

Short Break Services Statement

City of Stoke on Trent

Updated March 2023

Welcome to Stoke-on-Trent's Short Breaks Statement.

This statement has been designed with parents and carers of children and young people with Special Education Needs and/or disabilities living in Stoke-on-Trent. The statement will provide clear information about the Short Break services available.

Legislation

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations came into effect on 1st April 2011. A copy of the regulations can be found via the following link: [The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#)

The Regulations established in law outline the duty of every local authority to provide a range of short breaks for disabled children and young people and their parents and carers.

As part of the duty, each local authority must also produce a Short Breaks Services Statement to provide parents and carers with clear information on the following:

- What short breaks are available
- How to access the short breaks
- How the short breaks have been designed to meet their needs

What we mean by Disability

Section 17 (11) of the Children Act 1989 defines disability as:

“child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed”, although this statute remains, the language is very outdated.

The current Equality Act 2010 definition of disability states:

“a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities”. The Equality Act and explanatory notes can be found by following this link; [Equality Act 2010 - Explanatory Notes](#)

Publication and Review

Our Short Break Service Statement is published on the council's local offer website and can be found by following the link: [Short break services – SEND Local Offer](#)

The statement will be reviewed and updated annually. The review will continue to reflect the views and choices of disabled children, young people and families.

Children and Families Act 2014

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced some of the biggest changes in 30 years to Special Education Needs and Disability provision, in the way that Education, Health and Social Care work together to support children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

Some of the key changes are:

- Statements of Special Education Needs (SEND) is replaced with a joined up, holistic, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC), replacing the previous system of statutory assessment
- A requirement for the publication of a clear and transparent 'Local Offer' detailing what services, provision, and support is available in the local area. Stoke-on-Trent's Local Offer can be located at: [SEND Local Offer – SEND Local Offer](#)
- Young people with SEND who are in further education and training aged 16-25 have rights and protection comparable to those in school
- Joint Commissioning: Ensuring the voice of the children, young people, parents and carers is at the heart of what we do, including shaping local services

As part of our response to the changes we developed a single centre for disabilities called Hazel Trees, which is based in Fenton. Many of the services which will be directly involved in the EHC assessment and planning are located in this building. This has increased the effectiveness of the joint service planning and understanding of the needs of our children and young people across education, health and social care. It also makes it much easier and simpler for parents and carers to access advice, guidance and support for their child when they need it most.



What are short breaks?

Short Breaks are activities for children and young people, usually away from home, that enable them to relax, have fun, spend time with their peers, make new friends and have new experiences, whilst at the same time allowing the parents/carers to have a break from their caring role. Short Breaks can include day, evening, overnight, weekend or holiday activities.

Short Break Services should:

Enable children and young people with disabilities to:

- Enjoy the experience and try new things
- Share fun times and make friends
- Take part in activities which help their development
- Feel safe and know what to expect from their short break
- Maximise independence with appropriate target setting
- Support transition to adult services at an appropriate time
- Access community provision

Enable parents and carers to:

- Have clear information on their entitlement and know what services are available to them
- Have a range of services from which they are able to make choices
- Have trust in the short break provider, and to know that the carers are trained, understand their child's needs and provide safe short breaks
- Access support from other parents and staff – both practical and emotional – and to experience reduced levels of stress due to caring

Enable brothers and sisters to:

- Know that their brother or sister is enjoying their short break
- Be able to have time with their parents that is not taken up with caring responsibilities
- Be able to do their homework or just have some time for themselves

- Be able to join their brother or sister for some short break activities from time to time

Who can access short breaks?

Stoke-on-Trent's Aiming High Short Breaks is open to all children and young people who:

- have a disability (as defined by section 6 of the Equality Act 2010);
- or Special Education Need (SEN), with or without an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- require support to access play and leisure activities due to their care and support needs;
- need a targeted activity with a disability focus and an upskilled staff team;
- are aged 0-18, and
- live in Stoke-on-Trent.

