



One minute guide

Short breaks fostering for children with disabilities

No. 152, April 2026

What is short breaks fostering for children with disabilities?

Short breaks fostering in Leeds provides children and young people aged 0-17 years with disabilities or additional needs the chance to spend quality time with specially trained foster carers. This is part of our wider offer of [short breaks and fun activities](#) for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These breaks offer families essential rest, while children benefit from fresh experiences, supportive relationships and time away from home in a nurturing environment. Breaks may last from a few hours to a weekend or longer, depending on individual needs.

Short breaks fostering is specifically designed for children:

- whose primary caregivers require a regular break to recharge or spend time with other siblings;
- whose families may be at risk of breakdown without additional support;
- who are already in full-time foster care, but require additional stability or a change of environment; and/ or
- to allow children and their parents or carer an enjoyable break.

The duration and frequency of overnight short breaks foster care can make a difference to a child's legal status, and whether the time spent with short breaks foster carers means they can be defined as a child looked after. The Family Rights Group provide further information about this on their [website](#).

Short breaks foster carers

Short breaks carers are recruited, assessed, trained and supported. They often have specialist skills and experience of caring for disabled children in their personal or work lives. Carers are supported through access to specialist training and support groups.

The skills, experience and interests of carers are matched with the needs and interests of the children, and the scheme builds confidence, promotes independence and enriches the lives of children and families across the city.

Eligibility for short breaks fostering

Children who are already eligible for short breaks and fun activities are usually eligible for short breaks fostering if they have one or more of the following:

- Physical disabilities or severe sensory impairments (vision or hearing);
- Learning disabilities ranging from moderate to severe
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or neurodiversity (e.g. ADHD), where the impact on daily functioning is significant; and
- Complex health or medical needs.

How to access the children with disabilities short breaks service

Parents/ carers who would like to access the service can contact their existing social worker to discuss, or if they do not currently have a social worker they can contact the Leeds City Council Contact Centre (telephone: 0113 222 4403) to request a [Child and Family Assessment](#).

If the child has complex, long-term needs, the assessment may recommend specialist short breaks. The needs of the child and family are presented to the [RADAR \(Resource, Allocation, Decision and Review\) Panel](#) for a decision to be made about their eligibility, a suitable support package and allocation of support. For children who are looked after, the child's social worker should contact the Children With Disabilities Short Breaks Service (contact details below) to agree next steps, in line with the child's care planning and review arrangements.

When a potential match between a child and foster carers is identified, a foster carer profile can be shared with the child and family, including information about the home and the carers, and a pre-placement visit to the foster carer is arranged with the child and family so they can all meet. If all parties agree to proceed, a placement agreement meeting is held. This outlines how the foster family will meet the identified needs and outcomes of the child, the pattern of placements and any other relevant considerations. Introductions are arranged to suit the pace of the child and family.

The same foster family remains matched to the child wherever possible. The placement is reviewed through the appropriate framework, depending on the child's legal status - for example, Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection or Child Looked After reviews.

Reviews

Short break packages agreed via RADAR panel are reviewed at RADAR at least annually (or sooner, if circumstances change). Children who are looked after will have review arrangements set through their care planning and review process.

In exceptional circumstances, placements can be made on an emergency basis by management agreement, and presented by the social worker at RADAR panel at the earliest opportunity. Emergency short breaks are considered on a case-by-case basis and are dependent on available carer capacity and assessed needs and risks. Any urgent arrangements should be discussed with the short breaks services and recorded through the appropriate decision-making process.

Key contacts

You can contact the children with disabilities short breaks team via telephone: 0113 37 83536, or via email: childrenwithdisabilitiesshortbreak@leeds.gov.uk.