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WAKEFIELD SHORT BREAKS ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026



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Context

Executive summary: In 2025/26, Wakefield's specialist short breaks offer continued to expand and adapt to changing demand, with increased provider capacity, strengthened oversight, and clear evidence that families value provision; the next stage is to sharpen sufficiency planning, data interpretation, and consistency of delivery so that the service remains responsive, equitable, and sustainable.

Wakefield is committed to ensuring that all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are happy, healthy, safe, and supported to achieve their full potential.

The local authority has a statutory duty to provide short breaks for children and young people with SEND, as outlined in the following legislation:

- Children Act 1989
- Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- NHS Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012)
- Care Act 2014 (particularly in relation to transition to adult social care)

Short breaks are designed to give children and young people with SEND opportunities to enjoy experiences similar to those of their peers – both at home and within their communities. These services help them to participate fully in family life and the wider community.

Short breaks also play a vital role in supporting family carers, enabling them to continue providing care by offering regular respite and reducing the pressures associated with caring responsibilities. For many children and young people with SEND, these services are accessed through universal provision available to all families.

Wakefield offers a range of short breaks for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), delivered through **Universal**, **Targeted**, and **Specialist** provision:

- **Universal Provision**
These are services and activities available to all children and young people, including those with SEND. Examples include mainstream groups and facilities such as Brownies, bowling alleys, parks, and open spaces.

- **Targeted Provision**

These services are specifically designed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. They may include disability-specific sports clubs, swimming sessions, and youth groups tailored to support children with additional needs.

- **Specialist Provision**

This level of support is for children and young people with complex needs that cannot be met through universal or targeted services. It includes provision requiring specialist medical equipment, personal care, or support from highly trained staff. Examples include overnight residential care, nursing support, and groups with high staff-to-child ratios and personal assistants.

Public Sector Equality Duty

All work undertaken in relation to short breaks considers the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' or 'PSED' under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This applies to everything done by local authorities, including its short break provision.

The 'PSED' mandates 'due regard' to a series of needs, being the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between different groups.

Short breaks play a vital role in meeting the diverse needs of disabled children and young people. They contribute to:

- **Reducing barriers to participation** by improving access to mainstream leisure activities, clubs, and community spaces.
- **Promoting equality of opportunity**, helping disabled children enjoy experiences comparable to those of their non-disabled peers.
- **Enhancing visibility and inclusion**, increasing interaction between disabled and non-disabled individuals—including short break staff—which helps reduce stigma and foster positive community relationships.

To be effective, specialist and targeted short breaks must complement broader efforts to make universal services more inclusive, ensuring disabled children are fully integrated into their communities.

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), local authorities must give due regard to these needs when setting budgets and making commissioning decisions. This includes actively considering how short breaks provision can support equality, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations between different groups.

Assessments

Access to specialist short breaks in Wakefield is based on an assessment of need. These assessments are carried out by the following teams:

- Complex Care Needs Team
- Locality Social Workers
- Early Help Team
- Short Breaks Assessment Team

Reassessments may be conducted by the Complex Care Needs Team, Locality Social Workers, or the Short Breaks Assessment Team. These can occur as part of a scheduled review cycle or be initiated at the request of a parent/carer or professional when there has been a significant change in one or more of the following areas of need:

- The child's needs and development
- The parent carer's needs
- The family and home environment

This structured approach ensures that support is tailored to the evolving needs of the child and their family, and that resources are allocated appropriately and fairly.

Specialist Short Breaks Panel

Short Breaks Panel is held every two weeks to oversee the specialist short breaks process and to:

- Reach decisions on requests for specialist short breaks.
- Review specialist short breaks packages.
- Quality assure the short breaks assessments completed by the Short Breaks Assessment Team and Complex Care Needs Team.

This is a multi-agency panel chaired by a Service Manager.

