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# Short Break Services Statement 2024/25

## What is a short breaks statement?

In performing their duty under [The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations (2011)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/707/made); local authorities must provide a range of short break services for children (under 18) with disabilities; which are sufficient to assist parents/ carers to continue to care for their children effectively.

The Act places a duty on local authorities to prepare a short breaks services statement for parents/ carers, setting out details of:

* the range of short break services available in the area,
* any criteria by which eligibility for services will be assessed; and
* how the range of services are designed to meet the needs of families with disabled children.

The regulations also require local authorities to:

* publish their short break services break statement on their website,
* review and update the statement as appropriate; and
* consult parents/ carers as part of the review of the statement.

In addition, [The Children and Families Act 2014,](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted) places a duty on local authorities to publish a [local offer](https://www.medway.gov.uk/localoffer), which clearly outlines the services available to families in the area without the need for an child and family assessment.

## Background

Medway last published a short break services statement in 2012 and the statement was last amended in 2016; when significant changes were made to the short break services offer, we still have today.

In 2014, Medway conducted a review of local short break provision. Subsequently, a new model for short break provision was introduced by Medway Council in 2016. The short break grant/ funding (also known as direct payments or self-directed support) was introduced to allow families more control and choice regarding their short break, in line with the Children and Families Act 2014 regulations.

Since 2016 in Medway, If the child is diagnosed with a disability and receives [Disability Living Allowance](https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children) (DLA), the child and family are entitled to an annual short break grant (also known as direct payments). The payment amount varies, depending on the impact of the child’s disability on the family. Further details on eligibility criteria can be found in section 8 below.

The arrangements for how Medway organises Short Break provision had not been reviewed since 2016, until Summer/ Autumn 2023 when Medway conducted a comprehensive review of the short break provision model, including consultation with children, young people and their parents and carers.

The review findings are summarised as follows:

* the number of families who receive the short break grant has increased by 41% since 2016 when the model was introduced,
* short break services are highly valued by families,
* families report they have difficulty in finding out about provision,
* families need/ want a greater choice of and access to services,
* the universal offer has increased since 2016, with better more inclusive options available for children with disabilities, although these are not widely known about.

Subsequently, Medway Council has developed a short breaks sufficiency strategy (2024-27) with seven recommendations to address the findings of the review. The draft strategy is in the early stages of approval within Medway Council’s governance procedures. The strategy prioritises the need for an up-to-date short break services statement, co-produced with families, which reflects the current offer.

The 2024/25 statement seeks to provide better and clearer information about the offer for children and families in Medway, noting that there are new services available since the last review in 2016. Therefore, we are also working on the local offer website. The statement will be kept under review and updated in line with progress of the short break sufficiency strategy.

Medway’s vision remains to empower families to enable them to exercise more choice and control over how and when their children are supported, and wherever possible to reduce dependence on targeted/ specialist services. Recognising that some children with a disability may require additional help and support to have their needs met. Medway is working closely with [Medway Parent and Carer Forum](https://medwaypcf.org.uk/) in the ongoing review and update to the arrangements that were introduced in 2016.

## What do we mean by disability?

We apply The Equality Act (2010) definition of a disability:

*‘A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.’*

*A copy of the* [*Equality Act 2010*](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents) *(and accompanying explanatory notes) can be found on the Gov.UK website.*

## What is a short break?

Under schedule 2 of the [Children Act (1989)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents) and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations (2011), a short break is when children and young people (CYP) with disabilities participate in enjoyable activities during their leisure time (outside of school hours). Short break is an umbrella term used to describe all short break services including direct payments, as well as a range of activities such as;

* Inclusive, adapted or specialist after-school/ Saturday clubs,
* inclusive or specialist play schemes throughout the school holidays,
* sitting services and individual support in the community (e.g. a personal assistant) that might be paid for by direct payments
* spending a set number of days/nights in away from home, possibly in a specialist residential setting,
* support workers provided by an agency that can provide the care and support necessary to enable a young person with disabilities to attend community activities alongside their peers, such as scouts, guides, or sports clubs.

These services are organised into three tiers across universal, target and specialist, with eligibility criteria for each one, as set out in section 6.

