**Wakefield   
SHORT BReaks  
Annual Report   
2021 - 2022** 

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# Context

Wakefield is ambitious for all its children and young people, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We want to ensure that they are happy, healthy, safe, supported and able to reach their full potential.

The local authority has a legal duty to provide short breaks for children and young people with SEND under the provision of:

* Children Act 1989
* Breaks for Carers of Disables 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 (in relation to transition to adult social care)

Short breaks are services that are provided to children and young people with SEND to experience things that other children and young people do, both at home and in their community, and enable them to play a full part in their families and the wider community.

They also enable family carers to continue to provide the care that enables children with disabilities to be fully part of their families.  For most children and young people with SEND these are provided by services that are available to everybody.

Within Wakefield, Short Breaks can include **Universal, Targeted** and **Specialist** provision.

* **Universal -** Services and activities for everyone including children and young people with a disability. Examples would include; Brownies, bowling, access to parks and open spaces.
* **Targeted –** Services and activities that are designed specifically to meet the needs of children and young people with a disability, for example, disability sports groups and disability youth groups.
* **Specialist –** Services and activities that are for children and young people with complex needs that cannot be met by other short breaks, such as those children who need specialist medical equipment, personal care or support from specialist trained workers.  Examples of services include overnight residential services, connect carers, nursing support and personal assistants.

# Public Sector Equality Duty

All work undertaken with regard to short breaks takes into account 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.

The provision of short breaks to disabled children is obviously relevant to addressing all of these needs, as short breaks:

* Help address the discrimination disabled children face in being able to access mainstream leisure activities, clubs and so on;
* Promote equality of opportunity for disabled children compared with their non-disabled peers; and
* Increase disabled children’s visibility in the community and their contact with non-disabled people (including short break workers), thus reducing stigma and improving community relations. In this regard specialist and targeted short breaks must supplement wider efforts to promote community inclusion for disabled children, particularly through making universal services more inclusive.

As a result there must be careful consideration by local authorities of the needs specified under the PSED when budgets are set and commissioning decisions are taken.

# Assessments

An assessment of need is required to access specialist short breaks support and they are carried out by the Complex Care Needs Team and the Short Breaks Assessment Team. The majority of new requests for assessment come from the Children’s First Hubs. Reassessments are also carried out by the Complex Care Needs Team or the Short Breaks Assessment Team. These can be part of a regular review cycle or at the request of a parent/carer or a professional where there has been a significant change in one of the three areas of need.

The three areas of need considered at an assessment or reassessment are:

* Child’s needs and development
* Parent carer’s needs
* Family and environment

In 2021-22 a total of 153 new referrals was received for short breaks support. Parents and carers were contacted and 10 did not meet specialist short breaks criteria. They were sign posted to target and universal services. A total of 143 new assessments were conducted. Of these 28 children and young people and their families’ needs could be met more appropriately by universal and targeted services.

The remaining 125 new assessments along with the child or young person’s care and support plan are checked and signed off by the team managers which is then presented at the Short Breaks Panel. This represents a 56% increase on the 80 conducted in 2020-21. 187 re-assessments, in line with 2020-21, were conducted.

A total of 66 children and young people ceased support in 2021-22:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Turned 18 Years Old | 25 |
| No longer want to access Short Breaks support | 29 |
| Receiving support via the family | 1 |
| Package ceased | 1 |
| Moved out of district | 5 |
| Other | 5 |

# Short Breaks Panel

The Short Breaks Panel was established in November 2019 with the remit to oversee the Short Breaks process.

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

It is a multi-agency panel chaired by Julie Killey, Head of Service and Sue Sharp, WISENDSS Service Manager which meets every 2 weeks.

# Short Breaks Team

The Short Breaks Team is headed up by the Short Breaks Support Manager, Arielle Jardenico, supported by 1.5fte Short Breaks Co-ordinators and a 1.0fte Short Breaks Support Officer.

The team’s core roles are:

* To co-ordinate assessments for consideration at the Short Breaks Panel, which sits fortnightly;
* To attend, contribute to and minute the Short Breaks Panel;
* To inform parent/carer(s) of the outcomes of Panel;
* To liaise with Short Breaks providers to ensure that those approved for Short Breaks are picked up at the earliest possible opportunity following on from a panel decision;
* To ensure that providers used for Short Breaks, both internal and external meet minimum standards;
* To hold regular contract meetings with providers, supporting and challenging providers appropriately where problems may arise;
* Liaise with parent/carer(s) regarding all aspects of short break provision, including where provision is not working for whatever reason.

