

Short Break Statement for Northumberland

This short break statement was originally developed by the Short Break Steering Group which includes representatives of the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum.

Short Breaks are activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provided in a safe environment. As well as promoting best outcomes for the child, short break services also provide support and help to parents and carers in continuing with their role by giving them a break from caring. This is sometimes known as respite care.

Short breaks can be a wide range of activities, can be universal, targeted or specialist, but all should be aimed at providing a high-quality service for children which makes them, and their parents and carers feel happy, safe and included. The length and type of short break can vary for each child and family depending on what they want and need.

There are a variety of Short Breaks available to children and young people in Northumberland:

- All Short Breaks take place outside of the school day. This means that activities could happen in the evening, at a weekend or during school holidays.
- Many Short Breaks take place outside of the family home; for example, in local leisure centres or community spaces, although some Short Breaks may be within the family home with specialist support, such as a Personal Assistant, depending on the needs of the child or young person and their family.
- Short Breaks can also include overnight stays, depending on the needs of the child or young person, their family and the type of activity.
- Some Short Breaks can be for a child or young person with SEND to attend independently of their families, giving parents and carers the opportunity to have a break from their caring role.
- Some Short Breaks may give siblings and/or families the opportunity to take part in activities together or may offer support to siblings alone to recognise the impact of the disability on them.
- Sometimes the parent/carer or young person might identify the short break they want to use, other times it might be suggested to them by a professional.
- Parents may choose to receive a direct payment which allows them to put together a support package which meets their family's needs; some examples have been payment of caravan park fees or payment for a family trip to an inclusive outward-bound venue.

All children growing up in Northumberland should be able to attend activities both with and without their families which allow them to build friendships and develop new interests and skills and most of all have fun.

Northumberland is a large diverse county and children, young people and families should, as much as possible, be able to access activities which provide short breaks in their communities. This means

supporting all universal providers to be inclusive of children with SEND and their families. However, as with all families with children, sometimes there will be a need to travel to activities.

We know from talking to families that not all universal providers are inclusive for children with SEND and their families currently. We will continue to work to ensure that parents have confidence that their children will be included and safe in universal activities.

We recognise that for some children the best way they can be supported to have a short break is through specialist activities provided by staff who have training and experience in working with disabled children.

The short break that a child and family need can change over time, and it is important that all those working with families of children with SEND recognise when families may need more or less help and support through a short break than they have had before.

- More information about the types of short breaks and how these are accessed is given below:

Type of Activity	Universal - these are activities that all children in Northumberland can access	Targeted activities - which are specifically aimed at meeting the needs of disabled children and children with SEND	Specialist Activities - activities provided as a result of a child and family being assessed as needing a short break and the child's needs meaning that they need specialist support to help achieve a specific outcome. Parents or young people (over 16) can choose to receive a direct payment instead of the activities on offer.
How to Access	Parent/young person accesses directly with the provider.	This could be the parent directly with the provider or in some cases a professional might make a referral on a parent's behalf	Referred following assessment by a Social Worker, Social Work Support Assistant or Family Help Worker. Continuation will be formally reviewed at regular intervals.
Examples of What this includes	Any activity open to all children - including	Ability 2 Play	1:1 support to allow children to access

	sports, dancing, theatre, arts etc. Holiday Activity Fund activities including family trips.	Blyth Valley Disabled Forum Toby Henderson Trust True Colours Theatre Company We Can	activities in their community, for example scouts, brownies, a sports club etc. Support in the home. Overnight residential short breaks at Barndale or St Oswald's A direct payment made to a parent/carer or young person (over 16) Support provided through the internal DCT Family Support Team
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Other useful information

Support for Families

Any parent of a disabled child can apply for a Max card which allows for free or discounted activities across the UK. Please contact the Disabled Children's Team for more information or to request a Max Card. Please call 01670 536400 and ask to speak to the Disabled Children's Team.

Families can access support through Early Help services

The link below takes you to the webpage where you can find out more information and access the early help request form; this can be completed by a parent, young person or professional with the parent's consent

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Support.aspx#:~:text=Contact%20us%20%2D%20training%20enquiries&text=Telephone%3A%2001670%20536400%20and%20ask,EHA%40northumberland.gov.uk>

Families can request support through a Social Worker, Social Work Support Assistant or Family Help Worker

Families of disabled children can request to have an assessment if they feel they need help and support because of their child's disability or a professional can do this on their behalf. For the specialist short

break services identified above a child must have had an assessment which has identified that this type of support is needed.

Even if a child has previously been assessed as not needing specialist support it is important for families and people working with them to know that this does not mean that they cannot ask for this to be looked at again. Disabled children's needs and their family circumstances can change during their childhood which might mean they need more/different support as they get older.

An assessment can be carried out by any of the teams in Northumberland. For those children with significant disabilities, they may be assessed through the Disabled Children's Team.

For more information and the eligibility criteria for the disabled children's team please see the link below:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Northumberland-Local-Offer-SEND-0-to-25-years/Social-Care.aspx>

Short Break Statement last reviewed by Ian Walker, Senior Manager Disabled Children and Designated Social Care Officer, August 2026