



Lancashire Short Breaks Statement 2024 - 2025

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Lancashire
County
Council



Introduction

Lancashire County Council has a responsibility to provide a range of Short Breaks Services designed to assist individuals who provide care for children with disabilities to enable them to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively by giving them breaks from their caring role.

Welcome to the 2024 – 2025 Short Breaks Statement, which sets out Lancashire County Council's Short Breaks offer to children and young people aged 0-18 years with additional needs and/or disabilities. Here in Lancashire, we know that children and young people with disabilities have the right to be supported at home and in their local communities, to have opportunities to make and meet friends, feel confident, and to thrive in family life.

We have written this Short Breaks Statement to make it useful and clear to use. This document provides information about the range of services and support available to you and your family and how to access it. We will carry on talking to families about the design of our statement and our approach to service provision. We will do this to ensure that we work together on an equal basis, this is called co-production.

Definitions

Disability: A person is disabled if they have a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities.

Family Hub Network: The Family Hub network is a model of providing high-quality, whole family, joined up, family support services. They bring services together to improve access, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family support.

HAF: The Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) is a Department for Education (DfE) funded programme for children in receipt of benefits related free school meals (FSM).

Local Offer: When we refer to our 'Local Offer' we mean all the services and organisations which are part of the support on offer in Lancashire. We publish it so you understand the support available and how to access it. You can find our Local Offer online: www.lancashire.gov.uk/SEND

SEND Directory: When we refer to the SEND Directory we mean a directory for organisations, providers and services that support or provide information, advice and activities for families including children and young people with SEND. You can find our SEND Directory online: [SEND Local Offer Directory](#)

Short Break: A 'Short Break' is the government and Lancashire County Council's term for an activity for a child with disabilities that also provides a break for the parents. A short break is sometimes called respite and is provided because

Lancashire County Council recognises that parenting a child with disabilities can be hard.

What are Short Breaks?

Short Breaks give children and young people the chance to take part in activities, explore new opportunities, form friendships, become more independent and enjoy themselves. A short break could be for just a couple of hours, a whole day, or a few days. Short Breaks activities take place outside of school hours during daytime, evenings, weekends, and school holidays.

Lancashire County Council's aim is to commission and offer a range of reliable, local short break provision to enable carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities and to enable children, young people and their families to lead as fulfilling a life as possible and to enjoy, achieve and have access to the same opportunities as others in life.

There are a variety of short breaks on offer across Lancashire, some can be accessed directly, and others will require a Social Worker assessment. Short Breaks during the day, evening, overnights, and at weekends. These breaks may happen within:

Our short breaks include:

- Weekend activity clubs
- After school clubs and school holiday clubs
- Overnight stays (in the home of an approved carer or in a residential unit/ Short Breaks setting)

Short Breaks support families because they help children and young people to:

- take part in fun and enriching activities
- develop their confidence
- spend time with friends and make new ones
- take part in activities in a safe and supported environment
- achieve personal goals and learn new skills
- get active and stay healthy

Short Breaks support you as parents and carers to:

- feel better able to manage caring responsibilities/improve your emotional wellbeing
- provide time to spend with your other children
- give you the opportunity to complete other tasks you may not otherwise have time to or just to RECHARGE
- have trust that your child is safe and being well supported by suitably trained staff
- help you to achieve personal goals and learn new skills

- allow the opportunity for you to meet other families that share similar experiences,
- create opportunities for your child to enjoy new experiences and friendships

Eligibility for Short Breaks and how to apply

Families living in Lancashire who have a child or children with a disability aged between 0 – 18 are eligible for Lancashire County Council's Short Breaks Services.

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as either a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This may include a physical or learning disability, a hearing or visual impairment. It includes children and young people with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome and children who may have challenging behaviour as a result of a learning disability. It also includes children who have complex needs, who require palliative care, or who have a life limiting or a life-threatening condition.

There are 3 categories of Short Breaks in Lancashire these are known as Universal, Targeted and Specialist.

Universal Short Breaks

Universal or 'mainstream' Short Breaks are everyday community services that are available to use without an assessment.

