice, improves access, and ensures children and families receive the right support at the right time.

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](#)

Family Hubs (previously Children's Centres)

Children's centres in Wokingham are becoming Best Start Family Hubs. This change will be completed by November 2026.

Family Hubs provide a central place where families can access advice, guidance and a range of support services, from pregnancy through to young people aged 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities or care leavers).

Families can access a range of support through Family Hubs, including groups and activities for young children, health visiting and midwifery services, parenting advice, and support with things such as behaviour, sleep, routines and family wellbeing. Information, advice and guidance about special educational needs and disabilities is also available.

Family Hubs are part of a wider network of services and can help families find the right support at the right time. This includes linking families to more specialist help where needed. They also provide opportunities to meet other families and build local support networks.

To find out more about Family Hubs, including your nearest location and the types of support available, visit: [Children's Centres and Best Start Family Hubs](#)

You can also contact the Family Hub team directly through the council using the contact details on this page, or by speaking to a member of staff at your local Family Hub.

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.