In Medway, the Council offers enhancements to the Universal offer (Youth Service, Medway Go etc) without the need for an assessment. Access to the Targeted Short Breaks offer is described below. Finally, the Council has a duty to provide short breaks where an assessment identifies that they are necessary for the child and family. The Children Act 1989 requires Local Authorities to assess children’s need and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 requires that we provide services (short breaks) to meet these needs.

A short break supports the adults who are responsible for caring for children with disabilities to continue to do so, and do so more effectively, because breaks from caring responsibilities provide parents/carers with the time necessary to –

* have a break from their caring responsibilities,
* rest and recuperate,
* undertake education, training, or regular leisure activities,
* effectively meet the needs of and spend quality time with other children in the family,
* to receive additional support in meeting their child’s additional health and social care needs.

It includes a range of provision that provides opportunities for disabled children and young people (aged 0 -18):

* to spend time away from their parents/ carers,
* to relax and have fun with friends and peers,
* to develop their independence and on occasions develop skills in preparation for adulthood,
* to learn new skills and increase confidence, and
* to have enjoyable experiences with or without their parents/carers.

A short break can:

* be for two hours or more,
* include day, evening and/or overnight activities (as assessed),
* take place in the child’s own home, the home of an approved paid carer, or in a residential or community setting.

## Who are short breaks for?

Primarily short breaks are aimed to give families who have a disabled child (0-18 years) a break; but they should also be fun and stimulating for the children and young people who use them.

Families eligible for short breaks may have children with:

* Complex physical disabilities,
* Severe learning disabilities,
* Severe or profound sensory impairment (which significantly impact their care needs),
* Autism Spectrum disorders (which significantly impact their care needs),
* Children who may have challenging behaviour as a result of their learning disability or autism,
* Children who have complex healthcare needs and who may have palliative, life limiting or a life-threatening condition.

## What does Medway offer?

We recognise that every family and child are different and unique.

Not all children and families will need the same level of short breaks; some may need more than others for several reasons;

* the impact of the child’s disability on the wider family
* the lack of other support (from family, friends etc),
* or because of a family or personal crisis.

Since 2016, short breaks provision has been organised into 3 distinct categories, to ensure provision is better linked to levels of need:

### Level 1 - Universal services

For children with mild needs that have minimal or no impact on the family. Families do not need to be referred but signposting from a professional may be needed.

All children and young people should be able to access opportunities which are taking place within their local communities, which whilst not specifically designed for or aimed at children with disabilities, could appropriately support and include young people with disabilities in an inclusive way that allows them to take part in activities alongside their non-disabled peers, friends, and siblings. For example, leisure activities, youth clubs, arts, and sports groups. These services have a duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments.

The Council recognises that some children with a disability may require more specialist services and that even to attend universal services they may require additional help and support, such as support from a personal assistant which can be paid for using the short break grant and/ or direct payments, which is described in more detail in section 7.

These are some examples of universal services provided by Medway Council:

* [Medway Youth Services](https://www.medway.gov.uk/youth) are provided free throughout the year for all children as part of the universal offer. There are specific sessions for children with disabilities: Shine (for 10–18-year-olds), and Wednesday Squad (for 16–25-year-olds). Short break funding or direct payments may be used to supplement a day trip with the youth services that has additional costs.
* [Medway Go](https://go.medway.gov.uk/) provide a range of freeactivities for children aged 4-16 yearsduring the school holidays. These sessions are only available to children entitled to free school meals and those with SEND. Sessions include dance, art, sports, animal experiences, computer skills and lots more. The offer includes inclusive activities that children with SEND can take part in alongside their peers as well activities just for children with SEND.
* [Medway Sport](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200180/sport_and_sports_centres/266/disability_sport) offers inclusive activities such as disability youth games, swimming lessons, sensory swim sessions, dance, arts and sports clubs as part of their leisure offer.You can sign up to receive their newsletter to be kept up to date with the latest activities.

A range of other inclusive provision is available from community and voluntary services, offering sessions such as multi sports, animal experiences, creative arts, and social clubs. These services may be freely available, or families may need to use their short breaks grant, or other income to fund them. More information about community activities available in the local area can be found on Medway’s [local offer website.](https://www.medway.gov.uk/localoffer)

### Level 2 - Targeted services

For children with moderate to severe needs that have a moderate impact on the family. Families do not need to be referred but signposting from a professional may be needed.