Specialist Short Breaks Team

The Specialist Short Breaks Team is led by the Specialist Short Breaks Manager, supported by:

- 1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) Short Breaks Coordinators
- 2.0 FTE Short Breaks Support Officers

The team plays a central role in the delivery and oversight of specialist short breaks across Wakefield. Its key responsibilities include:

- Coordinating assessments for presentation at the fortnightly Short Breaks Panel.
- Attending, contributing to, and minuting Panel meetings.
- Communicating Panel decisions to parent/carers.
- Liaising with short breaks providers to ensure timely implementation of agreed support following Panel approval.
- Ensuring all short breaks providers—both internal and external—meet required minimum quality standards.
- Planning and delivering holiday group provision for children and young people with SEND.
- Setting up and managing direct payments to families, including monitoring appropriate use of funds.
- Participating in regular contract management meetings with providers, offering support and challenge where necessary, and using these arrangements to monitor quality, management performance, responsiveness, and cost.
- Visiting short breaks provision during the summer holiday period to observe delivery, assess quality in practice, support providers, and maintain a visible presence with children, young people, families, and staff.
- Maintaining ongoing communication with parent/carers to address any issues or concerns related to short break provision, including where arrangements are not meeting the child's needs.

Specialist Short Breaks

The following specialist short breaks support is available for children and young people in the Wakefield District:

- Managed Account – the Council manages the support on behalf of the family, finds the provider and pays the provider directly. The provider can deliver:
 - Individual support in the home for personal care, social and leisure, waking and sleeping nights.
 - Individual support in the community for social and leisure.
 - Term Time and Non-Term Time specialist groups (except Christmas holidays).
- Direct Payment – the family manages all or part of their short breaks support.
- Residential Provision.

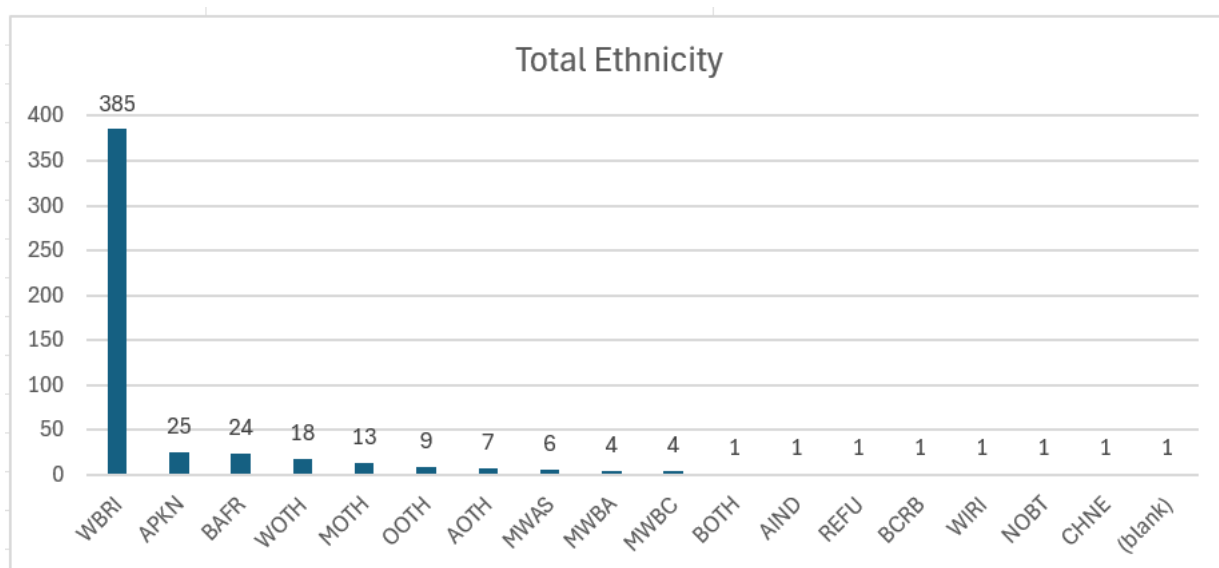
Many providers offer more than one type of support which can include personal support, group social/leisure in the community, individual social/leisure in the community, daytime support in the home, overnight support inside the home or overnight support outside the home. In addition to our internal providers, we commission external providers whose information can be found on Local Offer website: [Wakefield SEND Local Offer | Wakefield SEND Local Offer \(mylocaloffer.org\)](https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/localoffer)