# 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
  + Individual support in the home for personal care, 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
* Connect Care [connect-care-leaflet.pdf (wakefield.gov.uk)](https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Documents/schools-children/fostering/connect-care-leaflet.pdf)

A list of all the providers along with the support they offer can be found in the Local Offer. <https://wakefield.mylocaloffer.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=4018>

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, overnight support outside the home. In addition to our internal providers we commission the following providers:

Aspire2b

Care Angels

Care Mark

Carers Trust

Connect Short Breaks

Pacific and Gold

Prestige Nursing & Care

Sense Short Breaks

Stride Theatre

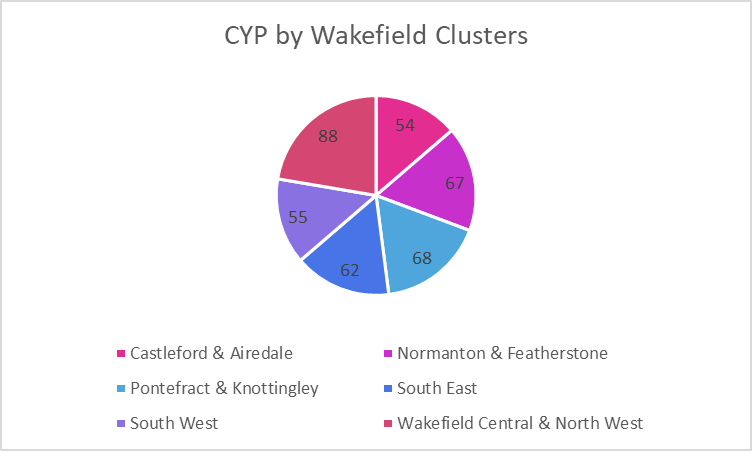
The Endorphins Group – Sports Work

# Performance

In 2021-22 there were 394 children and young people that received specialist short breaks support. This is an increase of 17.6% on 2020-21. The children and young people in receipt of the short breaks service are predominantly male and White British.

The majority of children and young people receiving short breaks continues to be those aged between 8 – 11 years old, in Key Stage 2.

The chart below indicates the areas where the children and young people in receipt of short breaks reside within the Wakefield district. Although not always 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 access opportunities within their local areas.



## 

## Specialist Short Breaks

The table below is the summary of short breaks provision children and young people have received in 2021-22. The figures for 2020-21 are included for comparison.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Provision** | **2020 - 2021** | **2021 - 2022** |
| Managed Account | 278 | 296 |
| Personal Care | 12 | 13 |
| Social and Leisure | 164 | 184 |
| Term Time Specialist Groups | 12 | 11 |
| Non-Term Time Specialist Groups | 90 | 143 |
| Direct Payments | 77 | 71 |
| Residential | 81 | 71 |
| Mixed Packages\* | 131 | 82 |

\*the figure provided is also accounted for in the relevant provision, this data has been supplied to give indication that 82 out of 394 children and young people receive more than one provision.

# Compliments and Complaints

We constantly strive for excellence, ensuring that children and young people with SEND have their needs met, families feel supported, and that we have a workforce of engaged providers who are well-matched to meet need. In order to achieve this, we actively seek out feedback from service users and providers, listening to what they tell us and acting upon it.

The total number of complaints received in 2021-2022 was three.

## Complaint and feedback themes:

* Inconsistency of staff from providers and poor communication
* Transport not showing up as arranged
* Unhappy with the support awarded

Through regular contract management meetings with our providers we have sought to address the theme of inconsistency and poor communication. We have recognised the additional pressures providers have experienced with regards to staff sickness and recruitment because of the Covid-19 pandemic and regulations around testing and self-isolation. We have established positive working relationships with our providers which enable us to have honest discussions and challenge practice where we feel it has fallen short of what we would expect. We encourage our providers to alert us to potential pressures in the system so that we can work together to provide quick resolutions.

Wherever possible we seek to address transport issues as soon as we are alerted to them, to ensure that children and young people do not miss out on the opportunities afford to them by attending specialist groups.

Feedback

Through wider feedback and regular contact with our Parent Carer Forum, we need to explore extending our current provision to include support for young people 18 to 25 years old to prevent them from going into crisis. This will keep them attending local colleges with their peers and in their community.