These are designed for children with disabilities, recognising that some children and young people require extra support to take part in activities. Targeted services may include activities that are open to all children and young people, with extra staff put on to ensure that children with disabilities are able to participate fully. They may also include smaller group sizes or activities that are put on especially for children who meet the eligibility criteria.

* **The Short Break Grant/ Funding** is paid to disabled children and their families annually. It can be used throughout the year to purchase services such as a personal assistant (PA) to provide support in the home or community, or spent on leisure activities, such as those listed in the local offer. A self-assessment form is used to confirm your eligibility for this funding. More details in sections 7 and 8. Medway self-directed support co-ordinators can work with families and help them to get the best form of short break that meets their needs.
* **ROCC** is provided in collaboration with the Rivermead Inclusive Trust, based in Rainham. ROCC is a specialist provider of holiday clubs for children and young people aged 5-25 with SEND. Seasonal activities are provided on and off-site. Families can self-refer for places which are either self-funded or paid for using short break grants. There is usually a waiting list for this service. For a small number of families who have an assessed need for this service, direct payments may be used, or the Council may purchase this service directly on your behalf. For more information about [ROCC](https://www.rivermead.org.uk/rocc/298.html) email roccsl@r-i-t.org.

### Level 3 - Specialist services

A smaller number of children will have more complex needs and disability requirements that can only be met by specialist services. These services might include residential, or family overnight breaks, floating support, or direct payments where families are given the funding to buy the required support, such as employing a personal assistant (PA) to support with family routines.

Floating support is practical assistance in the home including home based short breaks/respite or support to access community activities. It is much like direct payments, except that the services are organised directly by the local authority. However, it is important to note that although the local offer gives information about a wide range of providers who can offer short breaks services; Medway Council can only purchase services from a limited range of providers, who have been pre-approved via our Framework. Such services can only be accessed through a child and family assessment to ensure they get the right services to meet their needs.

This assessment would be completed by a Social Worker in the Children and Young People with Disabilities Team and would consider the child or young person’s needs, family history, any issues affecting parents and carers, and any other relevant issues. Parents or young people can request this assessment online using this [link.](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/concerned_about_a_child/5)

Guidance to eligibility to access an assessment from the Children and Young People with Disabilities Team is set out in Annex 1. Children who are not eligible for the Children and Young People with Disabilities Team may have an assessment undertaken by the Council’s Children and Families Assessment team who will support with signposting to the Universal and Targeted offer in Medway and where necessary liaise with the Children and Young People with Disabilities Team to access suitable specialist services.

Children who receive specialist short breaks services in Medway will be allocated a Social Worker who will visit the child and family and convene Child In Need Reviews. Medway has adopted a proportionate schedule of visiting and reviewing which will be discussed on an individual basis with families in receipt of Specialist Short Breaks.

* **Direct payments** vary in amount and duration. They are usually paid in instalments to fund the cost of employing a PA, which may be an extended family member, someone else known to the family or provided by an agency. For children with very complex needs 2:1 care may be required. A child and family assessment, which is carried out by the Children and Young People’s Disability Team is required to access direct payments. They can be contacted using this [link.](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/concerned_about_a_child/5)
* **Parklands after school club** provides small group-based care for 5–18-year-olds with complex needs. A referral is required from CYPD to attend Parklands after school club. Please use this [link](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/concerned_about_a_child/5) to request an assessment.
* Although not currently running, the service relaunches April 2024.
* **Floating Support Services** are agreed following a child and family assessment. It provides practical assistance in the home including home based short breaks/respite. It is much like direct payments, except that the services are organised directly by the local authority.
* **Council run short breaks residential home** – Parklands, provides overnight respite for up to 24 nights per year, for 5–18-year-olds with complex needs such as those who require PEG feeding, personal care, and have mobility challenges. Only available upon referral form CYPD.

Universal, targeted and specialist services are being developed further and the ambition is more services will be introduced over the next 12 months to increase sufficiency. Short Breaks funding was awarded in late 2023 from the Department for Education to increase choice and flexibility of short break options in Medway.

## Short breaks grant eligibility criteria.

How Medway determines whether you are entitled to help and support available in the form of a short break grant is set out below.

We recognise that every child and family are different and unique. This is why we have developed an self-assessment with clear eligibility and inclusion criteria.

The self-assessment questionnaire asks several questions about the impact a child’s disability has upon the family. The assessment is designed to assist Medway in deciding if a family meets the eligibility criteria for short breaks and what level of payment it can award.

