

**Children with Disabilities Team**

**Short Breaks Statement**

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# What is a Short Break Statement?

Darlington Borough Council has a statutory duty set by the Government to support disabled children and young adults, and their parents/carers, through the provision of short break support.

Councils must also write a statement about this and explain:

* What is available.
* Who is eligible for the service; and
* How services are accessed.

This duty is set out in The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 which came into force on 1st April 2011.

# What are short breaks?

A short break is any service that allows a disabled child to have an enjoyable break away from their parent and gives their parent a break from their caring responsibilities.

They are offered for different reasons:

* You feel that you are struggling to care for your child and really need a break.
* You feel that sometimes a short break helps you to recharge your batteries. This maybe especially true if your child does not sleep through the night and needs your attention.
* You find it hard to get out socially or attend adult education because your child needs a lot of support.
* You feel that other members of your family are ‘left out’ because of your caring duties.

Short Breaks also enable disabled children to have social opportunities and join in with fun and interesting activities without their parent. A short break is not the same as childcare which is for parents to work or attend work related training.

How is a referral made for an assessment?

Referrals can be made by professionals or by parents/carers. Referral to the Team can be made through the Children’s Front Door for Darlington Borough Council. The Front Door can be contacted on the following number (01325) 406222.

When making a referral, professionals or parents/carers should give as much information as possible in the conversation with a Social Worker from the Front Door Team.

# How are assessments undertaken?

The Children with Disabilities Team works with people aged from 0 to 17, the Short Break Statement is specifically aimed towards disabled children and young adults aged 4 – 17 years. When a young person reaches age 18, they will be assessed using the Adult Care and Support Needs Assessment and services will be provided (if eligible) through Adult Social Care.

When a referral to the Team is received, a Social Worker will be allocated to undertake a Child and Families Assessment which includes a specific Disabled Children’s Assessment.

The Disabled Children’s element of the Assessment are split in to 2 age groups, as follows:

* 4 –10
* 11 –17

These age groups broadly follow the different age groups within the educational system and will link in with the Education, Health and Care Plan, which is a single plan for disabled children and young adults, encompassing the support to be offered through social care, health and education. The assessment aims to give children, young adults and their families an idea of how much funding will be available to allow them to plan their support over the next 12 months if they are eligible for this service.

# Children aged 0 – 4

It is generally expected that children aged 0 – 4 will not require any paid services to meet their needs, as all children of this age would need a high level of input from their parents or carers. Only in exceptional circumstances will paid services for children of this age be considered.

# Parent Carers’ Need Assessment

Each assessment questionnaire also includes a Parent Carers Needs Assessment; designed to capture the specific needs of the child or young adult’s carer(s). The Parent Carers Needs Assessment is optional, and therefore a parent/carer has a choice as to whether this will be completed.

A Parent Carers Needs Assessment is a conversation between a parent/carer and a Social Worker to understand how caring for a disabled child impacts their lives. It’s a chance for parent/carers to share their challenges, needs and any support they may require. The Social Worker completing this assessment will signpost or refer parent/carers to services that will be able to help and support them to feel able to continue caring for their child and take care of their own wellbeing.

You do not have to have a child or young person open to Children’s Services to request a Parent Carer Needs Assessment. Parent/Carers who would like a Parent Carer Needs Assessment should call the Children’s Front Door on 01325 406222 to request this for a child aged 0 – 17.

# The Assessment Process

There are some general points which apply to all the assessments:

* The Social Worker from the Children with Disabilities Team will be allocated.
* The Social Worker will complete the assessment with the child or young adult, and their parent/carer.
* The assessment is designed to capture outstanding support, care or development needs. If the needs of a child or young adult are being (or can be) fully met by other support networks (e.g. parent/carer, wider family, other agencies, universal services) then we will consider those needs met and the result will be a low score within that section.
* The impact on the parent/carer of meeting these needs should be fully recognised within the Parent Carers Needs Assessment.
* The Social Worker will, with the permission of the parent/carer, liaise with other involved professionals to get a thorough overview of the outstanding support needs within each section for their child/young person.
* The assessment should be completed whilst always having regard for what would usually be expected for a child of that age.
* The assessment will determine if the child meets the eligibility criteria to be provided with paid services to meet their unmet care or support needs.
* The points allocated within the Disabled Children’s Assessment element will be added up to result in an indicative budget as outlined in the Resource Allocation tables. The final budget may be less or may be more, dependent on the specific needs and the outcomes identified in the Support Plan. However, Darlington Borough Council would generally expect that the identified needs and outcomes can be met within the indicative budget.
* Budgets are approved via internal resource panels and processes following completion of the assessment and proposed plan (Child in Need plan).

