

# Leisure activities for children and young people with disabilities, and breaks (respite) for their family

Solihull's Short breaks statement  
2023 - 2025



## For parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities

Dear Parents and Carers

This document sets out the leisure activities offered by Solihull Council for children and young people with disabilities, and short breaks (respite) for their families.

This document tells you about the range of services available, how to access them and how we consult about short breaks. It also gives you a bit of background about our legal requirements.

We hope you find this document useful and easy to understand. We would welcome your feedback, comments and ideas in relation to “short breaks/respite” – particularly if you’d like to be involved in influencing what should be offered in the future. Please contact the Children’s Commissioning and Placements Team by email [childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk)

You can find further information about services across the borough for children and young people with disabilities through the Council’s [Local Offer](#), on the Activities and Events page on the [Council’s website](#) and from the [Family Information Service](#).

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## Section 1 – About short breaks

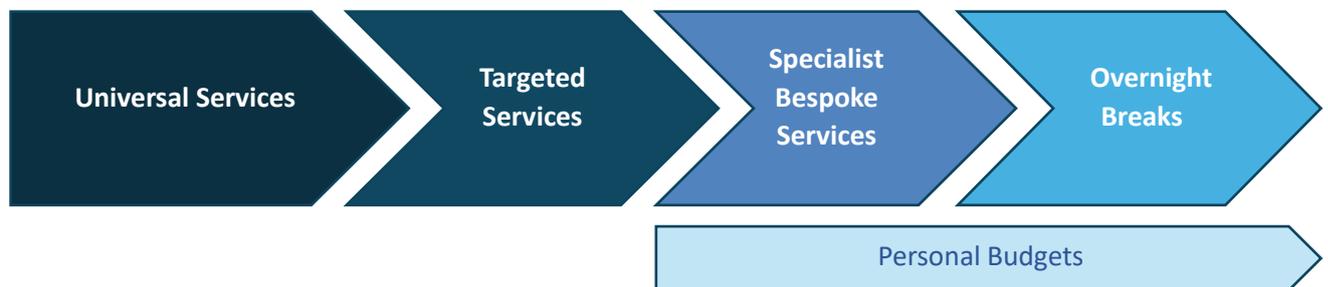
### What is a short break?

**Short breaks are leisure opportunities for children and young people with disabilities which give their parent/carer a break/respice from their caring responsibilities.**

Short breaks are intended to have positive benefits for both children and young people with a disability and their parents/carers.

Short breaks are a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. The overall offer around short breaks within Solihull provides a graduated response to the identified needs of individual children and young people.

Figure 1: Graduated Response to Short Breaks



## **What are the benefits of short breaks for children and young people with disabilities?**

Short breaks provide fun, leisure and social activities for those children and young people with disabilities who are unable to attend mainstream activities. Short breaks enable them to:

- Spend time away from their parents/carers and other family members
- Have fun with their friends
- Develop new friendships
- Develop their independence and try new experiences; giving them opportunities to increase their confidence and learn new skills.

## **What are the benefits of short breaks for parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities?**

Short breaks (respite) can benefit parents/ carers in the following ways:

- Have a break from their caring responsibilities
- Rest and unwind
- Spend time with other members of their family (including meeting the individual needs of other children in the family)
- Undertake education, training or a regular leisure activity
- Carry out day to day tasks which they need to perform in order to run their household
- Support the long-term resilience of families to continue to care for their child with a disability

Most of our funded short breaks services involve the child or young person taking part in an activity without their parent or carer present. We recognise that for some families that type of short break isn't feasible; instead a short break for the family, as a family, away from the home or a break from the general routine of family life may be more desirable.

We still have some work to do to improve what's available to meet families' needs for this kind of short break but some activities are available (see Section 2).

### **Who can access short breaks?**

Children and young people will be eligible to attend a targeted short breaks service:

- up to their 19th birthday (or until the end of Year 13 if they attend a special school)
- if they are resident in the borough or are in care and are the responsibility of Solihull Council, wherever they are placed.
- if they have a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) that prevents them from accessing universal services without substantial ongoing additional support.