We also need to fill the gap for young people with Autism, SEMH and / or behaviours that challenge to support those not accessing an educational setting back into their school or college at the earliest opportunity. This cohort will need a more creative and bespoke approach as often they are unwilling or unable to access the support, we have available.

Compliments

These are a selection of quoted compliments received. They evidence that the service is very much valued by families and children and young people alike. Compliments are also received from our providers.

*“The contact with the SEND team worked really well. They were there to answer any questions via email and to contact when needing something clearing up via email. The All About Me forms were a good idea the forms work well.” - Provider*

*“Jxxxx loves going to STRIDE and spending time with his PA. He loves STRIDE so much that he never wants to leave when I collect him. The support I receive from Specialist Short Breaks is really supporting myself, Mxxxxx and Axxx to be able to have a break from our caring role and spend time together doing things which we often struggle to do whilst caring for Jxxxx.*

*We have watched Jxxxx grow in the enjoyment of attending group and it is a pleasure to see that he likes it so much, enjoys going out, and doesn’t always want to come home.” - Parent*

*“Kxxxx always has a massive smile on his face on the day that he knows that (his carer) is arriving.” - Parent*

*“My son who is non-verbal has developed social skills and self-esteem since going out with (carer)” - Parent*

*“Over the last two years we have had difficult times where Jxxxxx has been anxious and worried, which has led to poor sleep and lack of understanding routines and boundaries. Short Breaks has allowed some stability back into his life and given him time away from home life to socialise, which has been invaluable. The staff have been amazing with us as a family.” - Parent*

*“I like Aspire 2 B because I can do gaming. The staff are nice and friendly.” - Young person*

# What we have achieved in 2021-22

## Our ongoing response to the Covid 19 pandemic

As restrictions permitted, we were delighted to be able to reinstate our face-to-face specialist and targeted holiday provision. For the children and young people with SEND, this has meant them being able to actively engage with others outside of the home, broadening their social experiences. We have remained mindful of the anxieties expressed by some families of children and young people with SEND and have worked with them and providers to support alternatives where necessary.

A significant challenge to the delivery of provision has been the availability of staff. Our providers have endeavoured to meet the commitments they had undertaken, however there have been instances where staff have been unavailable due to either covid-related illness or the need to self-isolate. Providers have also experienced difficulties in the recruitment of new staff. This has had a negative impact on waiting times. We would like to thank all our providers for the efforts they have put in to ensure that our children and young people received the support to which they are entitled, and to thank our families for their patience at what has been a challenging time for all.

## Keeping parents/carers informed of progress

Parents/carers are informed, by letter, of the outcome of Short Breaks Panel decisions. The children and young people are then included in a waiting list which is sent to providers. On picking up a case, the provider then makes direct contact with the family to arrange the implementation of the support package.

Our waiting list is monitored frequently, and it became evident that some families were waiting for longer than 13 weeks for a provider to engage with them, often because of the recruitment and staffing issues relating to the Covid 19 pandemic, which reduced capacity within the system.

To reassure families that we are still actively searching for an appropriate provider we have initiated a system of contacting families in weeks 6, 9 and 13 following agreements of a support package.

## Expansion of targeted provision in summer 2021

As a result of a successful submission to the Happy Health Holidays Fund, and the ability to deliver face-to-face rather than virtual sessions, we were able to extend the support offered to children and young people with SEND and their families over the summer holidays 2021.

In summer 2021 we were able to provide:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of:** | **Targeted Groups:** | **Specialist Groups:** | **Total:** |
| **Sessions** | 355 | 483 | 838 |
| **CYP** | 93 | 91 | 184 |

In 2020 we had to deliver our groups virtually, over an extended 7-week period, in 2021 we delivered face-to-face provision over a four-week period.

Comparison between Summer 2020 and Summer 2021

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CYP accessing**  **Targeted Groups:** | **CYP accessing**  **Specialist Groups:** | **Total:** |
| **2020** | 23 | 68 | 91 |
| **2021** | 93 | 91 | 184 |
| **% increase** | **304%** | **34%** | **102%** |

While the change in delivery method undoubtedly had an impact, comparisons between 2019 (pre-Covid pandemic) and 2021 still shows a significant increase in service delivery.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CYP accessing**  **Targeted Groups:** | **CYP accessing**  **Specialist Groups:** | **Total:** |
| **2019** | 37 | 52 | 89 |
| **2020** | 23 | 68 | 91 |
| **2021** | 93 | 91 | 184 |

This shows a percentage increase across the two year period of 151% for targeted support and 43% for specialist support with an overall percentage increase of 107%.

