



# One minute guide

## Short Breaks Fostering - children with disabilities

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### What is Short Breaks Fostering for children with disabilities?

As part of the Leeds Fostering Service, short breaks services are provided for children and young people with disabilities. These fostering short breaks take place in the homes of approved short breaks foster carers who specialise in supporting disabled children and their families.

The aim is to provide high quality short breaks with clearly identified outcomes where:

- Children have fun, their needs are met and horizons expanded; and
- Children and their parents or carers can have an enjoyable break.

Short breaks can be effective in supporting families and preventing family breakdown. Short breaks can also support children in foster care and promote placement stability.

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 life. Carers access specialist training and support groups. The skills, experience and interests of carers are matched with the needs and interests of the children.

The aim is to ensure that children have fun and the opportunity to access new experiences.

The service offers short breaks to eligible families ranging from day care, outreach support, overnight stays, regular weekends, or longer periods if required; though a short break cannot be longer than 17 consecutive days. Short breaks must also remain under 75 days in total per year; anything over 75 days would warrant child looked after status.

### Which children and young people can access this?

Eligible children are those who have:

- A physical disability;
- A learning disability (moderate to severe);
- A sensory impairment (severe);
- Complex needs—multiple impairments;
- Autistic spectrum disorders;
- Complex health needs; or
- A combination of the above.

## How is the service accessed?

The needs of the child and family are assessed and presented to the Resource, Allocation, Decision and Review Panel (RADAR) for children with disabilities which makes a decision about eligibility and allocation.

Eligible children and families must have an allocated social worker for an application for overnight short breaks. Day time short breaks can be accessed through an Early Help assessment by the early help lead practitioner.

When a support package is agreed by RADAR Panel, the social worker or early help lead practitioner makes a referral to the Children With Disabilities Short Breaks Service and is advised by the panel how to do this. The service identifies a potential suitable match.

When a potential match is identified, a foster carer profile (Welcome to My Family) can be shared with the child and family which includes pictures and information about the home and the foster carers.

A pre-placement visit to the foster carer is arranged with the child and family so they can all meet. If all parties want to proceed, a placement agreement meeting is held which outlines how the foster family will meet the identified outcomes and the needs 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. The placement is reviewed at an Early Help, Child in Need or a Child Looked after Review depending on the child's legal status.

All short break packages are reviewed at RADAR Panel on an annual basis.

In exceptional circumstances placements can be made in an emergency by management agreement and presented by the social worker at RADAR Panel at the earliest opportunity.

## Key contacts or for more information

You can contact the Complex Needs Fostering team via their duty email at: [complexneedsfosteringdutyinbox@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:complexneedsfosteringdutyinbox@leeds.gov.uk)

You can find further information on the Leeds City Council [Foster4Leeds](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/foster4leeds) website, where you can also express an interest in becoming a short breaks foster carer for children in Leeds.

To access the RADAR Panel contact the Short Breaks Coordinator tel: 0113 3785140 or email: [RADAR@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:RADAR@leeds.gov.uk)