Universal settings offer a wide range of activities and a chance for disabled young people to mix with non-disabled peers. For example:

- ✓ After school activities
- ✓ Child minder and early years settings
- ✓ Holiday playschemes
- ✓ Drama and music clubs
- ✓ Sports activities e.g., football
- ✓ Youth services e.g., youth clubs
- ✓ Uniformed organisations like Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Girl Guiding

Eligibility

Universal services aim to be inclusive and open to disabled people and are clear that they must make reasonable adjustments to support **all** children and young people to access their service as they have a legal responsibility to do so.

There are no eligibility criteria for accessing universal short breaks. You should contact service providers yourself, to establish what is on offer, any eligibility criteria, the availability of spaces and any financial contribution or charges.

Where you wish to use universal services, you should talk with the service provider to:

- ✓ provide information about your child or young person's additional needs and how to best support them.
- ✓ discuss and explore what the provider may need to change (these are called reasonable adjustments)
- ✓ jointly assess the risks and work together to create a plan to reduce any risks
- ✓ make a plan for your child or young person starting

You can usually find out what universal services are available in your local area from your child's school, your local library, friends and family or the internet.

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service also has a wide range of services available in the community including groups for young people to attend.

[Find a children and family wellbeing service - Lancashire County Council](#)



Targeted Short Breaks

Targeted Short Breaks are specific Short Breaks for children and young people with SEND who cannot access universal services without additional support or where these are just not suitable. Targeted Short Breaks may be provided in the evenings, weekends, and school holidays.

Targeted short breaks are not always funded or commissioned by the Council. Other activities are run by organisations such as charities and schools and funded in other ways. Please be aware that some organisations may charge for the activities that they run.

In Lancashire, we have commissioned a range of targeted services - we call this service offer **Break Time**. The offer is for up to 78 hours of Break Time hours within a financial year (April to March), to attend a more specialised service including playschemes and group activities. These may be provided in the daytime, evenings, weekends, after school and during school holidays.

Eligibility

Children will be able to access Break Time from the start of the academic year (September) in which they turn age 5 to the end of the academic year (August) in which they turn 18.

A child or young person has special educational needs and/or disabilities meaning they are unable to access universal services and activities; and the parent and carers are in receipt of child benefit for that child or young person.

Children will live in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool council areas).

Parents or carers will be asked to complete a registration form, rather than a formalised assessment. Registration for Break Time is open on an annual basis.

How do you assess registration forms?

Our online registration form asks a range of questions about you and your child's needs. We use a range of indicators to try and build as full a picture of your family's needs as possible, whilst keeping the application process as simple for families to complete as we can.

Once you have registered you will be given a registration number and then you will be able to contact the Break Time Providers yourself. Information about each provider is available on the website below.

- The provider may request further information from you to ensure that they are able to meet your child's needs
- You should talk through your child's needs with the provider and consider a visit to the venue
- You can talk through and agree a plan for introductions with your provider
- You can agree how you will use your allocated hours across the year, so you use the support in a planned way

If you feel the level of support is not sufficient to meet the needs of your family, you may need to request a formal assessment. Please see Specialist Short Breaks in the next section.

Find more information about Break Time activities and how to register.

[Break Time short break activities - Lancashire County Council](#)

Specialist Short Breaks

Access to Specialist Short Breaks is based on a child and family assessment, which is prepared by a social worker or a child and family practitioner. The

assessment will consider the impact of the child's disability on family life, parental needs and capacity and the family's circumstances and wider resources and support network. In undertaking the assessment, they will seek your consent to talk to other professionals involved with your child about their care needs.

The social worker/ child and family practitioner will also talk to your child or young person to learn about their aspirations and to understand what is important to them.

Following the assessment, a decision will be made about the best way of providing and funding Short Breaks for your child. This may include services to support you in the home or support to get out and about. For some families the social worker/ or child and family practitioner may also recommend overnight Short Breaks.

The assessment will be written into a support plan which outlines the services and short breaks that may be appropriate to be provided and how this will meet the child's or families' needs and identified outcomes. The social worker/ or child and family practitioner will also arrange introductions to the services

Support may include:

- Direct payments or personal budgets
- Domiciliary/Homecare
- Break Time Plus
- Fostering short breaks,
- Overnight stays in specialist settings

Find more information on the [Break Time Plus webpage](#).

The social worker/ or child and family practitioner will also provide you with information around Direct Payments and help you to understand the benefits of organising and paying for your own support and employing the people you choose to work with your child. Information about Direct payments can be found here [Direct payments - Lancashire County Council](#)

We also recognise that the needs of children and their families change, and that a re-assessment of these needs may be required. If you would like your needs re-assessed, please contact the social worker/child and family practitioner who will be able to discuss this with you further.

