



One minute guide

Short breaks and fun activities

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What are short breaks and fun activities and what does the law say?

Short Breaks is a national term to describe a break from caring for families with children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Short Breaks and Fun Activities is the term we use in Leeds to describe activities for children and young people with SEND to have fun, spend time with friends and build their confidence and skills in a safe environment. Short breaks and fun activities allow children and young people with SEND to interact with their peers without needing their parents, other family members or care givers to help them to participate.

[The Children and Families Act 1989](#) requires Local Authorities to provide services which assist carers of children and young people with SEND by providing breaks from caring. Each Local Authority has a duty to provide a range of short breaks for disabled children and young people, from birth up to their 18th birthday.

[The Children Act 2014](#) introduced a number of changes for children and young people with SEND, including a single, graduated SEN Response Pathway and integrated [Education Health and Care Plans \(EHCP\)](#), and requirements for each Local Authority to have a [Local Offer](#) which details up to date services and support, and to ensure the voice of children, young people, parents and carers (and their families) is at the heart of what we do.

What kind of short breaks and fun activities are available?

Short breaks in Leeds can be categorised in three ways; Universal, Targeted and Specialist.

Universal Services offer short breaks opportunities that are open to all children and young people in Leeds, whether or not they have SEND. There are lots of universal services available in the community which all children and young people can access such as youth clubs, leisure centres and sports clubs. The people running these activities have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure children and young people with SEND can access them, for example attending training to meet behavioural or medical needs. Most children or young people's needs can be met within Universal Short Breaks services, they do not require Targeted or Specialist Short Breaks. Children and young people with SEND should not be charged more than other children or young people.

Targeted Short Breaks are specifically designed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and include weekend and school holiday activity schemes, residential and evening activities. Some targeted short breaks are funded by Leeds City Council whilst others are provided by voluntary groups and charities. Details of targeted short breaks funded by Leeds City Council can be found in the [Fun Activities and Short Breaks catalogue](#).

Specialist Short Breaks are services for children and young people with the most complex needs, where the child or young person's disability has a substantial and long-term effect on their opportunities to be safe, develop skills for life and be part of their local community growing up. Specialist short breaks in Leeds include approved [Short Breaks Foster Carers](#), residential short breaks, Independent Support Workers, and [personal budgets](#), including direct payments. To access a specialist short break, there will need to be an assessment of need from a social worker or a professional that knows the family well.

Residential short breaks - Rainbow House

Residential short breaks in Leeds may take place at Rainbow House, an Ofsted Outstanding-rated residential home for children aged 9-17 years. Children attending Rainbow House have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), which can include learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairment and associated behaviours which can be described as challenging. The service delivers direct support to children and families, as well as working to build capacity in schools, settings and other providers to be inclusive of children with complex needs.

How can families access short breaks and fun activities?

The Leeds Local Offer can be found [here](#), providing information about all services for those aged 0 – 25 years with SEND. Families can find out what Universal Short Breaks are available by contacting the family information service on 0113 378 9700 or by visiting their [website](#).

All of the Targeted Short Breaks that are funded by Leeds City Council can be found in the [Fun Activities and Short Breaks catalogue](#). These can be accessed by completing the Targeted Short Breaks expression of interest form which can be found [here](#).

Access to a Specialist Short Break can only be secured through an assessment of the child or young person's needs, involving the child or young person, their family and the professionals that work with them. If families already have a social worker or other professional working with them, they can ask this professional to carry out an assessment. If they are not working with anybody currently, they can contact the [Duty and Advice team](#) (0113 222 4403) to discuss their child's needs.

What are personalised budgets and direct payments?

Personalised budgets, including direct payments, are available to children and young people who have more complex needs and have had an assessment of their needs. They are a way to give families more control over the services that they access.

Children's services allocate a sum of money – a budget – to be used to meet those needs, which is personalised to that child. It could be used to pay for a worker to support a child, or specialist equipment for example.

More information on personal budgets, including direct payments can be found [here](#).

Where can I find further information?

There is a range of information available about short breaks and fun activities in Leeds:
[Leeds Local Offer](#)

[Short Breaks service statement](#)

The Short Breaks and Fun Activities catalogue can be downloaded from the Local Offer website [here](#).