

SHORT BREAKS AND RESPITE

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



All parents need a break and sometimes this is not easy to admit without feeling guilty. Having a child with additional needs can put extra stresses and strains on relationships and family life, which make having a break even more important. It's all about giving you and the rest of the household that break from caring while you recharge your batteries. It can also be about new experiences for your child.

Having a short break can help you discover that it is possible to let your child go. It's a chance for your child to find out they can enjoy life away from the family. It can also help them learn to adapt to new situations and experiences.

What is a short break?

When we talk about short breaks we mean any organised activity or care (outside of school) that gives your child a chance to have fun and socialise, and you a chance to take a break from your caring responsibilities. A short break might be an inclusive after school or holiday club, a social group for children with similar disabilities; a few hours care in your own home. It may also be an overnight or residential stay if your child has more complex needs.

Day time short breaks can be accessed by any child under 18 years old with additional needs in receipt of middle or higher rate Disability Living Allowance; overnight short breaks will require your child to undergo a social care assessment of need.

Your local authority has a duty to tell you about their range of short breaks available, their eligibility criteria and how to apply. Find out what is available in your area by visiting your local authority's Local Offer online. It's also worth asking other parents or local disability organisations for schemes they might have used.

How do you get a short break?

You can organise day time short breaks and short-term individual one-to-one support yourself directly by contacting the short break provider. You should not expect to pay more for your child to attend than any other child.

If you want your child to access overnight short breaks, you will need to contact your local children's social care team for an assessment of need. Social care will use a resource allocation system (RAS) to ensure that assessments and funds are allocated fairly.

See the 'Ask about' section at the end of this fact sheet for the relevant contact details for your area.

Bear in mind that more specialist short breaks can be hard to get. There is always a heavy demand. You will have to jump hurdles and will probably have to wait. But it's well worth the effort. Good respite care can make a huge difference to your ability to cope.

If your child meets the assessment criteria and is considered eligible for overnight short breaks, social care workers will work with you to draw up a care plan that sets out the kinds of support they will get. This plan (which may be part of their Education, Health and Care Plan) will be reviewed regularly.



SHORT BREAKS AND RESPITE



Tips for getting a short break

- **Don't wait till you're desperate to ask for help.** It can take a long time to get an assessment and organise care and funding so be brave and ask for support before you're going under.
- **Explain how the demands of caring for your child are taking their toll** and make it clear that things are difficult. Much of the social services funded respite focuses on your child's level of impairment rather than your family's needs. You may need to challenge this.
- **Get other people on your side** – ask your health visitor, GP or other professional to write to social services to back up your need for support.

Funding for short breaks

If your child has been assessed as being eligible for social care, they may be allocated a personal budget which is the amount of money the local authority has decided is necessary to arrange your child's care and support. A personal budget can be allocated to you directly as a 'Direct Payment' so that you can organise and pay for things like short breaks yourself. Or the local authority can hold onto the money and arrange support on your child's behalf. Or you can have a mixture of both. Ask your social worker or short breaks assessor about direct payments and personal budgets once you've been assessed as needing a service. Read our companion fact sheet on 'Direct Payments' (see below).

Making short breaks work for you

- **If your child is assessed as eligible for short break services, get involved in planning their care with the social work team.** This will help make sure that the arrangements are successful and any difficulties are dealt with as you would wish.
- **Don't feel you have to accept what you've been offered** if it's not working out.
- **Write down a list of questions and key things** about your child and take this with you to visits or meetings about respite arrangements.
- **Visit short break providers.** Talk to your child or show them pictures before you take them to visit. Spend time there together and observe what happens. Find out what other parents and other children say about the care provider and ask questions.
- **Spend time agreeing how best to introduce and trial any short break arrangements.**
- **Keep an open mind as sometimes initial visits don't go well.** Often it takes time for children to settle with new people and it's hard to get everything right immediately, so be careful not to miss out on an opportunity because it needs working at for a while.
- **Be prepared for things to go wrong.** There are bound to be hiccups, even in longstanding short breaks arrangements. If there are problems, speak to your short breaks provider first, and then your social care worker or care manager. You should have discussed what might happen in a crisis during the care planning process and have alternative arrangements in place, if necessary.

Ask about

- **Autism Sussex** – runs clubs and siblings' clubs, go to www.autismsussex.org.uk or call 0345 450 0060.
- **Choice Team** – works with children and families who access a lower level of support through Personal Budgets or Direct Payments. An identified key worker will act as your point of contact, and review your child's support plan annually to ensure that it continues to meet their needs



SHORT BREAKS AND RESPITE



and those of the family. A new service, eventually it is planned that they will accept direct referrals for support where social work is not needed. For more information, call: 0330 222 2633, or email: choice@westsussex.gov.uk.

- **Compass Card** – this is a free leisure discount card (administered by Amaze) for 0 to 25 year olds with significant additional needs who live or go to school in West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in the county. Call: 0300 123 9186 or find out more at: www.amazebrighton.org.uk.
- **Core Assets** – provides short breaks for children and young people via a one-to-one buddy to help them access local opportunities. Tel: 01903 753948 or email: conor.chong@coreassets.com.
- **Crossroads Care** – can provide short break care in your own home. For further information, contact Crossroads Care on: 01903 790270, or email them at: admin@crossroadscare-sc.org.
- **Family Fund** – you may be able to get help to pay for activities and short breaks. Go to: www.familyfund.org.uk or call: 01904 621115.
- **Groups and clubs in West Sussex** – include the Ashdown Club, Worthing: 01903 528607; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: 01444 459108; PACSO, Chichester: 01243 533353; Springboard Project, Crawley: 01293 531963, Horsham: 01403 218888.
- **Independent Lives** – information, care and support services designed to enable people with care needs to be independent, includes information on personal assistants, how to find one and how to manage Direct Payments. For more go to: www.independentlives.org, call: 0845 601 2399/01903 219482 or email: info@independentlives.org.
- **Local clubs and activities**, parent support groups – refer to our handbooks *Making Sense of It All* and *Making Sense of Adult Life*, which both contain directories of short breaks running locally. For further information, visit our website: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk.
- **Respite care** – facilities in West Sussex include: Chailey Heritage Residential; Cissbury Lodge, Worthing; High Trees, Crawley and Horsham; Orchard House, Cuckfield; and The Finches, Burgess Hill. Ask your child or young person's social worker for more information (see below for contact details).
- **Short breaks** – available for children and young people aged 0-18 years who live in West Sussex and have a disability and/or additional need. Children who receive middle or high care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) automatically qualify. For more information (and to also find out more about respite options) go to: www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/7940/short_breaks_directory_2016.pdf, email short.break.team@westsussex.gov.uk or call: 0330 222 2562.
- **Social care** – can help to arrange short breaks and respite care. If your child is under 18, call the MASH, tel: 01403 229888, email: MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk. For over 18s call the Adult Social CarePoint: 01243 642121, or email: socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk.

Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** and **Making Sense of Adult Life** (14+) – Reaching Families' handbooks for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex provide essential information on leisure and social lives, money matters, social care, health, employment and much more. Go to: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk.
- **Fact sheets** – see our companion fact sheets: *Adaptations and Equipment*; *Direct Payments*; *Leisure*; and *Survival Strategies*. For more go to: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/factsheets.htm.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org>.





Reaching Families

Empowering families of children with disabilities

- amazebrighton.org.uk
- www.reachingfamilies.org.uk

