Guide to short breaks and fun activities for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs

Short breaks and fun activities

Leeds City Council
In Leeds we have a clear commitment: to work with families and tailor the help that they receive to their unique needs and circumstances. This approach is at the heart of our ambition to be a child friendly city and the measure of our success is how effectively we work with those families who need our support the most. So our short breaks service is vital. Short breaks provide parents and carers of disabled children with an important respite from their responsibilities. They do this in a way that is fun, safe, life enhancing for the child and based on the feedback of the children and families themselves. A broad partnership of dedicated professionals and providers come together to offer the best possible service, covering the full spectrum of support, from short breaks for everyone, to those with more specific needs and those requiring the most specialist and complex support. They do this recognising that every child is special. Services are regularly reviewed and refined to offer a personalised service, with an effective blend of choice, control and creativity so that each child can thrive. In this way they reflect the spirit of the Children and Families Act 2015 and the aspirations of our city to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people.

We hope that this guide will be helpful to you. We’ve tried to keep our offer as clear, simple and accessible as possible and we always value your ideas and feedback. We’ll keep working with those who benefit from short breaks to learn and improve and give our children and young people the high quality support they deserve.

Councillor Lucinda Yeadon
Chair of the complex needs partnership board

Nigel Richardson
Director of children’s services
Leeds City Council want Leeds to be the best city in the UK. A child friendly city, where children and young people are valued, supported, enjoy growing up and look forward to a bright future.

Many thanks to the parents and carers of EPIC Leeds, partners from the child health and disability team, the complex needs service, Leeds Community Healthcare, Scope, SENDIASS and the Family Information Service for your help in writing this guide.

What does the law say?
Paragraph 6(1) (c) of the Children’s Act 1989 requires Local Authorities to provide services designed to assist carers of children with disabilities and additional needs by giving them breaks from caring. This Duty came into force on 1st April 2011 and requires each local authority to:

- Offer short breaks as a preventative early intervention strategy
- Offer a range of short breaks services to parents/carers
- Publish a statement of those services to parents/carers

This guide answers the following questions about short breaks and fun activities for your family:

- What is a short break?
- What short breaks and fun activities are right for my family?
- How can I find out more about short breaks and fun activities locally?

Providing short breaks and fun activities plays a part in making Leeds a child friendly city for all children and young people, including those with disabilities and special educational needs. Partners who are involved in short breaks and activities have written this guide to explain how we work together with children, young people and families in a fair, open way to provide short breaks and fun activities which meet their goals and improve their lives.
For the last three years, Leeds City Council has provided targeted short breaks through the Leeds Partnership Short Breaks service. This service has been very successful, as we know from positive feedback from parents and carers.

From April 2015, the allocation process for funding short breaks providers is being led by Leeds City Council’s Children’s Commissioning and Market Management.

For further information and advice, please call the Placements Service on 0113 378 3775 or email placementserviceshortbreaks@leeds.gov.uk.

Leeds City Council has a contract with Scope in Leeds. This is a universal plus service which aims to encourage and support access to universal activities.

Scope supplies advice, support and grants to providers and works in partnership with Leeds Play Network – Play Partners to make sure that access to universal activities is a real possibility. Please call Scope on 0113 887 0550 or email leeds@scope.org.uk.

Short breaks can be personalised to meet your needs. More general information on short breaks is available via the national organisation short breaks network, on their website www.shortbreaksnetwork.org.uk.

**Short break, not childcare**

A short break is not an alternative to childcare and shouldn’t be used to enable parents to work. Rather it offers parents and carers an important break from their caring responsibilities whilst children and young people get the opportunity to make friends, try new things and gain confidence.

**Who can access short breaks and fun activities?**

Short breaks and fun activities are available for children and young people from birth to their 18th birthday. This includes children and young people with physical disabilities, complex health needs, autistic spectrum conditions, sensory impairments, physical impairments and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

For more information contact the Family Information Service on 0113 247 4386 or visit www.familyinformationleeds.co.uk.

**How can I get help or advice about short breaks and fun activities?**

You can get advice about targeted short breaks from the Placements Service on 0113 378 3775 or refer to the short breaks directory at: www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx

EPIC Leeds are parent, carer and families participation forum in Leeds which aims to empower parents, carers and families to work in partnership with services, organisations and professionals. You can find out more at www.epicleeds.org.uk or email epicleeds@gmail.com.

You may be offered an assessment of your child and your family’s needs to help you access a short break. You can get advice about assessments from the Integrated Processes Team on 0113 247 6830.

If your child is over 18, contact adult social care on 0113 222 4401.

You can also find details of activities for young people including some for people over the age of 18, on the Breeze website at www.breezeleeds.org, or by calling the Family Information Service on 0113 247 4386 if you cannot access the internet.
WHAT IS A SHORT BREAK?
Which short break is right for your child and your family?