When applying to attend, families should provide confirmation of their child's eligibility. This could include **any** of the following:

- Evidence that the child or young person is in receipt of middle or higher rate disability living allowance (DLA) or any personal independence payment (PIP), or
- An Education, Health and Care Plan or Social Care Assessment showing a relevant assessed need, or
- A letter from a relevant professional (e.g. their GP, consultant, school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), community nurse or another relevant professional) confirming that the child or young person's needs mean that they require targeted services for children and young people with disabilities.

Eligibility for the targeted Short Breaks services provided by SoLO, and those activities funded through Short Breaks grants, can be accessed without having to undergo a social care assessment, providing the above criteria is met.

### **How much does a short break cost?**

The cost of a short break should be either equivalent to or less than the cost of a similar activity available for young people without a disability. Parents/carers have told us that this is important. Parents/carers have told us they are happy to contribute towards the cost of an activity, rather than expecting it all to be paid for by the Council – the Council therefore subsidises the cost of short break activities and parents are then expected to pay for the “parental contribution” element.

### **What if the main short breaks services don't meet your family's needs?**

If the short breaks provided at universal or targeted support are unable to meet your child or young person's needs, then if social care assesses that there is a need, there may be an option to have a personal budget which can be taken as a direct payment instead of social care arranging the short break. The parent/carer with their son or daughter can then choose what service to buy from community or specialist providers directly, in-line with the [direct payments policy](#).

## Section 2 – Leisure and short breaks services

### Mainstream and universal services

These are services provided to all children and young people and their families, like youth clubs and leisure centre activities.

The Council has used short breaks funding to improve the accessibility of mainstream leisure provision to enable families to enjoy activities together. This has included part-funding some [Changing Places accessible toilets](#).

The [Holidays Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme](#) aims to provide a range of activities and a nutritious meal for children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals during Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays, along with a proportion of places for other vulnerable children and young people. The HAF Programme has a number of providers who support children in mainstream settings, as well as targeted provision for children with additional needs. It is possible for providers to access additional funding to provide support if they are aware of specific additional needs in advance of attendance.

### Targeted leisure activities

These are services set up for children and young people who need additional support or who may need activities or groups tailored because of their disabilities.

Most targeted short breaks activities in Solihull are delivered by SoLO (Solihull Life Opportunities). The opportunities currently available for children and young people are on their [website](#).

There are a range of activities available after school, at weekends and during the school holidays. The activities available have been developed in consultation with the children and young people that attend the activities. Some projects have waiting lists and when a place becomes available this is offered to those who are not currently receiving any other short breaks. These activities are subsidised using Council funding which means families pay a fair rate.

In 2024 we are also providing grants to several organisations to provide short breaks during term-time after school, in the evenings or at weekends (Signpost Inclusion, Entrust Care Partnership, Solihull Moors Foundation, Inclusive Sports Academy, Urban Heard, Ordinary Magic and Strike 9T) and during the school holidays (Signpost Inclusion and Strike 9T). Further details about the activities are available [here](#). The Council contributes to the cost of these activities, so that they can be offered to families at a fair and subsidised rate.

Information about other groups and activities that are aimed at children and young people with disabilities are included on the [Family Information Service Directory](#), available on the Local Offer.

Many inclusive sports/physical activities are supported by the Council's Solihull Active team. Usually no booking is required to take part. See <https://www.solihullactive.co.uk/inclusive-activities/> for up to-date information.

The Council also subsidises family swimming sessions on Sundays at Reynolds Cross School. These are for families with a child with a disability who are unable to use public swimming pools. If you'd like to book to attend these sessions contact

[s503aroe@reynaldscross.solihull.sch.uk](mailto:s503aroe@reynaldscross.solihull.sch.uk) or phone 0121 707 3012.

Wheels for All is for families and carers who want to experience cycling together in a safe environment for complete beginners and those who need support to increase balance and confidence. A full range of bikes and adaptive bikes is provided. See <http://www.solihullwheelsforall.org/> for more information, including how to access the service.