Parents, carers, and professionals can request an assessment by contacting: 0300 123 6720.

How much do Short Breaks cost?

Some short break services are free, and others charge a fee. Parent carers should not expect to pay more than a non-disabled child accessing a similar type of service.

We want to ensure that services are available locally to reduce the time taken and the costs of travel to the activity. Service providers do look to ensure activities are affordable and reduce the costs to you by raising additional funding too.

For Break Time and Break Time Plus activities, service providers should charge a minimum parental contribution of £2 per hour. Families are also expected to contribute towards the costs of a child or young person taking part in a particular Break Time or Break Time Plus activity, e.g., entrance tickets to an external activity like the zoo or the cinema and associated transport costs.

For Break Time Plus, parent carers of a child under 16, or a young person aged 16 or over who receives income or employment related benefits, can discuss the costs with their service provider, social worker or child and family practitioner.

Where a child or young person is living in a children's home or with foster carers, the cost of attending an activity will be met by the carers. Where children and young people are in the care of other local authorities, funding decisions rest with authority.



The Child and Family Well Being Service (CFW)

In September 2023 Break Time became part of the Child and Family Wellbeing (CFW) service at Lancashire County Council. The service will remain the same, however, parent carers might notice that their queries are handled by someone different, or that information is sent out from a different person. Break Time used to be managed by the Children with Disabilities (CwD) Service.

The Child and Family Wellbeing SEND Team will be able to:

Support parent carers with information about Break Time membership and how to access and engage with Break Time activities.

Support parent carers to find a meaningful Break Time activity that provides the extra support for your child

Manage the Break Time registrations and respond to your queries.

We have created a new email address to make it easier for parent carers to contact us about the Break Time service. The new email address is:

breaktime@lancashire.gov.uk

A member of the Child and Family Wellbeing SEND Team may contact you by telephone to ask you if you have used any of your Break Time hours, they may also ask if you need any assistance or help to understand the Break Time offer.

We will be able to tackle the issue of non-attendance (no shows) at booked sessions to maximise the number of hours available for children and young people.

The Child and Family Wellbeing SEND Team will be able to provide additional support and guidance about how to access Break Time.

Holiday Activity Programme (HAF)

The HAF Programme is a Department for Education (DfE) funded programme for children in receipt of benefits related free school meals (FSM). [Holiday activities and food programme \(HAF\) - Lancashire County Council](#)

Activity clubs offer a range of support for children with SEND. Whilst all are inclusive, some more specialised than others and suitability can be discussed directly with providers on sign up.

Some providers have a limited number of places available for non-FSM eligible children who would otherwise be considered vulnerable, however these places must be requested and reviewed by providers and are not guaranteed.

Break Time Membership

Year 1 (2022/23) 1324 Break Time members across Lancashire.

Year 2 (2023/24) 1,490 Break Time members across Lancashire.

Year 3 (2024/25) so far, there are 1363 Break Time members who have successfully been registered.

Providers

24 providers registered to deliver Break Time

13 providers registered to deliver Break Time Plus



How Short Breaks services are developed with you

It is vital that our Short Breaks offer is co-produced with parent carers, young people with SEND and our providers. This helps us to make sure that families get the right support and that we use Short Breaks funding in the best way.

Parent and carers, children and young people have been involved in the shaping of short breaks and services in a variety of ways. Specific consultation activities have taken place which have resulted in the current short break offer.

To ensure the Short Breaks offer is fully co-produced we will do this by:

- Engaging more widely with parent/carers and children and young people through surveys, face to face meetings, polls and focus groups
- Gather wider feedback as part of our on-going monitoring processes with our providers.
- Work with our providers through our Provider Forum to share best practice.
- Talk to children and young people within their existing social groups and settings, or wherever they feel most comfortable.

About the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum



The Lancashire Parent Carer Forum is an independent group of parent and carers of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities aged (0-25 years). They are volunteers who provide a voice to represent Lancashire's parents, carers, and their families. If you would like to influence and contribute to the development of short

breaks and other services for children with SEND in Lancashire, you can contact them directly. For more information visit the [Lancashire Parent Carer Forum Facebook page](#) and [Lancashire Parent Carer Forum website](#) .