We recognised that the needs for each family vary; some families may need more support because of their individual circumstances. Children and young people with complex needs may require more support to have a short break. In these cases, a social care assessment may be required. The criteria for social work assessment to access specialist level short breaks, can be found by following this link to a Parents' Guide to Social Care: [Parents' guide to social care](#)

How many children and young people who have a special education needs and or disability live in Stoke-on-Trent?

DfE research suggests that a measure of 7-10% can be used to estimate the number of children with disabilities within the overall child population, and that 1.2% will have significant or complex needs.

Population

The JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) data for 2022 estimated population numbers. In 2022 Stoke-on-Trent had an estimated population of 258,400 people, and a 0-19 population of 64,561 which accounts for 25% of the population

Education Health and Care Plans

Internal Performance Education Health and Care Plan data informs us that there are 2923 EHCP's in city as of November 2022

The top 3 primary needs for pupils who have an EHCP are:

- Moderate learning difficulty 28%
- Social, emotional & mental health 23%
- Speech, Language or communication difficulties 21%

Current Service Provision – Stoke-on-Trent

The Aiming High Short Breaks Service in Stoke-on-Trent has been supporting vulnerable Disabled children/young people and their families since 2014.

Data from the current service in Stoke-on-Trent for 2021/22 contract year (October 2021 – September 2022):

- 5256 short break spaces in 639 activities were available
- 282 individual children accessed the service
- 30% of activities parents paid contributions in order to access additional spaces
- 1046 children on the disability register

Children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent by age range shown in the table above (2021 Census data, released October 2022)

Age Range	Total	%
0-4	15,625	6.0%
5-9	16,987	6.6%
10-14	16,833	6.5%
15-19	15,116	5.9%
0-19	64,561	25.0%

Key messages from consultation with children and families:

Disabled children and their families have told us we should consider when planning and commissioning Short Breaks services:

- Activities where friendships can grow.
- Clearer criteria for access
- Confidence that disabled children's needs will be met by appropriately trained staff in all activities and settings
- Flexible services and timely support
- Family activities in quieter environments

Short Break Services available

There are a broad range of short break services and activities available across the city.

Universal services

These are services available to all children and young people within our local communities through local youth centres, sports and leisure centres, children's centres (soon to be known as Family Hubs), funded childcare and early education (links are available here [Free childcare and early education places](#), [Childcare Choices](#)), after-school clubs, Brownies, Scouts or other community activities. Universal services are often the first point of contact for many families and we will work with these services to promote inclusion and training support, to enable staff to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities.

Targeted services (our Aiming High Short Breaks Service)

We recognise that some children and young people may have additional support needs, and could require targeted activities with a disability focus and an upskilled staff team to enable them to access a short break safely. Our Aiming High Short Breaks service has been designed to support these children and families. A formal social care assessment is not required for young people to access short breaks; however, Action for Children coordinate the booking of these activities, and will complete a risk assessment to ensure each child is safe whilst attending the activity.

Activities include weekend, after school and school holiday activities, such as swimming, trampolining, bowling, day trips, sensory fun sessions, fishing and family activities.

The Aiming High Short Breaks Service features the following:

[A Core Offer](#)

The Core Offer is free of charge for all children and consists of:

- One activity a month,
- One additional activity during half term and Easter holidays, and
- Two additional activities during the summer Holidays
- Additional activities through parental contributions

Where there is not an identified need for additional support, but parents/carers wish to access additional activities, they can pay a financial contribution towards additional activities. Up to date information on contribution amounts can be found by contacting Action for Children directly.

[An Aiming High Enhanced Offer](#)

The Enhanced Offer is group-based activities for children and young people who require a higher number of sessions than those provided within the Core Offer and the additional activities through parental contributions. Group-based activities may include additional core offer activities, or extended school provision.

