

North Somerset Children's Services

Short breaks statement



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What are short breaks?

Short breaks are activities for children and young people with disabilities and their families. They help them participate in their local community and make new friends through safe, fun, and interesting things to do.

What is a short breaks statement?

In 2011, the 'Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children' regulations were published. As part of these regulations, all local authorities must produce a 'short breaks' statement. This is a guide to the services offered by North Somerset Council. It lets families know what short breaks are available and how parents can use them. The local authority needs to listen and respond to the views of children and their families.

What can short breaks do?

- Take place during the day, after school, at the weekends, and overnight
- Support children and young people to build independence and to have a choice
- Give parents and carers a break from their day-to-day caring responsibilities
- Help parents and carers find fun activities for their children
- Take place in a leisure or activity centre, the child's own home, the home of an approved carer or in a specialist residential setting
- Help parents and carers take part in training, leisure activities, day-to-day activities, or education
- Minimise the serious risk of family breakdown

How can short breaks help families and their children?

By giving the child or young person the opportunity to:

- take part in exciting activities that interest them
- develop independence and confidence
- spend time with their friends and make new ones
- achieve personal goals and learn new skills

By helping parent carers:

- reduce feelings of stress and allow 'you' time
- spend time as a family
- meet and get to know other families who share similar experiences
- feel confident you child is having fun with skilled carers who understand their needs

What types of services are available?

Universal services

All providers of activities in North Somerset are expected to have policies in place that support staff and families to provide and take part in accessible provision.

Members of the SEND Clubs and Activities Services (SENDCAS) team offer support to providers to ensure their activities cater for as many needs as possible. This means children with SEND and their families can enjoy exciting activities, knowing their needs will be met by professionals who care. Often, a little extra support in mainstream activities can make a huge difference to children and young people with disabilities.

If you require additional support for your child, either you or the provider can contact the team to discuss what guidance and support can be provided.

The SENDCAS team are constantly aiming to support community access. These activities accommodate physical Disability and provide 'exclusive' and 'inclusive' activities, chosen and influenced by young people in North Somerset.

The SENDCAS Team can be contacted at: SENDCAS@n-somerset.gov.uk

Targeted services

Some families require more support than universal services to access activities in the local area. Targeted services are specifically designed for children and young people with SEND. You can use the SEND Hub (Local Offer) to explore these services and see what is available. Below are some examples of services which are delivered through SENDCAS and family support teams. Though these activities are subsidised by North Somerset Council, there may be times when parents or carers are asked to contribute toward the costs of activities.

Portage services

The North Somerset Portage Service is a home-visiting service for early years children with significant and complex developmental delay. North Somerset Portage is registered with the National Portage Association.

Portage provides support and advice to families to teach their child new skills using a small steps approach. Practitioners liaise with other agencies, receive regular clinical supervision, and work in partnership with parents and carers to empower them to teach their child through play.

Portage visits include:

- weekly home visits by a trainer and skilled practitioner
- plan, do, and review approach for teaching activities designed for each individual child and parent
- a positive approach, building on what a child can achieve

Sitting services

The Sitting service team consists of experienced and skilled staff with a background in health & social care or education. The team meet the care and social needs of children and young people who need planned short breaks at home. Most 'sits' are for 4 hours per month, agreed by a resources panel and paid for via the referring team or a Direct Payment. Care is taken to match the sitter and family. Sitters work independently, or occasionally in pairs depending on the level of need. They can offer personal care, administration of medication, and support with bedtime/mealtime routines, behaviour support, and independence skills.

A 'Family File', kept in the child's home, contains all the support information needed to ensure a positive and supportive experience for everyone. Monthly 'sits' are arranged directly between the family and the sitter. Sitters keep a log of their visit in the file, as feedback for the parent/carer and to support contributions to annual reviews for a child.

The team are all employees of North Somerset council. They are DBS checked, have regular safeguarding, paediatric, first aid and any other relevant training needed to support the children they work with.

SENDCAS

The team set up and manage a range of out of school and holiday outings throughout the year based on age, ability, and friendship groups.

The activities support a range of additional needs, and every effort is made to tailor the planned trips to a child's individual needs. The team provide a variety of activities for children aged 6-to-18 years old (school years 1-to-13) which support independent skills, creating friendships and networks, supporting the individual needs of children and young people that attend.

SENDCAS also run the Buddy Scheme. This is designed to provide a service to children and young people with a wide range of complex, additional needs and to support them in accessing out of school activities within their community.

[Visit the SEND Hub \(Local Offer\) for more information about SENDCAS](#)

Does my child need an assessment to access universal and targeted short breaks?

You do not need an assessment to access universal or targeted services. You need only contact the teams to ensure the group can meet your individual child's need and that there is a space in the group. For some groups a parental consent form will be required.

As part of North Somerset's Local Offer, we want universal services which are provided to all children, young people, their families and community. North Somerset Council is committed to ensuring all short breaks are delivered by staff that are well trained and experienced in working with children with disabilities and their families.

