

Short Breaks Statement 2026





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Introduction

Local Authorities are required by law to produce and publish a Statement of Short Break Services for disabled children, young people, and their families under the [Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#). This regulation applies to Services under the Children Act 1989 however the accompanying guidance makes it clear that the Short Breaks Services Statement should also include Universal and Targeted Short Breaks.

This Statement is for families living in Westmorland and Furness who have a child/young person who has a disability and aged between 0 to 18 years. For the completeness of information, it also includes a section for those aged 18-25 years, however, this service is provided by [Adult Social Care](#).

What do we mean by disability?

For Universal and Targeted Short Breaks, the law directs that the definition used regarding disability is that contained in the [Equality Act 2010](#): 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities'.

For specialist services the law directs that the definition of disability is the one contained in the [Children Act 1989](#).

What is a Short Break?

Short breaks are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting.

Most users of Short Breaks are disabled children and their families but non-disabled children in need may also receive Short Break Services. This guidance applies to disabled children and their families rather than non-disabled children in need and their families.

There are 3 main types of Short Breaks:

- Universal Short Breaks (USB)
- Targeted Short Breaks (TSB)
- Specialist Services Short Breaks (SSSB)



What are Universal Services?

Universal Short Breaks is the standard term used for any activity or break that is publicly available to all members of the community and are typically provided by individual, private or charitable organisations.

Examples of these may include libraries, youth clubs, leisure centres, scouts, brownies and sport clubs.

These breaks should be accessible for disabled children and young people as all providers have a duty to follow the [Equality Act 2010](#) guidance and make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled children to attend these activities.

How do I access Universal Services?

Universal Short Breaks are open access activities that are accessible to everyone and offer breaks to families regardless of whether they have a disabled child or not.

They are available directly through individual organisations, without the need of a formal assessment or involvement from the Local Authority.

What are Targeted Short Breaks Activities?

Targeted Short Breaks are similar to Universal but are designed specifically to meet a particular group of people's needs. They recognise that, on occasions, children and young people with disabilities require additional or higher levels of support in order to participate in activities. Targeted Short Breaks Activities in this instance are specifically designed to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities.

Targeted Short Breaks can be provided via a number of different organisations including schools, charities and the Local Authority. For instance, special school extended activities, after school clubs, breakfast clubs, holiday activities or other organisations that run summer schemes or leisure activities for disabled children would count as Targeted Short Breaks.

Families with disabled children often access a mixture of Targeted Short Breaks Activities and Universal Services. Targeted Short Breaks are accessible without a formal assessment.

How can I access a Targeted Short Breaks Activity?

For Targeted Short Breaks that are not run by Westmorland and Furness Council, you should contact the organisation that is running that particular service.



They may have put information on the [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Local Offer](#), so that may be a good starting point.

Westmorland and Furness Council support a number of organisations who offer Targeted Short Breaks. These can be accessed by families without the need for a formal social care assessment to be completed.

Eligible families can access up to 76 hours a year of Targeted Short Breaks through an online application process. This allows parents to self-refer without having to complete a full assessment of needs with a social worker.

To Qualify you must:

- Be ordinarily resident in Westmorland and Furness, and
- Have a disability as defined above, and
- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and
- Be within the academic year groups Year 1 to Year 13.

Current providers offering targeted short breaks funded by Westmorland and Furness Council are.

- [SportsWorks](#)
- [Lancashire County Council – Tower Wood](#)
- [Oaklea Trust](#)
- [4Eden](#)

Other providers will be brought on board as part of the commissioning cycle.

How Family Help Supports Families of Children with Disabilities:

For families with a disabled child, Family Help plays a key role in providing early, targeted support alongside the Short Breaks offer. It can:

- Support parents to understand their child's needs and access the right services
- Help families navigate SEND processes, including EHCP pathways
- Improve routines, behaviour support, communication and family wellbeing
- Link families into Universal and Targeted Short Breaks
- Identify when a child may need a specialist assessment under the Children Act 1989



Family Help practitioners work collaboratively with health, education, social care and community partners to ensure that disabled children experience coordinated and consistent support, reducing pressure on parents and siblings.

How to Access Family Help Support:

Our Family Hubs are the front door for early and Family Help in Westmorland and Furness. They provide a single, convenient access point where families can find information, advice, and support in their local community.

Family Hubs bring together services for children aged 0–19, and 0–25 for those with SEND, ensuring that families do not experience fragmented or duplicated support.

Family Hubs provide:

- Information and guidance about childcare, SEND support, health visiting, and family support
- Parenting support, groups and workshops
- Targeted services for families who need extra help
- Access to Early Help assessments and Family Help practitioners
- Activities and support for younger children via our Best Start Family Hubs
- Links into Universal, Targeted and Specialist Short Breaks

The Family Hub digital offer provides families with online access to information, resources and routes into support at any time. This can be found -

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/family-help/family-hubs>

What are Specialist Short Breaks Services?

Specialist Short Breaks provide the most support of available Short Breaks Services and aim to assist parents to continue to care for their children/young people or to care for them more effectively.