Performance

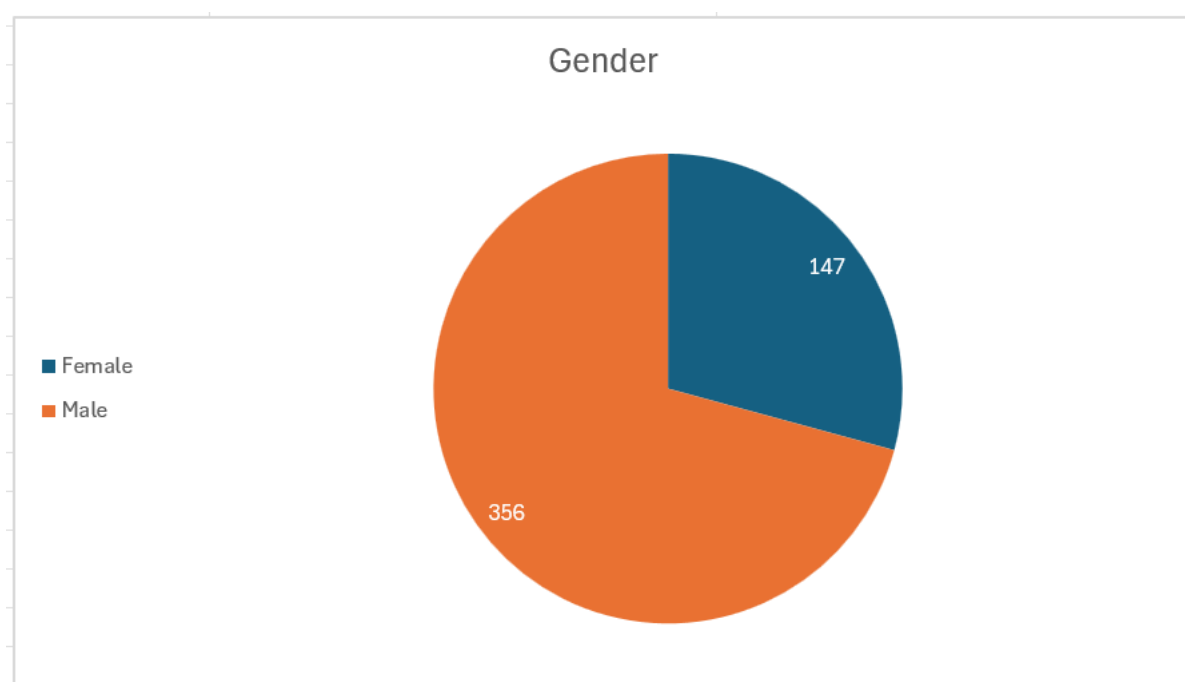
In 2025-26 there were 652 packages of specialist short breaks support arranged for 503 children and young people in Wakefield.

This level of activity demonstrates continued significant demand for specialist short breaks, with provision supporting both children's access to positive experiences and families' ability to sustain caring responsibilities.