Different types of short breaks and activities are available to meet different needs. The following pages will explain these in more detail.
There are lots of activities in the community which all children and young people can access, for example Brownies, arts and crafts groups or football clubs. You can find lots more details by visiting www.familyinformationleeds.co.uk or by contacting the Family Information Service on 0113 247 4386.

Children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs should be able to access these activities if they want to. The people who run these activities have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to make sure children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs can access these services, for example, accessing additional training to meet behavioural or medical needs.

Further details are available in the short breaks directory at www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx. Some of these activities may be free. Some may have costs for all children and young people who access them. Children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs should not be charged more than other children or young people.

Extra support to access these services
Scope in Leeds can help parents and children/young people to get involved in these kind of groups. Scope in Leeds can also provide training and advice to people who run these activities to help them include children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Please call Scope on 0113 887 0550 or email leeds@scope.org.uk

Emma’s story

Emma is a nine year old who has Down’s syndrome and a moderate learning disability. She attends a mainstream school with support from a learning assistant. She has no difficulty with her personal care needs, such as going to the toilet, but sometimes needs to be reminded. Emma has a communication book which explains that she finds it easier to understand instructions in picture format.

Emma’s parents heard about a local playscheme for 5-11 year olds, and Emma thought she would like to attend. The playscheme identified a training course about how to include children with disabilities and additional needs and all the playworkers are going to attend this. Emma’s parents gave permission for the play leader to contact her school and have arranged for a home visit so that Emma will know someone when she attends the playscheme in the summer.

The playscheme made sure they knew lots about Emma and what activities she enjoyed.

On the first morning Emma was a bit anxious about going, but as soon as she arrived a playworker welcomed her and introduced her to the other children, and her dad left. Emma made friends with another girl who goes to Emma’s school, and when her dad picked her up in the afternoon she told him about all the things she had done and that she wanted to go again tomorrow.

Services for everyone including children and young people with additional needs (universal services)
Short breaks and activities that meet specific needs (targeted services)

Targeted short breaks and activities are designed specifically to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs. For example, this might be a youth group for young people with autism spectrum conditions, or a playgroup for children with Down’s Syndrome.

The 2015 short breaks directory containing details of all short breaks can be found at: www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx
Placements Service, Leeds City Council coordinates this provision, please call 0113 378 3775 or email placementserviceshortbreaks@leeds.gov.uk

Bethany’s story

Bethany (age 8) has neurofibromatosis - an over-arching condition which means she has lots of other conditions alongside this including epilepsy, von willebrans disease, colostomy, reflux, sensory problems and more.

Bethany first had short breaks at Lineham farm last spring. Mum was worried prior to the event as it was her first time accessing a short break.

It helped that she went with her big sister Rebecca (age 15) who also has additional needs plus a few other friends.

Bethany undertook new challenges whilst she was at Lineham Farm, encouraged by the other children and young people she was with.

Activities included animal care, a climbing wall, bike riding and arts and crafts amongst others. To look at Bethany you would not know that she has all these conditions as they are all hidden disabilities.

Whilst Bethany faces many challenges, she is always happy to give new things a go, always has a smile on her face and can be a bit of a diva!
Specialist short break services for children and young people with very complex needs

Specialist short breaks are for children and young people who have very complex needs which cannot be met in the other types of short breaks. For example, they may need specialist medical equipment, personal care, or support from specialist trained workers. Specialist short breaks give families a break from caring while their child enjoys fun activities in a safe, supported environment.

These short breaks include daytime or overnight breaks in a specialist health unit, or in the home of an approved foster carer.

These services cater for very complex needs so an assessment of needs will be done. This is where a child or young person, their family and the practitioners who work with them, all talk together about what the needs are and how to meet them.

If you are already working with a social worker or another practitioner, you can ask them about an assessment (you could show them this guide). If you are not working with anyone and you think you might need an assessment for a specialist short break, call the Integrated Processes Team on 0113 247 6830 for advice.

The assessment will collect all the information needed to make a referral to a specialist health short break unit or a family-based short break.

If you need a specialist short break you can also ask for a ‘Direct Payment’ instead of using the services available. This lets you have the money for the short break to spend on something else that meets your assessed needs, for example to pay the wages of a support worker to work with your family. See page 11 for more details.

Dennis’s story

Dennis is 10 years old and 6 months ago was awarded 4 hours per week with an Individual Support Worker (ISW). The process of finding a worker was tricky due to his medical issues, however once someone was found we got the chance to meet them to see if they would be a suitable match for Dennis.

Once we all agreed the match was good, the ISW went off to be trained and 6 weeks ago the support started. Dennis loves the chance to be able to go out without mum for a while and so far it has been great. Both Dennis and his ISW have a good time when they go out and it gives Dennis a little bit of independence from mum.
How will I know the service is good quality and will include my child well?

Children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs have the same rights to everyday opportunities as everybody else does. They should be respected as individuals and able to make choices and contributions. Scope in Leeds supports providers to be ready to welcome children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs into their service.