**Care Plans and the indicative budget**

The budget should only be used to meet the needs identified within the assessment and the outcomes specified in the Care Plan (Child In Need Plan). Whilst Darlington Borough Council encourages Social Workers, children/young adults, and their parents/carers to be creative in meeting needs, we do need to ensure that the money given is meeting the identified need and is contributing to the specified outcome. In consultation with you a Social Worker will help to develop the Child In Need Plan considering what service can best meet or support in each area that an assessment identified. Not all unmet support needs would require a paid provision to meet the identified outcome and all options will be considered when completing support plans.

# Who is eligible for short break services?

The final part of each assessment enables the Social Worker to explain whether the child or young adult meets the eligibility criteria for support from the Children with Disabilities Team. This criteria is openly available, and the Social Worker will always share these with the child or young adult and their parents/carers.

If the eligibility criteria are not met, any needs identified within the assessment will not be met through paid services. The Social Worker will assist the child or young adult, and their parent/carer, in trying to find other available services to meet these needs and a recommendation as to what the next support steps would be made. This could be through a Child In Need Plan without paid services but support still offered by a Social Worker Team, a referral to targeted support services via our Building Stronger Families (early help) service, or signposting to universal services or support available through the local offer.

To be eligible for a service from the Children with Disabilities Team, children and young adults must meet the following criteria:

1. Be aged between 0 and 17 and be ordinarily resident in Darlington. (Children aged under 4 years who have a disability will be considered based on individual needs and exceptional circumstances. This is because all very young children usually require a high level of care, support and supervision from a care giver)
2. Have complex needs (in addition to any behavioural problems including ADHD and ADD that may be present) or have a serious or life-threatening illness.
3. There must be evidence that the child or young adult’s additional needs impact significantly on their ability to enjoy ordinary day to day activities.
4. The child or young adult must require a much greater level of day to day care to meet their needs than would usually be required for a person of that age.
5. They must require a high level of support in at least three of the following areas:
	1. Personal care and supervision
	2. Education or employment
	3. Access to social activities
	4. Communication
	5. The physical environment
	6. Condition management
6. The child or young adult’s condition is life limiting or expected to last 6 months or more.

# How will services be provided?

If eligibility criteria are met, and an indicative budget established, there will generally be several options for support to meet identified needs.

The needs may be met through universal services or through extended family support networks. Universal services are things such as local youth clubs and other services available to the general public.

Many families currently in receipt of paid services prefer to receive these through a Direct Payment, monies paid by the Local Authority directly to families so that they can organise and pay for support themselves. Alternatively, families may prefer to use a provider already identified by the Local Authority as suitable to provide particular types of support through the Community Short Breaks Framework.

# What range of short breaks is available?

Short breaks can be for a short period of time, or longer periods such as overnight.

Darlington Borough Council operate an Ofsted registered short breaks service for children and young people with physical and learning disabilities called Harewood Hill Lodge. It is a purpose built detached bungalow, situated in a quiet residential area of Darlington, offering short breaks for up to five children aged between from 5-17 years.

If a family chooses to receive a Direct Payment, they will take control over identifying the provider of the short break and will organise their support directly with this provider. The provider may be a family friend or an extended family member or could be an agency or other private provider.

A support service is offered to all families in receipt of a direct payment and can assist with things such as recruitment, employer’s responsibilities, payroll and financial returns. This means that many families who may otherwise not have been able to manage a direct payment can actually do so very well

If a family does not feel that a direct payment is suitable to meet their needs, they may choose to access the Community Based Short Breaks Framework which is broken down into five ‘lots’, as follows:

* Lot 1 – Sport, Art/Craft, Drama, Recreational and Personal Development Activities
* Lot 2 – Holiday Play Schemes and Holiday Opportunities
* Lot 3 – After School Clubs
* Lot 4 – Promotion of Independence Skills, Befriending and Mentoring Services
* Lot 5 – Individual packages of support in the community

The providers on the Framework for each lot have been through a rigorous suitability assessment so families can be sure that they will provide a high quality service. Families do not need to use exclusively direct payments or exclusively the Framework, and may choose to use a combination of both. If a framework provider is unable to provide the required support to meet assessed needs, sourcing officers from the council will undertake explorations with alternative support providers.

Parents and carers are normally expected to provide transport to and from short breaks.

## How can young people and families get involved?

We are always seeking ways to improve support to disabled children, young people and their families. Engagement activity in relation to community short breaks will take place through a number of avenues, existing providers, voice of the child and family feedback, through schools and direct family engagement.

There is an established independent parent carer forum in Darlington – Together for better <https://darlingtonpcf.co.uk/>

*“*Together for better are parent/carers of children and young people with additional needs (0-25 years) who are passionate about improving our children and young people’s lives”

Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) provides Inclusion, Participation and Leadership opportunities for disabled young people through its Young Leaders Project. The intention is that young disabled people gain skills and experience in order to influence DAD and other services. Young Leaders is a user led group and aims to achieve the following:

* Improve accessibility of services
* Widen public attitudes with regards disability and change negative attitudes
* Develop leadership skills in members

DAD can be contacted on (01325) 489999 or email:mail@darlingtondisability.org or chyps@darlingtondisability.org

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