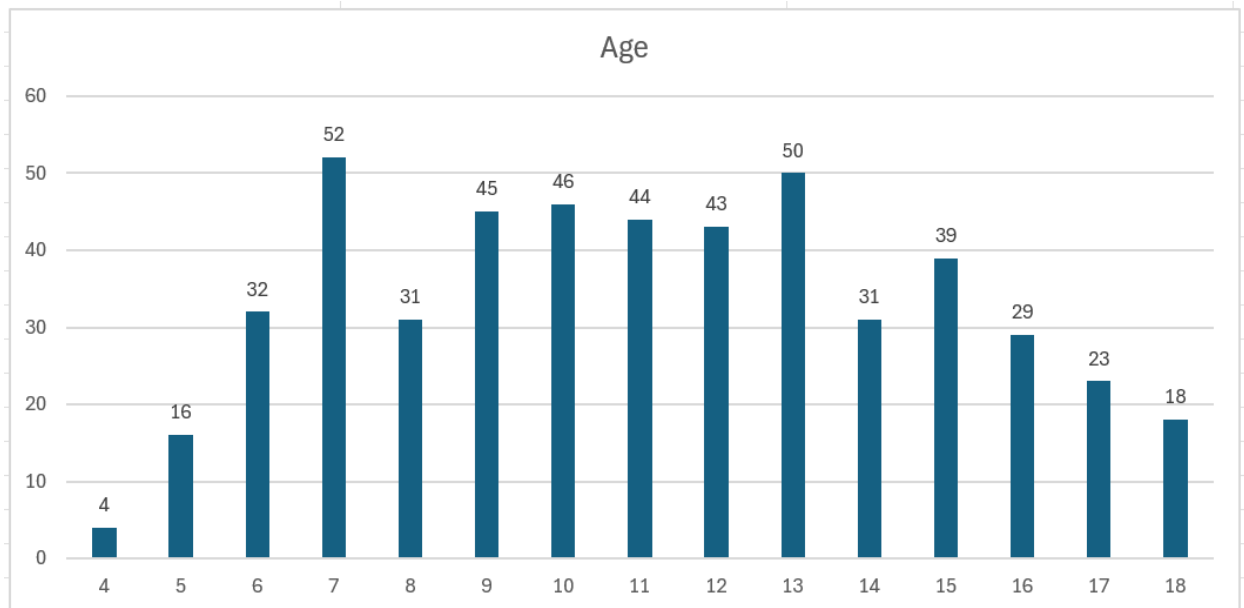
Ethnicity



Gender



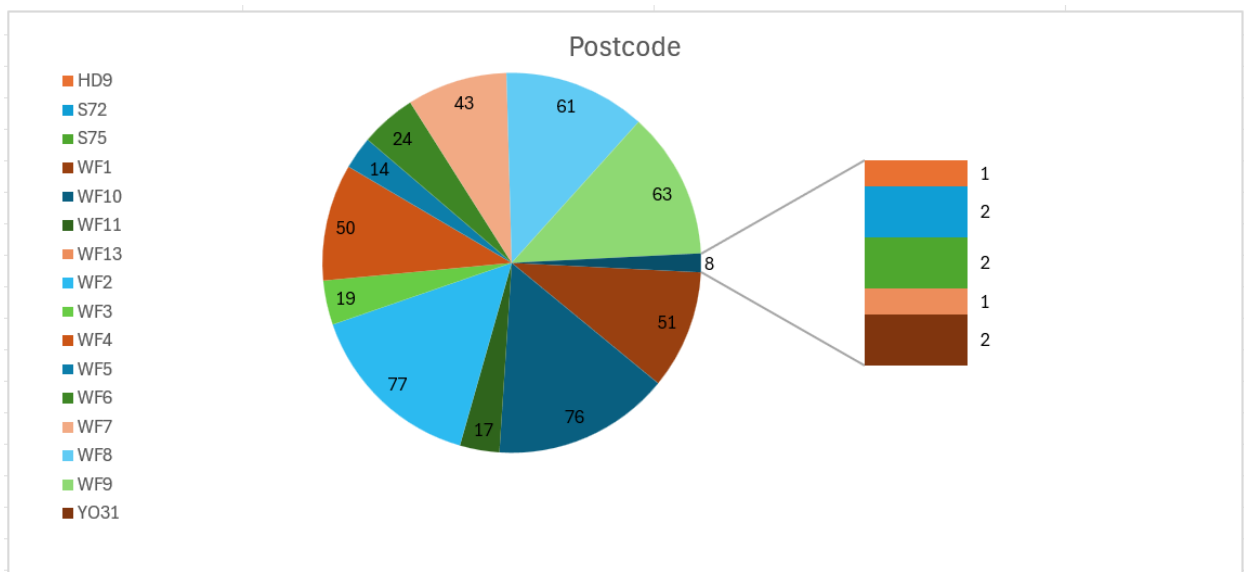
Age

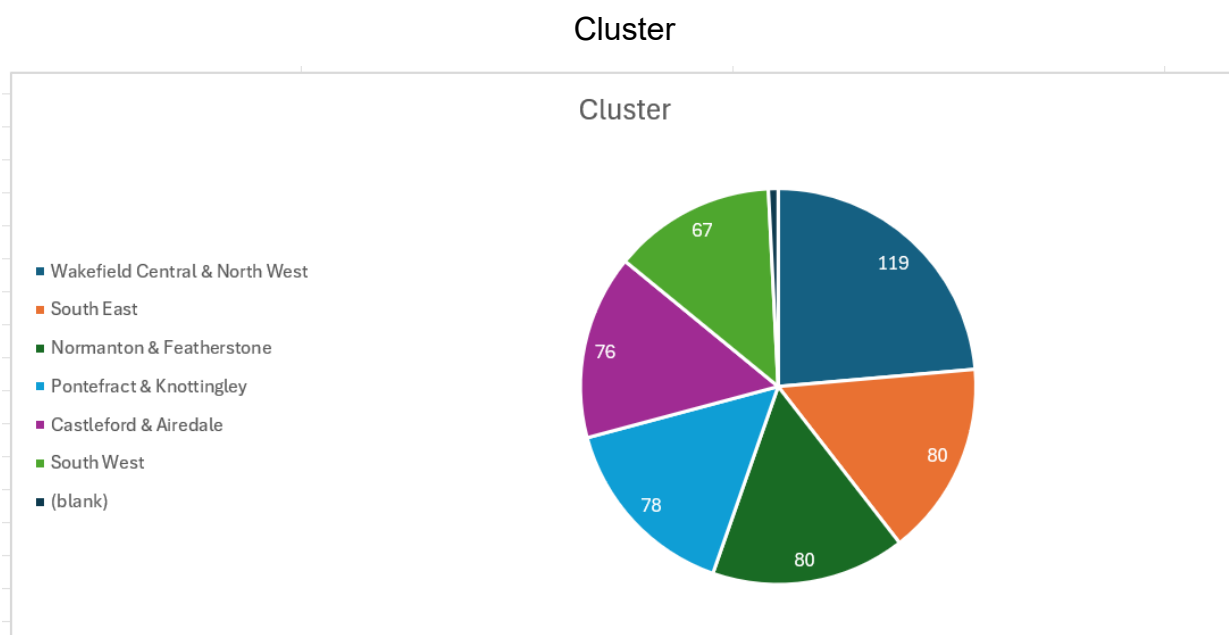


Most of the children and young people who received short breaks in 2025 – 26 were in Key Stage 2 and aged between 7 – 11 years. This represents a change from last year where the biggest group was children in KS3. Additionally, the biggest group are boys.

The charts below indicate the areas where the children and young people in receipt of short breaks reside within the Wakefield district. As much as possible, we use this information to inform the planning of our targeted and specialist short breaks to try to ensure that children and young people can access opportunities within their local areas.

Postcode





Specialist Short Breaks

The table below is the summary of short breaks provision children and young people have received in 2025-26. The figures from previous years are included for comparison but please note that differences in the systems used may make it difficult to compare figures accurately.