About POWAR



POWAR is a participation group for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

It is run by Lancashire County Council's Targeted Youth Support and Participation service. POWAR influences decision making and helps to make a difference to young people's lives. They hold regular meetings which are informal and fun. These meetings are open to young people from secondary school age up to 25. For more information, visit the [POWAR webpage](#).

Feedback

We want to make sure that short breaks really work well for children, young people and their families in Lancashire. Your views, comments and thoughts are really important to us so we can make sure we get this right.

We are encouraging parent carers and children and young people to complete evaluation feedback. Please share with us any feedback about your experiences with your Short Breaks, this includes Targeted Short Breaks (Break Time) or Specialist Short Breaks (community, homecare, Break Time Plus and/or overnight care). Feedback can be about your activities, the registration window, the Short Break offer, or anything else! [Short Breaks feedback - Lancashire County Council](#)



We asked: Whilst your child is at their Break Time activity, did you have the opportunity to have a break yourself?

62% 
of respondents strongly agreed they get the opportunity to have a break themselves.

22%
tended to agree. 

We asked: When your child attends an activity do you believe it benefits the whole family?

85% 
of respondents strongly agreed when their child/ren attend an activity it benefits the family

10%
tended to agree. 

We asked: Did your child or young person use their Break Time hours to access an activity during the summer holidays?

78% of you told us that your child/ren accessed Break Time over the summer holidays. 

We asked: If your child enjoyed the Break Time activity.

59% 
said their child enjoyed the Break Time activity.

14%
tended to agree. 

We asked: Did the Break Time activity provider meet the child's personal/specific SEND requirements?

85% 
of respondents said they felt the Break Time provider met personal/specific SEND requirements.

10%
tended to agree. 

Making sure services and activities meet your child's and their family's need.

We understand that increasing demand on services and changing needs mean that it is important that we regularly review the services we commission and deliver. There will be some improvements we can make quickly, and some that will take a little longer, but we will share our progress regularly so you can check that we have got it right at step along the way.

We recognise that there is more to be done to solve the challenge of not enough Break Time providers. We are working hard to increase the number of providers and continue to actively look for new ones. Network events for schools and external organisations are held on a regular basis.

Based on what you have told us, we will make recommendations and start taking actions to improve future short breaks. We recognise the importance of Short Breaks Services for children and young people with SEND and their families. By working closely with providers, partners and families we have continued to develop our Short Breaks offer in recent years.

What we are doing/what we have done so far:

As we continue to improve short breaks services for children and families in the local area, we have:

- ✓ Break Time is now part of the Child and Family Wellbeing (CFW) service at Lancashire County Council. The service will remain the same, however, parent carers might notice that their queries are handled by someone different, or that information is sent out from a different person.
- ✓ launched a digital registration form for Break Time memberships.

- ✓ embedded the Break Time Plus offer for children and young people in our care and those with an assessed need.
- ✓ created a short breaks feedback link available on the Local Offer [Short Breaks feedback - Lancashire County Council](#)
- ✓ designed a Short Breaks Quiz for Lancashire County staff (Children's Social Care). The quiz aimed to test their knowledge regarding the Break Time programme and was designed to assist Commissioners and the SEND Partnership to help identify any gaps and how we can strengthen their knowledge.
- ✓ created a new email address to make it easier for parent carers to contact us breaktime@lancashire.gov.uk
- ✓ continue to monitor all services, internally and externally delivered, to ensure our Short Breaks offer is good quality and meets the needs of children, young people and families.

Gaps

We know that a large proportion of children and young people are not accessing the Break Time hours they are entitled to.

The Lancashire Parent Carer Forum have told us that the Break Time Plus offer is confusing. We will work with the Forum to make sure that information is clear, accessible, up-to-date and explains how families can access Break Time Plus.

We recognise that some children and young people have been considerably impacted by the introduction of 78 hours per year for Break Time members. We are currently working with a range of professionals to improve other leisure and culture opportunities for children and young people with SEND. We intend to develop and grow the opportunities available across Lancashire, so they are suitable for more disabled children in the future.

We understand that 78 hours may not meet the needs of all children and young people who have a Break Time membership. Where children have higher or exceptional levels of need a parent carer can request a Children and Family Assessment. This assessment may identify that the child is eligible for Specialist Short Breaks Services as described above.