[Visit the Short break and things to do page of the SEND Hub \(Local Offer\) for more activities](#)

Specialist short breaks which require an assessment from Children with Disabilities Team

Some activities which require more specialist support beyond universal or targeted services may require an assessment from the Children with Disabilities Team in North Somerset Council to access. The team will offer an assessment where the child has a complex additional need or disability like:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder with communication disorder and developmental delay.
- challenging behaviour due to a severe learning disability.
- physical impairment or sensory impairment affecting sight or hearing.
- complex healthcare needs including those with a life limiting or a life-threatening condition.
- Severe developmental delay in motor and or cognitive functioning

Under section 17, The Children Act 1989, all children and young people with Disabilities are entitled to an assessment of their needs. The overall provision of these services is a responsibility across all areas of children's services including health and voluntary sector services. The criteria for referral and assessment for the Children with Disabilities team would not include those with the following diagnoses:

- Emotional and behavioural difficulties
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Asperger's Syndrome

These children would access assessments provided by the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and through the locality social work teams.

What is an assessment?

An assessment is where a social worker or other professional meets with you and your child to listen to your needs and work together to meet them. With your permission we will use other assessments which may have been carried out, this will avoid you having to repeat your family's history.

Assessments should be proportionate to need and for some families an early help assessment will be offered by a family support worker, whereas for the most complex situations an in-depth single assessment by a social worker will be required. The Manager or Deputy in the Children with Disabilities Team decides what assessment they need to do based on Effective Support for Children, Young People, and Families.

To request an assessment, contact the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 01275 888 808.

Parent/Carers also have a right to an assessment of their own under the Children and Family Act 2014, section 97. Local authorities are required to undertake a parent carer assessment:

- where an assessment is requested by the parent carer including siblings of children with disabilities this should be included in the assessment plan
- where the child has an education, health and care plan this assessment and plan will inform the care element of that plan.

Professionals will work with the family and young person to develop an individual specialist support package. Support offered will be based on the needs and outcomes of the child or young person while considering the health and welfare of the family.

Factors which are assessed when considering specialist short breaks include:

- Child has communication needs which, without support, severely affect personal safety, (for example is deaf, blind or without speech)
- Specialist equipment is required to be mobile and requires support to access activities in the community
- As a result of their disability your child or young person's behaviour proves a serious risk to themselves and/or others. This includes self-harm
- Child needs constant supervision throughout the day and for prolonged periods at night, when no longer age appropriate.
 - Where the need for a break arises due the child not sleeping, the family will need to need to seek services from health in relation to a sleep programme prior to consideration
- Child has been assessed as having either: Profound and Multiple Learning Disability (PMLD), Severe Learning Disability (SLD), and/or Autism with challenging behaviour, which results in significant risk of self-harm or harm to others
- This support cannot be provided within your family or community
- Support is required to be able to undertake all basic self-care functions when no longer age appropriate

Other factors that will influence assessments:

- Where caring responsibilities are such that this is having a significant impact on family life, including the health of the parent/carers and siblings
- Carer has physical or mental health problems
- Actual or potential risk to health or safety of carer
- Carer suffers sleep deprivation on a regular basis due to needs of the disabled child through the night
- Child's behaviour is a serious risk to self or others

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- Child has been, or is, subject to a Child Protection Plan
 - Other person(s) with disabilities or long-term health needs in the household who need support
 - Sole carer and has a limited support network
 - Significant pressures in the family, for example, domestic violence
 - Risk to the child because of the physical environment
 - Risk of the disabled child's care breaking down
 - Without support the child is likely to need a specialist residential or educational placement
 - The family has difficulties in meeting financial commitments
 - There are stressful family relationships which may be harmful to disabled child
 - Significant Impact on siblings, for example, needs of other children in the family

The assessment and support needs will be considered at a monthly multi agency panel to agree a support plan for each child. The panel aims to provide an equitable, transparent and personalised allocation of short breaks and specialist equipment based on need.

Current specialist short breaks which require an assessment of the child:

- Overnight short breaks
- Sitting Service
- Outreach Service
- Family link scheme
- Buddy scheme
- Carers service
- Personal budgets or direct payments

Can I choose my own package of support?

The SEND Hub (Local Offer) contains lots of information about the support you can receive, including personal budgets and direct payments.

[Visit the SEND Hub \(Local Offer\) for more information](#)

What financial support can I get?

Each child, through their assessment, will have a plan developed to meet their assessed need. Once completed this will give an indicative budget which can be used to fund personalised support for the child.

A personal budget can also include funding from education, health and social care via an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

Education, Health, and Care Plans

In September 2014, a new approach to the statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) was introduced across England. The Children and Families Act 2014 and Special Educational Needs Code of Practice puts children, young people and their families at the centre of decision making and planning.

The approach involves integrated assessment, planning and provision across education, health and social care services supporting children with SEND and the introduction of personal budgets which will allow parents and young people the opportunity to make choices about the way funding is spent on provision described in their child's education, health and plan. Parents and young people will also have greater involvement in deciding which assessments are needed.

[Visit the SEND Hub for more information about EHCPs](#)

Transport for short breaks

Families of children with disabilities can often claim mobility allowance, community transport, or have a mobility vehicle which could be used for transport. In the 'preparing for Adulthood' section of the SEND Hub (Local Offer), we have included lots of details about how young people can access disability transport schemes so that they can travel independently, and receive financial support to do so.

[Visit the SEND Hub to find out what transport schemes are available](#)

Transitions

This is the time when young people are moving from childhood into adulthood and are starting to prepare to leave school and take the next steps to their adult life. Young people aged 14 plus with disabilities and additional needs often require more support during this time to reach their full potential and optimum independence.

We have created a section on our SEND Hub (Local Offer) about this important transition, and will be working with young people to develop this further.

[Visit our Preparing for Adulthood area of the SEND Hub \(Local Offer\)](#)

This publication is available in large print,
Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require
council information in languages other than
English.

Please contact – 01934 888 888