The data should be interpreted with caution because historic system changes may affect direct comparability; however, the overall pattern continues to indicate strong demand for social and leisure support, specialist groups, and flexible arrangements that meet family circumstances. Provision*	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026
Managed Account: Personal Care	12	13	13	22	32	21
Managed Account: Social and Leisure	164	184	177	204	295	232
Managed Account: Specialist Groups	102	154	164	221	286	238
Direct Payments	77	71	72	82	130	101
Residential	81	71	68	67	67	60

* some children and young people access more than one service as part of their support package

A total of 115 children and young people ceased support in 2025-26:

Turned 18 Years Old	25
No longer needed to access Short Breaks support	69
Package ceased – no longer engaging	13
Moved out of district	7
Other	1

Compliments and Complaints

Wakefield is committed to delivering high-quality short breaks that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, support their families, and engage a skilled and responsive provider network. We strive for excellence in all aspects of service delivery.

To achieve this, we actively seek and value feedback from both service users and providers. We listen carefully to what they tell us and use this insight to inform service development, improve practice, and ensure that provision remains relevant, inclusive, and effective.

One formal complaint was received in 2025/26 which was partially upheld.

Complaint and feedback themes:

The Specialist Short Breaks Team have been proactive in dealing with issues when they arise but listed below are main themes of issues that families have raised:

- Consistency of carers for support packages in the community
- Quality of information given by providers for support packages in the community

Each concern or issue is addressed fully with the provider, actions put in place and improvements monitored.

Compliments

These are a selection of the compliments received about short breaks. They evidence that the service is very much valued by families, professionals and children and young people alike. We also get compliments from providers and occasionally, members of the public.

From a parent:

I wanted to say thank you very much for allowing my son to have a place on the playscheme as he has been there for 3 days and has loved every minute and it has worked out perfectly for both him and our family.

From a social worker:

I would like to pass on my thanks to the care agency who are supporting this child. I went to visit last night and was really pleased with how happy he was in their care. Both care workers were caring, calm and understood his needs. It was a real pleasure to observe. I also want to thank them for the speed in which they have supported this family on an emergency basis.

From a young person to their carer:

It has been so great having you as a part of my life this past year and a half. I am glad that you have gotten to see the person that I have become. You are really special to me. I will never forget you. I have so much love for you. You've been so kind and it's much appreciated. I will miss you, however I am confident that I will thrive in this next chapter of my life. I think you are such an amazing person. I hope that I run into you in the future when I am a firefighter and I can show you all of what I have accomplished. Thank you so much and goodbye.

From a parent:

I just wanted to commend the service and staff at the group my son attends. The staff are professional, kind and caring and are always so pleased to see him. They give really good feedback on how the day has gone and always plan stimulating and exciting activities for the children. It is so nice to not have any worries about the service which is looking after my son.

From a parent:

My daughter has been to groups on a couple of occasions now and has really settled. I want to thank everyone for their time and support in getting her settled. I am very grateful for all the help and support she has received.

Wakefield Parent Carer Forum and Short Breaks

Wakefield Parent Carer Forum is an independent parent carer forum supporting families of children with special educational needs and/or disability, aged 0-25 years old, living in the Wakefield district. The forum is led by a group of local SEND parents who listen to, and represent the views of parents, carers, children and young people now and in the future. They work in partnership with service commissioners and providers through participation and co-production to make a positive difference and improve the quality of life for all SEND children and families in Wakefield.

They regularly involve forum members in developing local SEND services, feeding back their experiences, and raising any areas of concern. They also share examples of good practice and pass on positive feedback where things are working well and recognition is deserved.

Wakefield Parent Carer Forum work in co-production with Wakefield Council & Wakefield Integrated Care Board, which means they are involved in most things SEND related across the district.

Since they launched, the forum has met on a fortnightly basis to highlight any issues, share information and discuss any plans for the district. The co-production meetings include the Local Authority, the Integrated Care Board, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service, Educational Psychology, and the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Team plus invited special guests such as local councillors, and other service managers. These meetings have proved to be an invaluable tool to all parties involved and have helped to build a strong working relationship with all members.