At the current time, our new Targeted Break Time offer is still developing, and the hours may not yet be able to meet the needs of all children. Currently 78 hours equates to two hours per week during term-time (or an average of 6 hours per week during school holidays) for one year. Every child who is eligible for Break Time receives the same number of hours to use to ensure equity.

Our priorities for 2024/25 developing short breaks:

- ✓ ensure that the aspirations of children and young people continue to drive our delivery and that their voices are heard
- ✓ improve social inclusion for children and young people with SEND and for them to feel connected to their community
- ✓ strengthen the Early Help offer for children and young people with SEND
- ✓ make sure that information for Break Time Plus is clear, accessible, up-to-date and explains how families can access this service
- ✓ work with parent carers to understand the barriers to accessing Break Time and work to remove these
- ✓ continue to increase the range of short break services including more activities for children and young people with neurodivergent needs.
- ✓ keep the Short Breaks offer under review
- ✓ work with service providers to ensure you continue to be actively involved in the day-to-day planning and delivery of your Short Breaks opportunities

Who can I contact if I need help?

If you have queries relating to Break Time, you can email breaktime@lancashire.gov.uk

[If you would like to request a](#) child and family assessment, you can call 0300 123 6720.

What can I do if I am unhappy with the support being offered?

Each of the commissioned Short Breaks providers will have their complaints procedures, we expect providers to respond to you to put things right quickly.

If you are unhappy about any decisions about your child's Short Breaks, you can email us at cyp-shortbreaks@lancashire.gov.uk.

Families and individuals have a right to appeal the assessment of their needs. This can be discussed with the social worker/child and family practitioner who has undertaken the assessment.

Alternatively, you can make a complaint via the [Lancashire County Council complaints procedure](#).

How can I pass on positive feedback about my child's Short Break?

Feedback helps us to learn what works well and enables us to pass on your recommendations to other families. Parent carers tell us that they find reassurance and support from personal recommendations. We welcome your feedback, so please share with us your positive experiences by contacting cyp-shortbreaks@lancashire.gov.uk.

You can also share your positive experience with families who may benefit from the Short Breaks service at [Short Breaks feedback - Lancashire County Council](#)

Measuring impact

We will ensure that our short break services focus on improving life opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

We know that the views of families, children and young people are essential to support positive outcomes. Not all children, young people and their families will need the same level of support; some will need more than others because of the nature of their child's disability and their individual circumstances.

We will continue to monitor and review the views of children, young people with SEND, their parents and Service Providers so that everybody feels involved and included. This will assist the Council with developing a cycle of continual improvement.

Regular meetings will be in place with all Service Providers of commissioned short breaks to continuously review individual packages of support and monitor the service as a whole.

We want to ensure our Short Breaks service focuses on improving opportunities for disabled children and young people and their families by working alongside them. We know that their views are essential for future success.

Shaping Short Breaks

By listening to the views and aspirations of children and young people and their parent carers, we will strive to ensure short breaks are available to enable and empower children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to lead fulfilling lives, have access to enriching activities and have opportunities away from their parents and/or carers. This will be achieved by continuing to develop our short breaks services and ensuring responsive and timely services, which are accessible.

Using feedback from children, young people, parents and carers we will continue our work to help children and young people with disabilities to enjoy opportunities to reach their potential and fulfil their ambitions.

We want to make sure short breaks really work for children, young people and families in Lancashire and we can't do that without you. Your views, comments and thoughts are really important in making sure we get this right.

We would like to say thank you to those who have taken the time to give feedback and share your views.

The Short Breaks Duty Statement

The Regulations requires the council to produce a Short Breaks services statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for these services, and how the range of Short Breaks is designed to meet the local needs of families with disabled children. The statement is primarily for parents and carers of disabled children aged 0-18 years old.

This statement sets out how the council will seek to meet the Short Breaks duty as set out in the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. This section of the statement summarises paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 which requires local authorities to provide services designed to give breaks for carers of disabled children. A copy of The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/short-breaks-for-carers-of-disabled-children

This short break statement will be kept under consistent review so that it can be updated with the latest information about Lancashire County Councils Short breaks offer.

Any queries on the process for producing the statement should be addressed to Lisa Taylor, Policy Information and Commissioning Manager.

If you have any questions about Short Breaks or would like to be involved in the design and development of Short Breaks Services in Lancashire County Council, please contact cyp-shortbreaks@lancashire.gov.uk



**FAMILY
HUBS
NETWORK**