To meet the Scope in Leeds quality standard, providers must show:

- their knowledge, understanding and requirements of disability legislation and what it means for the setting
- respect for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs and young people’s rights to dignity, choice and control
- evidence they are supporting and including children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs and young people in their activities and setting.

Scope in Leeds works with activity providers and settings to establish what policies and procedures they have in place, undertake observational visits and supports them in creating a setting which includes children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Scope provides ongoing information and training to ensure providers keep meeting the standard, as well as the parents’ and childrens’ needs.

To find out if a provider has successfully met the quality standard, look for the Scope certificate at the setting or logo on their website. Alternatively, you can also get in touch with Scope on 0113 887 0550

Scope would also like to hear about your experiences of any activity, short break or setting which you or your child has used. Contact the Scope team with any compliments or suggestions for improvement.
Direct payments and personalised budgets

Direct payments and personalised budgets are ways to give families with high or very high level needs more control over the services they access.

They are available to families who have more complex needs and have had an assessment to help meet their needs.

When families have an assessment which finds they have high level needs, children’s services allocate a sum of money – a budget – to be used to meet those needs, this budget will become ‘personalised’ to them.

For example, some young people have used direct payments to employ their own support worker to help them access local fun activities. Some parents have used them to pay for a carer from an agency they know very well and have worked with before.

Knowing how much their budget is and being able to make decisions about how it is spent, will give young people and/or their families more control over the services they receive.

Personalised budgets

Please note personalised budgets are new and they are still being developed in Leeds. More information will be available and updated regularly here and on the Family Information Service website when it is available, call the Family Information Service on 0113 247 4386 or visit www.familyinformationleeds.co.uk

Direct payments

Families with high level needs may choose to receive their personalised budget as a direct payment which can pay for services or support to best meet the needs of their child.

These needs (or outcomes) should be identified in a Social Work Child and Family Assessment or an Early Help Assessment. They will also form part of your child’s Education, Health and care plan if they have one.

Details of all short breaks can be found in the accompanying Short Breaks Directory under the documents section at: www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx

Or on our Local Offer website at: www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Leeds-local-offer-for-young-people.aspx

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SHORT BREAKS AND FUN ACTIVITIES LOCALLY?
Quick guide to accessing short breaks and fun activities for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs and their families

**Need help?**

**UNIVERSAL SERVICES**

- Services for everyone
- Find details of short breaks and fun activities for everyone, including those with disabilities, by contacting the Family Services Information on 0113 247 4386 or visiting www.familyinformationleeds.co.uk If the setting needs help with preparation to support children and young people with special needs and disabilities into their service, call Scope on 0113 887 0550.

**TARGETED SERVICES**

- Short breaks and activities that meet specific needs
- If you already know which service you would like to access, please complete the single referral form under the documents section at www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx and send it to the provider directly.

All targeted short breaks are detailed under the Local Offer or alternatively, in the latest short breaks directory at www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Short-break-offer.aspx The Placements Service, Leeds City Council can advise you about breaks and activities that cater for children and young people with SEND, please contact them on 0113 378 3775

**SPECIALIST SERVICES**

- Specialist short break services for those with very complex needs
- A social worker or professional working with your family will support an assessment of your needs. The assessment will then be looked at by a panel of experts who can help identify the right short break to meet your needs. You can get advice about assessments from the Integrated Processes team on 0113 247 6830.

If you need help or advice at any time contact Scope in Leeds 0113 887 0550
What to do when things don’t go according to plan...

If you are trying to access short breaks and things are not going to plan or you have any concerns, you can contact Scope in Leeds at any point for advice call 0113 887 0550.

If you have accessed a short break or activity that you were not happy with, we recommend you talk to the organisation providing that short break or activity first. However, if that doesn’t help you can also make a complaint by contacting the Leeds City Council customer relations team via post at:

Customer Relations
Children’s Services
Landmark Court,
Unit 7, Revie Road,
Leeds, LS11 8JT

How to get involved in changing short breaks and fun activities in Leeds

If you would like to tell us what you think about the short breaks and activities available in Leeds, or get involved in helping us improve them, then please contact the Leeds City Council Voice, Influence and Change team on 0113 395 0876 or contact EPIC, the parent and carer participation forum for Leeds on 07889 728 403.

Any comments you share will be kept anonymous and used to help review this guide. This guide will be reviewed by all the partners listed on page 3, at least once a year, to help improve this guide and also identify improvements to the short breaks and fun activities available locally. There will be opportunities for people who want to get involved, to join in this improvement work. Please get in touch as above to find out more.
She enjoys herself a lot. She loves dancing and it’s great exercise for her.

Interacting in the group has improved her social skills. She has increased her confidence to join in a group situation with others she doesn’t know very well. She has recognised her own ability to learn a new skill and make new friends.

The staff have helped me in so many ways, the bullying has stopped and I made new friends.

I became more confident in talking about my problems and I am now sleeping back in my own room. Thank you!”

I can now travel independently, thank you!