In addition to their day-to-day work supporting SEND parent/carers within the Wakefield district, they are involved in the following work streams, attending meetings, sharing parent/carer voice, and positively challenging areas they feel could be improved:

- SEND Strategic Board
- SEND Provision Working Group Meeting
- WPCF, LA & ICB Co-production Meeting
- Local Offer Refresh Meeting
- ASD Strategy Group
- Wakefield Council SENCO Conference
- Service Co Design Meeting
- Family Hubs

What we've achieved in 2025-26 in Specialist Short Breaks

The provider framework has continued to grow, increasing the range of options available to families and improving capacity across holiday groups, term-time groups, and support delivered in the home and community.

Happy Healthy Holidays Funding

We have been successful in accessing funding from the government's Happy Healthy Holidays scheme which has meant that we have been able to provide more support to children and young people with SEND and their families over the summer holidays and offer free lunch for those who are eligible with free school meals.

In summer 2025 we were able to provide:

Number of:	
Sessions	280
CYP	68

Comparison over three years:

	Specialist CYP that accessed summer groups:	Targeted CYP that accessed summer groups:	Total:
2022	154	56	210
2023	177	58	235
2024	195	77	272
2025	199	68	267

Short Breaks Survey

In summer 2025, the Specialist Short Breaks Team conducted a survey to gather feedback from families accessing short breaks. The aim was to better understand their experiences and identify areas for improvement across the service.

Insights from the survey were used to inform targeted actions, including:

- Clearer guidance given to parents on the use of Direct Payment budgets
- A Short Breaks Handbook was written and issued to caseworkers to give information that could be used to support parent decisions around short breaks provision
- Guidance on the expected information to be given to new families was issued to all providers of Social and Leisure packages in the community to bring a greater level of consistency

A new survey is planned for the 2026 to continue gathering valuable feedback and ensure services remain responsive to the needs of those who use them.

Short Breaks Sufficiency Group

A new multi-disciplinary professionals' panel was created in order to oversee the Short Breaks processes for Wakefield Council. This panel aims to measure the effectiveness of the current provision and plan for future needs.

New Short Breaks Providers

One new Short Breaks group provider joined the framework to deliver holiday groups for children and young people. Eight new Short Breaks Social and Leisure providers were admitted to Wakefield's Short Breaks Framework and began to support young people across Wakefield significantly adding to the capacity of the service to support families at the times of their choosing.

This expansion is strategically important because it increases choice, improves local availability, and reduces reliance on a narrower provider base at a time of rising and more complex demand.

Emergency Provision

This year saw a substantial increase in the number of emergency short breaks support packages needed where families were in crisis. The increase led to a review of the processes and systems used and procedures were modified to make the processes smoother for families and for members of the teams involved.

Future Plans for Specialist Short Breaks

Wakefield is continuing to enhance its short breaks offer for children and young people with SEND through a number of key developments:

Future priorities are rightly focused on sufficiency, workforce capability, digital information-sharing, and stronger links with health partners so that provision can keep pace with increasing complexity and demand.

- An increase in the number of term time groups available will be in place from September 2026 to meet rising demand.
- A funding bid for Summer 2026 was submitted to support the continued delivery of a diverse range of short breaks, ensuring both targeted and specialist provision is available during the school holiday.
- Work is underway to improve the links between the Short Breaks Service and Health agencies who can deliver specialised training to carers so that they can better support young people with complex health needs.
- Digital systems used by the Short Breaks Team and Social Care are in the process of changing so that information is shared more easily, access is faster for those who need it and important updates are shared more quickly.
- The landscape of SEND and Social Care is changing and the Short Breaks are adapting to the increase in numbers and need to engage with more services. This means all procedures and processes will continue to be systematically reviewed by the team to ensure they remain fit for purpose.