This offer supports some children and young people;

- with the most complex needs
- who are joint funded by health (CHC funding)
- who can socialise in groups but require more than one short break per month

This is time limited support, which is regularly reviewed in line with a child/young person's assessed need, with the potential to step down to Additional Contributions or Core Offer. Eligibility is decided by a multi-agency panel via Lead Provider assessment or Social Work assessment at the Multi Agency Short Breaks Support Forum.

[Specialist services](#)

These are available to children and families who are formally assessed by children's social care as needing a specialist service when children have the most complex needs.

Specialist short breaks include:

- Overnight short breaks at Woodview, the local authority short break residential unit
- Overnight short breaks with specialist foster carers (Family Link carers)
- Direct Payments for parents who wish to employ their own personal assistant.

For further information please see the parents' guide to social care: [Parents' guide to social care](#)

There is also a specialist NHS residential unit called Dragon Square, which is based in Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and offers planned short breaks for children up to 18 years of age, ranging from a few hours, to overnight stays. This is for children and young people with a severe learning disability who also have very high support needs because of their very complex behavioural support needs and /or complex physical/ medical needs. These children also require 24-hour specialist nursing care. This service can be accessed via a health professional or social worker.

[Mix and match](#)

Many children and young people access a mix of short break services in order to meet their assessed need, some specialist level short breaks (where a formal assessment has been made) as well as through our Aiming High Service. This is to ensure that short breaks reach a wide range of children, and are accessible to as many as possible. They are particularly important, as the numbers of children accessing Aiming High is increasing.

[Promoting transition to adulthood](#)

Short Break services are available for children and young people with disabilities up to the age of 18. If you have one, an EHCP encourages greater co-ordination and planning between services, including short breaks, for young people aged up to 25yrs, as they move into adulthood, and access, where relevant, services designed for young adults aged 18yrs and over.

Managing transition into adulthood is a priority for parents and families of young people as they become young adults. Adult Social Care is closely involved at a time most relevant for that person & their family. Short Break services can be offered in a number of different ways following assessment under the Care Act where eligible needs are identified. Short Breaks can range from PA community support, sitting services or building based respite.

How is eligibility decided?

Rigid eligibility criteria for assessment and provision of services through the Children with Disabilities Team are not set because the unique combination of the child's disability, the circumstances of their home life and the wider context of their social environment, means that each referral must be assessed on its merits. The parent's guide to social care provides more details; [Parents' guide to social care](#)

The following links to the current threshold document; [Stoke-on-Trent Threshold Document](#)

and describes the policy regarding eligibility for specialist services and also lists the eligibility to access our Aiming High programme.

How will Short Breaks improve outcomes?

- They aim to support children and young people with disabilities to develop and learn through fun and play activities, make new friends and to promote their social, communication and independence skills
- They should support children and young people to develop self-confidence and a sense of achievement, where they can learn new interests and try out new activities in a safe environment
- When young people are preparing to leave school and make the transition into adulthood, age-appropriate short breaks should help to prepare them for making choices, new experiences and increasing independence
- Short Breaks aim to support families in their caring role, and reduce levels of stress due to the demands of caring
- Short Breaks can also provide opportunities for families to spend some enjoyable time together and for parents to get to know other families with similar experiences, in order to reduce isolation and share fun time
- Children with very complex health needs and/or life limiting conditions will be offered opportunities for short breaks which are appropriate for their needs.

How will these services be managed and reviewed?

Commissioners meet on a regular basis with parents to gather feedback and views of the Aiming High Short Break service, allowing for development of new ideas and exchanging views and experiences.

Commissioners also meet with the lead provider responsible for the Aiming High element of the Short Breaks Service. This allows for a regular dialogue and feedback on specific queries which are then implemented and followed up. Providers are also subject to detailed monitoring and review visits.

The overall short break provision is managed by Strategic Management within Children's Social Care, reporting into the CYP Strategic Partnership Board, and reports progress on a quarterly basis.