### **Specialist short breaks activity services**

These are services available to children and families who are formally assessed by Children's Social Care as needing a specialist service i.e. where children have more complex needs and these needs cannot be met through the Universal and Targeted services alone. Each request for a specialist bespoke short break would be considered by the Children's Children with Disability Team Manager or the Resource Allocation Panel in Children's Social Care on a case-by-case basis. Packages of support would be either paid for directly by the council or alternatively a direct payment would be made available.

### **Overnight short breaks (respite)**

Overnight breaks are for families whose child has been assessed by a Social Worker as having significant complex needs and therefore need a longer break where the child or young person spends the night away

from home, or in some cases receives overnight care in their own home. For those who are assessed as requiring overnight short breaks, this is usually fully funded.

The number of nights provided would be dependent on the assessed needs of the individual child. In discussion with the individual's family a bespoke package of support would be agreed, either at Lyndon House (for under 18s) or an alternative provider.

## **Section 3 – How do we consult with families regarding short breaks?**

We seek feedback from parents and carers in a range of ways to help develop short breaks activities in the borough. Over the last few years this has been through online surveys, focus groups, and seeking feedback from service users. Parent representatives were also involved in developing the service specification and evaluating the tenders/applications submitted by potential service providers for our targeted short breaks activity services. Changes have been made to the way we provide Short Breaks in response to this feedback (including increasing the range of organisations providing targeted short breaks).

## **Section 4 – How do we consult with children and young people with disabilities?**

Short breaks providers must obtain feedback from children and young people about the service they receive. A range of communication methods are used to ensure that all children and young people can express their views, however complex their needs. We have also worked with Our Voices Our Services to obtain the views of children and young people at special schools to understand what's important to them when attending activities.

## Appendix A - Legal context

The [Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#) and accompanying [Department for Education Advice for Local Authorities](#) provide details of how local authorities must provide breaks from caring for carers of children and young people with disabilities.

In summary, the regulations require local authorities to:

- ensure that, when making short break provision, they have regard to the needs of different types of carers, not just those who would be unable to continue to provide care without a break;
- provide a range of breaks, as appropriate, during the day, overnight, at weekends and during the school holidays; and
- provide parents with a short breaks services statement detailing the range of available breaks and any eligibility criteria attached to them.

The Department for Education summarises its advice as follows.

Local authorities **must**:

- provide a range of short breaks services;
- give families the choice to access short breaks services using a direct payment
- publish a statement of their short breaks services on their website
- keep their short breaks statement under review;
- state in their short breaks service statement the range of short breaks services available, the criteria by which eligibility for services will be assessed, and how the range of services is

designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children in their area;

- consult parents as part of the review of the statement;
- consider the legal implications of the eligibility criteria they apply to short breaks services; and
- not apply any eligibility criteria mechanistically without consideration of a particular family's needs.

Local authorities **should** ensure that:

- short breaks are reliable and regular to best meet families' needs;
- local authorities should try to reach groups of parents who may be more difficult to engage;
- parents are engaged in the design of local short breaks services;
- short breaks can build on and be offered by universal service providers;
- they are working in partnership with health services to understand the range of short breaks services in their area and to train the workforce;
- short breaks promote greater levels of confidence and competence for young people moving towards adult life;
- local authorities should ensure that those who use short breaks services have the chance to shape the development of those services; and
- they continue to develop their workforce in relation to short breaks services.

It is **good practice** for local authorities to ensure that:

- a “local offer” is considered in order to provide families with access to some short breaks services without any assessment;
- formal assessment of families’ needs leads to a tailored package of services for them;
- in preparing the short breaks services they have thought about how best to share information about disabled children between agencies within existing data protection requirements;
- they have considered working together with partners to ensure strategic sign-off and shared accountability locally for the statement and the services it refers to; and
- commissioning is leading to more responsive short breaks services.

## **Appendix B - About this short breaks service statement**

This document is Solihull Council's Short Breaks Statement. It is intended to provide parents and carers with information about the short breaks services available in the borough, and outline how we are meeting our legal requirements.

This latest version has been updated in autumn 2022 in conjunction with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to ensure that it continues to reflect the current short breaks offer locally, and will be kept under review. This statement will be formally reviewed by the end of 2025 at the latest.