The specific eligibility criteria for a direct payment linked to short breaks is that a child;

* Has a diagnosed disability
* Is in receipt of DLA

The payment varies, depending on whether the disability has either:

* Little or no impact on family and/or minimal risk of family breakdown (Level 1)
* Moderate impact upon family and/or possible risk of family breakdown (Level 2)
* Significant/major impact on family and/or significant risk of breakdown (Level 3)

The grant is paid directly to families via a managed account or a pre-paid card. Families can use the funds to purchase the required support such as specialist play schemes, a personal assistant to support the family with routines or after school cubs.

## How to access short breaks grant funding?

Families wanting to access a short break grant will need to complete a self assessment. The self assessment form is available on the [Medway Council website](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/8570/short_break_self-assessment_referral_form).

The self-assessment process will be supported by self-directed support co-ordinators, whose role will be to:

* Screen and filter the self assessments,
* Work closely with families and their children with disabilities to develop ways in which they will spend their grant payments,
* Refer where necessary for additional and more comprehensive assessments,

### Short break self-assessment process

The following steps describe the process for completing a self-assessment for the short break grant:

1. Family downloads and [complete the short break self-assessment form](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/8570/short_break_self-assessment_referral_form)
2. For help and support with completing the self-assessment form, please email Sbgrant.assessments@medway.gov.uk
3. Once completed, families should email the self-assessment form to Sbgrant.assessments@medway.gov.uk
4. The form is then reviewed by the self-directed support co-ordinator and a decision is made about whether you are eligible and what level of funding is require to meet your family’s needs.
	1. If you are not eligible for a short break grant payment you will be signposted to the universal offer
	2. If you are eligible, your payment will be awarded. The self-directed support co-ordinators will work with families and help them to better understand the short break grant, answer any queries they may have and, in some instances, will arrange for the Council to manage the funds on their behalf.
	3. If the self-directed support co-ordinator feels that your family has additional needs that cannot be fully met by the grant, they will suggest a referral to the Children and Young Peoples Disability Team for additional support.

For general enquires about the short break grant, the self-directed support service can be contacted on 01634 331351 or by sending an email to sdsadmin@medway.gov.uk.

## How are our short breaks designed to meet local needs?

Our vision is to ensure that Medway Short Breaks are available to for disabled children and their families when they need, providing breaks and support early, preventing and managing crises to help keep families together.

We are committed to an ongoing review of short break provision in Medway to ensure we can fulfil this vision. We welcome feedback from children, young people and their families. This feedback will allow us to identify the strengths and challenges of the existing model to help shape future service delivery. This includes ensuring where possible, delays and waiting times are kept to a minimum and undertaking a thorough process review, which started in January 2024

Regular monitoring meetings and provider foums take place to discuss the development of the existing model.

Parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities can make a difference to the service their family receives by phoning 01634 331182 or emailing sarah.richards@medway.gov.uk or by contacting the [Medway Parent and Carer Forum.](https://medwaypcf.org.uk/)

## Appeals and complaints

If you are unhappy about any aspect of a short break activity, please speak with the provider of the short break in the first instance.

Following an assessment, if a young person or family is unhappy with the services or support recommended, they are advised to contact the social worker or short breaks co-ordinator who completed their assessment, to discuss their concerns. If this does not resolve the issue, parents can direct their concerns to the team manager. If they conclude that the decision was based on incomplete or inaccurate information, or that a proper account was not taken of the information available, the report author will be asked to review their recommendations and re-submit proposals to their manager.

If the young person or parent is not satisfied with the response from the team manager, they can contact the panel chair or Service Manager to discuss their concerns. [Take a complaint further online.](https://www.medway.gov.uk/complain)

