**Wakefield SHORT BReaks  
Annual Report   
2023 - 2024**

Laura Cole

Interim Specialist Short Breaks Manager

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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 or 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, swimming, 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, nursing support and groups with a high ratio of highly trained adults 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.

The provision of short breaks to disabled children is obviously relevant to addressing all 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. Most new requests for assessment come from the Short Breaks Assessment Team and 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 2023-24 a total of 136 new referrals were received for short breaks support. Parents and carers were contacted and 29 did not meet specialist short breaks criteria. They were signposted to targeted and universal services. A total of 105 new assessments were completed.

This represents a 7% decrease on the 147 conducted in 2022/23. 261 re-assessments were conducted, a 1% decrease on 2022/23 (263).

A total of 75 children and young people ceased support in 2023-24:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Turned 18 Years Old | 16 |
| No longer needed to access Short Breaks support | 46 |
| Package ceased – no longer engaging | 6 |
| Moved out of district | 0 |
| Other | 7 |

# Short Breaks Panel

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

It is a multi-agency panel chaired by a Service Manager which meets every 2 weeks.

# Specialist Short Breaks Team

The Specialist Short Breaks Team is managed by the Specialist Short Breaks Manager supported by 1.5fte Short Breaks Co-ordinators and 2.0fte Short Breaks Support Officers.

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 supported from 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 organise and deliver holiday group provision.
* To set up and oversee direct payments to parents including the monitoring of appropriate spend.
* To participate in 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. 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://wakefield.mylocaloffer.org/)

# Performance

In 2023-24 there were 464 children and young people who received specialist short breaks support. This represents a 17.9% increase on the number of children and young people who accessed the service in 2022-23. The children and young people in receipt of the short breaks service are predominantly male and white British.

A white paper with black text and red and black text

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Most of the children and young people receiving short breaks continue to be those aged between 8 – 11 years old, in Key Stage 2. Additionally, the biggest group are boys.

A graph of age and stages

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A screenshot of a graph

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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.

A pie chart with numbers and a diagram

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A pie chart with numbers and text

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## Specialist Short Breaks

The table below is the summary of short breaks provision children and young people have received in 2023-24. The figures from previous years are included for comparison.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Provision\*** | **2020 - 2021** | **2021 - 2022** | **2022 - 2023** | **2023 - 2024** |
| Managed Account: Personal Care | 12 | 13 | 13 | 22 |
| Managed Account: Social and Leisure | 164 | 184 | 177 | 204 |
| Managed Account: Term Time Specialist Groups | 12 | 11 | 10 | 18 |
| Managed Account: Non-Term Time Specialist Groups | 90 | 143 | 154 | 203 |
| Direct Payments | 77 | 71 | 72 | 82 |
| Residential | 81 | 71 | 68 | 67 |
| Mixed packages | 131 | 82 | 89 | 122 |

\* Mixed packages are where a child or young person accesses more than one service as part of their support package

# 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.

There were no formal complaints received in 2023/24.

## Complaint and feedback themes:

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

* Inconsistency of staff from providers and poor communication.
* Type of support is not what was asked for by parents.

Compliments

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

*‘Just to let you know that she came back very very happy and enthusiastic and ....tired. I don't know what she did but I can tell from her face that she enjoyed a lot. Staff from transport was amazing as welll. I am not so sure to who I need to say thank you but please send all my gratitude to everyone and big Thank you’*

*‘The process in terms of starting our respite has been amazing so far. We had a visit from the care company yesterday who were very understanding, knowledgeable and professional and they have already found a Support Worker for our son. They were flexible in terms of when we receive the respite and it turns out to be at a much better day and time for us than I had expected. They really took the time to get to know us and our son's needs and they made me feel confident about them and the support that we will receive. I am so excited and feel truly privileged to have this support available to us. I know we are on the journey and there is a way to go in terms of our son accepting the respite etc but I am so hopeful that if it works out, it will literally be life changing for us all.’*

*‘My son had his first support session with the provider on Friday, his worker connected with him, they remained in the home for the two hours so I hope that they can build on their relationship and then she will take him out in the community as discussed and documented in his assessment.’*

*‘My son has enjoyed going out with his carers. He has 2 carers so the support is consistent, if one worker isn't available the other one will come. The workers are always on time and provide pictures of what he has been going. The agency is accommodating of the family's needs and have swapped sessions around when needed for family holiday, appointments, etc. The workers listen to my requests of what I want my son to do.’*

*‘We are about to go away for summer but I wanted to let you know how amazing the provider and support worker have been. The carer is absolutely amazing with my son and they have built up a fantastic relationship already. Because of missing the odd weekend when we've been away, we had "banked" some hours and my son has been managing some FOUR HOUR sessions with the carer. We cannot believe it and the uninterrupted time that we get to catch up on life admin / work or like last weekend when we both just had an afternoon nap which is unheard of, ever!!!!!’*

# Feedback

Wakefield Parent Carer Forum gathered feedback from SEND parent/carers which identified a feeling of isolation from SEND families across the district and highlighted the need to provide inclusive and accessible SEND family fun days.

WPCF were pleased to be commissioned by Wakefield Council as part of the Short Breaks Innovation Funding to deliver five SEND Family Fun Days. After conducting surveys with local SEND families, we planned and hosted several events including, indoor circus themed fun days, outdoors forest themed fun days at This Green Moon, pantomime visits and a day trip to The Deep in Hull, all with reasonable adjustments as a standard and delivered to meet the needs of every family.

Feedback from families attending has been very positive and has evidenced that families have benefited immensely from spending quality time together as a whole family, peer support and their child interacting with other children with the similar interests and needs. Families have reported feeling less isolated, having a support network of other SEND families and the confidence to attend events we host in the future.