A further bid for funding has been submitted for summer 2022.

## The incorporation of Direct Payments into the Short Breaks Support Team

As outlined in our previous annual report, the responsibility for the setting up of Direct Payments moved across to the Short Breaks Support Team in April 2021. This was the final aspect of the Short Breaks Review. This has streamlined the service to families and means that all Short Breaks support services are managed by one team.

The next developmental step in the use of the Liquidlogic central records management system to enable Direct Payments to be made. The Short Breaks Support Manager is currently working with Liquidlogic support staff to develop this capability.

## Developing the use of Liquidlogic

The introduction of Liquidlogic as the central records management system for Children and Young People’s Services provided an opportunity for the Short Breaks Team to examine how assessments and re-assessments are processed, recorded and monitored. The Short Breaks Support Manager has worked extensively with the Liquidlogic support team to explore the functionality of the system and streamline processes for practitioners. In consultation with the managers of the Complex Care Needs Team and Short Breaks Assessment Team we were able to complete the transition ahead of schedule, going live from 14th March 2022 rather than the anticipated start date of September 2022.

As a result of the utilisation of the Liquidlogic functionality, the use of Care Partner (Imosphere) and the associated reporting software (Amolytics) will end on 30 April 2022. This represents a cost saving of £28K p.a. in terms of software purchasing.

## All About Me Forms

These documents act as a key point of information between families and the providers of our targeted and specialist groups. The document sets out details of the child or young person’s needs, including any medical needs, and their likes and dislikes, and their preferred communication methods.

It was recognised that, where some children and young people had been accessing short breaks provision for some time, many of the documents required updating or finishing as they had not been fully completed. A programme of reviewing ‘All About Me’ forms was undertaken, with parents/carers contacted by telephone to complete them.

The result is a fully completed and update set of forms which are shared with our providers, enabling them to plan activities to meet the needs of and engage the children and young people more effectively, as well as having accurate and up to date health information to secure the safety of the child/young person.

## EHCP Advice

Following the success of the pilot to improve social care input into EHCP’s conducted between March and December 2021, permission has been given to appointment to a new post to continue this work. When a case progresses to Stage 2 assessment for EHCP the family will be contacted to have an initial conversation. This initial conversation will support the identification of any unmet social care needs and will be an opportunity to provide the family with information around the Local Offer and services available. From this initial conversation a decision will be made with the family whether a full needs assessment is completed. There will also be support to workers when a case is allocated to enable them to provide advice for the EHCP.

# Future Plans

## Further development of the use of Liquidlogic

The Short Breaks Team will continue to explore how this tool can be used to improve our service to families.

Work is currently being undertaken to identify how Direct Payments can be processed through the system. This will ensure that payments are accurate and made at regular intervals. It will also increase capacity within the Short Breaks Support Team, ensuring that implementation times are reduced, and monitoring systems are established.

The use of Liquidlogic to provide regular performance reports is also being explored. This will provide a rich vein of data around Key Performance Indicators which will enable the establishment of targets for further service improvement, ensuring that our families receive the very best service possible.

## Updating of the Short Breaks Statement

The Short Breaks Statement is due for review.

There is a request from the Parent Carer Forum for it to include a clear pathway diagram with an explanation of what parents/carers can expect at each stage of the process. We will continue to work closely with them to ensure that the statement is fit for purpose and accessible.

As part of our drive to make all documents accessible we will produce an Easy Read version for children and young people, engaging with the Shout Out for Change group for ideas as to what needs to be included.

## Self Assessment

Initial consultation has taken place with the Parent Carer Forum who would welcome a self-assessment process for accessing short breaks. It is agreed that the need for professional assessment is required to access specialist short breaks, however the use of a self-assessment form to access targeted short breaks. Those who did not meet the criteria could be signposted to appropriate universal provision.

## DfE Respite Innovation Programme implementation

Wakefield Council is delighted to have been successful in submitting a bid for funding from the Department for Education. The funding will allow further short breaks for children and young people aged 12 to 25 with Autism and/or SEMH needs, including those with anxieties that are preventing them from re-engaging with society following the Covid pandemic.

The funding is for one year in the first instance, however success will be carefully monitored and we intend to apply for further funding in years two and three of the programme.