## Appendix A: Medway Children’s services eligibility guide

The table on the following page is an internal document used by Medway Children’s Services to determine which team will undertake an assessment of the child and family. This is a working document that Medway Council are reviewing in partnership with Medway Parent and Carer Forum as part of the short break sufficieny review to ensure that the guidance can be understood by young people, parents/ carers and professionals.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Impact of disability: | ProfoundMeets criteria for specialist social care provision and assessment by the 0-17 disability service or access to the targeted short break offer. | SevereMeets criteria for specialist social care provision and assessment by the 0-17 disability service or access to the targeted short break offer. | ModerateMeets Criteria for Inclusive Social Care Provision (Assessment Team, Children’s social work team, Family Solutions and likely the targeted Short Breaks offer) | MildMeets Criteria for Inclusive Social Care Provision (Assessment Team, children’s social work team, Family Solutions and likely the targeted Short Breaks offer) |
| Learning Disability and Education  | Child/Young Person has a profound learning disability.Attends educational provision for with Profound Learning Disability eg Dane Court, Abbey Court etc | Child/Young Person has a severe learning disability. Attends educational provision for children with severe learning difficulties, e.g., Dane Court, Abbey Court. Bradfield’s and Rivermead only if the child had a Severe Learning Disability only. | Child/young person has a moderate learning disability. Attends mainstream educational provision with 1:1 support some of the time or a specialist provision not for profound or severe learning difficulties. | Child/young person has a mild learning disability.Attends mainstream school/pre-school/college with or without support. |
| Mobility | Unable to walk. Is always dependent upon use of wheelchair.Is totally dependent upon carer for mobility. | Unable to walk. May be able to stand or transfer with support. Able to manoeuvre self at least some of the time. | Walks but only with aids or assistance. May use wheelchair for intermittent use. | Able to walk and function independently but with some limitation of function. |
| Self- Care | Fully dependent on others for all personal care, (eating/ drinking/toileting and washing). Needs physical support with all personal care.  | Needs physical assistance with personal care. Needs high level of supervision with all personal care (eating/ drinking/toileting and washing). | Requires some prompts and supervision greater than that expected for developmental age. | Independent in majority of personal care activities. Requires occasional supervision beyond that expected for chronological age. |
| Communication | No verbal communication. Unable to communicate needs using any method. Unable to use communication aid. | None or very little verbal communication used.Can communicate at least basic needs using any method e.g. body language, facial expression, or PECS. | Delayed or disordered communication including language disorders causing significant difficulty in communicating with familiar adults. | Marked delay in language development. Language disorder, able to communicate with unfamiliar adults.Requires minimal support to communicate. |
| Behaviour associated with the disability | Profound challenging behaviour which impacts on all aspects of the Child/ Young Person’s functioning and the Child/Young Person poses a severe risk to self or others. Requires constant monitoring, supervision and a structured programme for managing behaviour overseen by specialist services eg specialist CAMHS, PBS etc.Frequent behaviour that may be of risk to the child or carers.  | Behaviour demonstrates significant risk to self or others. Requires monitoring, supervision and a structured programme for managing behaviour overseen by specialist services. Challenging behaviour which impacts significantly on community life and requires specialist provision to function socially/educationally. | Behaviour that poses moderate risk to self or others. Requires monitoring/ supervision in some circumstances. Has difficulties in relating to peers. Behavioural difficulties which may require specialist advice. | Behaviour that can be difficult to manage at times but can be managed without specialist provision.Need for monitoring/ supervision appropriate for age. Minor difficulties in relationships with parents/ peers/others.  |
| Safety needs associated with disability  | Needs constant supervision both during the day and night.Does not have any awareness of danger to self or others. | Needs constant supervision during the day. No awareness of danger to self or others. | Needs some supervision at times.Limited perception of danger to self or others. | Occasionally requires more supervision than Children/Young people of same age.Some awareness of danger to self or others. |
| Visual Impairment | Mobility restricted without special provision. Eligible for registration as blind and needs support to be independent because of visual impairment. | Eligible for registration as blind or partially sighted and needs support to be independent because of visual impairment. | Defect of at least half the visual field.May be eligible for registration as partially sighted. | Severe or profound impairment in one eye.Able to function independently. |
| Hearing Impairment | Total or near total loss of hearing (<95Db) and needs support to be independent because of hearing loss. | Severe hearing loss (71-95 Db) and needs support to be independent because of hearing loss. | Significant hearing loss but able to function with a hearing aid. Hearing loss (41-70Db) | Severe or profound hearing loss in one ear. Moderate hearing loss (20-40Db) |
| Health  | Complex health needs prevents participation in social and educational activities without constant 1:1 or specialist support. | Requires daily specialist or medical or nursing care.Daily use of specialist equipment that needs support. | Requires regular nursing or specialist support (more than once or twice weekly).Unstable health which impacts adversely on child or family. | Requires no or minimal nursing or specialist support.Known health condition which is under control and only occasionally interferes with everyday activities. |