We also needed to fill a gap for young people with SEND who are not attending school due to anxiety or mental health issues with the aim to reintegrate them into school in the future. This group needs the opportunity to meet, socialise, share experiences and engage in enjoyable, educational activities tailored to their needs. We now have a service via the DfE innovation short breaks funding to address this.

# What we have achieved in 2023-24

## The number of providers on our framework has continued to grow so that we are able to offer a wider range of choices to parents to meet the needs of the children and young people.

## A successful bid for innovation funding from the DfE enabled us to provide more family activities and gave carers and parents the opportunity to meet and share experiences. Siblings of children and young people who live with SEND were also included in some of the group support offered.

## Happy Healthy Holidays Funding

We have been successful in accessing funding from Happy Healthy Holidays 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 2023 we were able to provide:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Number of:** |  |
| **Sessions** | 156 |
| **CYP** | 235 |

Comparison between Summer 2022 and Summer 2023

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Specialist CYP that accessed summer groups:** | **Targeted**  **CYP that accessed summer groups:** | **Total:** |
| **2022** | 154 | 56 | 210 |
| **2023** | 177 | 58 | 235 |
| **%** | **15% increase** | **4% increase** | **12% increase** |

## 

## EHCP Advice

From October 2023 until March 2024 110 initial discussions took place with only 2 out of the 110 conversations completed resulting in a full assessment.

The detailed initial conversation provides comprehensive tailored advice to families. Following this, the majority decide that they do not feel it is necessary for them to progress to a full social care assessment as they are now aware of the wider support they can access without the need for an assessment. This is then recorded as EHC social care advice.

Examples of feedback from parents:

*‘Thanks ever so much for this information. It was really nice to meet you too.*

*It’s such a nice feeling that there is so much help and support out there.*

*Thanks for sharing this with us.’*

*‘I'm just opening the links now; they all seem really helpful.*

*Thank you for your time and for the useful information.’*

*‘Firstly, thank you for taking the time to speak to me on Wednesday. It was a very useful conversation and it was much appreciated. Thank you also for emailing those resources. I will take a look and see if there’s anything that might be beneficial to us, either now or in the future.’*

# Future Plans

## Due to the increase in short breaks support needed, we have appointed an additional short breaks support officer to the Specialist Short Breaks Team. A significant part of this role will be to implement a structured direct payment monitoring system to support all our families in the administration of personal budgets.

## We are working to identify and integrate a wider range of holiday group providers so that more physically active groups are available to our children and young people.

## We hope to add to our term time group offer by adding another group to our framework for either weekends or weekdays within the school year.

## Updating of the Short Breaks Statement

The Short Breaks Statement has also been reviewed in June 2024.

After a request from the Parent Carer Forum, it now includes a clear pathway diagram with an explanation of what parents/carers can expect at each stage of the process.

## Self Assessment

A self-assessment process for accessing short breaks was developed and utilised in the last year. Those who did not meet the criteria were signposted to appropriate universal provision. Currently, as requests for assessment are met in a timely manner by the Short Breaks Assessment Team, self-assessment is not in use. However, if this is needed in the future, it will be implemented once again.

## DfE Short Break Innovation Programme

Wakefield Council was successful in bidding for Year Three of the Short Breaks Innovation Programme funded through the Department for Education. This is following a successful two years of funding under this programme. This has allowed for the provision of further short breaks support for children and young people with SEND. The funding received so far has provided the following support:

* Supported SEND CYP who are disengaged and require a bespoke package of support that is additional to and different from our existing short breaks offer. These young people are required to have one or more of the following areas of need:
  + Social Emotional Mental Health needs (SEMH)
  + Autism
  + Behaviours that challenge
  + Emotion based school avoidance
* Support for 16 - 25-year-olds with an EHCP and in need of support with preparing for adulthood activities.
* Age-appropriate evening respite activities to address the current gap for 18–24-year-olds providing sessions each week.
* School holiday provision for children and young people with SEND and their siblings to give parents and carers a break.
* Family fun day activities delivered by Wakefield’s Parent Carer Forum for families who have a child or young person with Special Educational Needs. ‘Family’ includes parents, carers, siblings and other family members.
* SEND CYP aged 5-18 and siblings for extended school holiday provision.
* A new youth club covering Wakefield’s ‘Five Towns’.
* After school activities, including post 16/preparation for adulthood provision.

The additional funding in year three will allow the Council to expand or create new short breaks provision for SEND children and their families, with a focus on preparing young people for adulthood, and provide more intensive support to young people aged 12 and over who have autism and/or social, emotional, and mental health needs. Short breaks provision will be during the week with a view to engaging isolated children who are Electively Home Educated/not in school to encourage transition back to school and/or helping to reduce isolation and improve socialisation.

There will be a new youth club for SEND children covering Wakefield’s ‘Five Towns’, and additional afterschool care, focusing on the development of independence skills, social skills and community inclusion. Further support for those with significant or specific needs will now be added to the existing services for SEND children and young people and their families.

There will be more school holiday activities available, giving parents and carers a chance to take a break from their caring responsibilities as well as additional whole family and sibling activities giving families the opportunities to engage in leisure and social activities together

## Short Breaks Survey

The Specialist Short Breaks Team undertook a short breaks survey for families to complete to gather feedback to help improve the overall short breaks services. The results were used to target specific areas of need within Wakefield and the short breaks service itself. A new survey will be undertaken in the coming year.

## Happy Healthy Holidays Funding – Summer 2024

A further bid for funding was submitted for Summer 2024 so we can continue providing a wide range of provision to both targeted and specialist children and young people in the summer holidays.