They may include:

- Day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere.
- Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere.
- Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes.
- Services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays.

Some families can support their child with disabilities through their own networks and with informal support from friends, relatives, and local support groups. Some families find that they do not have the support available and need additional help to cope with the demands of caring for a child with disabilities.



How can I access Specialist Short Break Services?

If your child is disabled, you can request a social work assessment at any point.

Specialist Short Breaks may be accessed following a Child and Family Assessment under the Children Act 1989.

To request an assessment, you should call Westmorland and Furness Council's Multi Agency Children's Hub on **0300 373 2724** and select option 3 to request an assessment.

The assessment will look at many different factors before deciding whether you or your child is eligible for Specialist Short Breaks, and this will not be judged on disability alone.

Disabilities vary in severity and their impact on family life. Caring for children with profound and multiple disabilities, complex health needs and challenging behaviour may be particularly demanding for families. The impact, particularly on the health and wellbeing of carers and siblings, is hugely variable and will strongly influence the determination of need.

The assessment will take into consideration three key areas:

- The child's developmental needs.
- The parents' parenting capacity.
- Family and environmental factors.

How can Specialist Short Breaks Services help me?

Day Opportunities

Day care, evenings, weekends, and holidays play a key role in supporting disabled people to maintain and develop new skills, prevent social isolation, support inclusion and presence in their local communities and provide a break from caring and support for families ensuring they can continue to offer ongoing support.

Registered, Residential Short Breaks

This provides parents and carers with a longer break where they are tired because of the care they give to their child. This may include facing issues like challenging behaviour or sleepless nights.

Westmorland and Furness currently offers overnight short breaks/respite at two children's homes:

- 23 Hart Street, Ulverston
- 21 Huntley Ave, Penrith



Shared Care

This is the fostering option offered by Westmorland and Furness Council. The scheme offers short breaks to families through a Shared Carer who can look after the child in the carer's home.

It aims to match your child with a carer who can care for them on a regular basis; for a weekend, a holiday, or occasional overnight stays, building up your child's trust and confidence over time.

Short Breaks for 18 – 25 Year Olds

18 to 25 year olds Short Breaks are delivered by [Adult Social Care](#) and provide individuals who are eligible under the Care Act with a planned break, which may be facilitated in several different ways to best suit the assessed needs of the Individual and/or their carer.

Day Opportunities

Day Opportunities play a key role in supporting disabled people to maintain and develop new skills, prevent social isolation, support inclusion and presence in their local communities and provide a break from caring and support for unpaid carers ensuring they can continue to offer ongoing support.

Across Westmorland and Furness day opportunities are provided by Cumbria Care Services (internal provider) and independent sector providers across a range of locations. Support ranges from "traditional" building based services; to work in cafes; shops; horticulture; support into employment and voluntary work and adult education.

Registered, Residential Short Breaks

Registered, residential short breaks provide short term support for adults who have a learning disability and/or autism, who are eligible following a Care Act assessment, while their unpaid carers receive a break from their caring role. Short Breaks are planned but may also be required at times of emergency.

The current Westmorland and Furness offer for Registered Short Breaks for adults is provided by [The Glenmore Trust](#) – a 3 bed service with one emergency bed based in Eden.

Shared Lives

[Shared Lives](#) is a care and support service which provides family-based care provided by host individuals and families for adults aged 18+. Shared Lives Carers are local self-employed people recruited, approved, reviewed, and trained by Cumbria Care. Shared Lives Carers are regulated by the Shared Lives Scheme and can provide range of support including Short Breaks and day-time support for Care Act eligible adults.



Direct Payments

Direct payments are given in lieu of specialist services that are provided through Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Direct payments are not a service in themselves. They are a request that the parent makes to have cash payments as a budget so that they can source their own support to meet the assessed need.

Consultation and Co-production

Our Short Breaks Services are informed by involving a wide range of stakeholders.

We value parent carer involvement, if you would like to be involved from Jan 2026, Parent Carer engagement will be led via Laura Burling at Contact, as they work to develop a new Parent Carer Forum for Westmorland & Furness.

Laura can be contacted on 07808774233 or laura.burling@contact.org.uk

We also collect information on a regular basis from commissioned providers, holding regular contract meetings to evaluate what is working well and what is not. Parent/carers can assist in this process by completing any feedback forms from providers and notifying the Short Breaks team if you are not given any.

Publication and Review

Our Short Breaks Services Statement is published on the [SEND Local Offer](#). It is reviewed regularly with our partnership groups, and it reflects the views and choices of our families. We welcome feedback from individuals as well as via our partnership groups, as we strive for continual improvement.

This statement has been developed in line with the following legislation:

- Equality Act 2010
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Children Act 1989
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014



Further queries

If you have any queries about accessing Short Breaks, further information is available via the [SEND Local Offer](#) or directly from Short Breaks providers.

Glossary

Direct Payment – Money paid in lieu of directly provided services for disabled children and their families.

Registered – A care organisation registered with the Care Quality Commission and/or Ofsted.