



# **Short Breaks Strategy Guidance and Pathways**

**Department of Community and Children's Services**

**City of London Corporation**

## VERSION HISTORY

| Version | Revision Date          | Status   | Summary of Changes   |
|---------|------------------------|----------|--|
| 1       | 26.2.16                | Draft    | First draft written by Early Help Coordinator  |
| 2       | 14.3.16                | Draft    | Minor amends to draft following feedback from Early Help sub-group held 01.03.16   |
| 3       | 8.4.16                 | Final    | Version 2 approved by Service Manager  |
| 4       | 4.11.17                | Re-draft | Additional visual pathways and feedback forms requested by SEND Parent Forum (added prior to 2018 review)  |
| 5       | 07.3.18                | Final    | Visual pathways and Parent Forum amends approved ahead of SEND Inspection  |
| 6       | 03.08.18               | Re-draft | Commissioning approach added   |
| 7       | April - September 2019 | Re-draft | Update by Early Help Co-ordinator to reflect national short breaks guidance, thresholds, eligibility criteria, overnight short breaks and provide clarity. |
| 8       | 19.03.21               | Review   | Updated by Early Help Co-ordinator. Old commissioning approach removed, added information about pre-paid cards personal budgets and testimonials.          |

## DISTRIBUTION

| Title                                       |
|---|
| Early Help Sub-Group – Full membership      |
| SEND Programme Board – Full membership      |
| City Parent Carer Forum – Full membership   |
| Service Manager – Children and Families     |
| Head of Service – Education and Early Years |
| Assistant Director – People                 |

Approved by Chris Pelham

**Review date: March 2022**

**Review responsibility: Chris Pelham**

**Review body: SEND Programme Board**



## Short Breaks

### 1. What are Short Breaks?

Short Breaks is an umbrella term used to describe social/leisure daytime activities for children and young people with, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They enable children with disabilities to participate in social/leisure activities and can provide a respite for their parents/carers.

Access to short breaks can play an important part in supporting the personal and social development of disabled children and young people by enabling them to explore different activities and interests while having a break away from their main carer.

### 2. Legal context

The City of London provides short breaks according to the duty outlined in section 25 of the 2008 Children and Young Persons Act '*to assist individuals who provide care for [disabled] children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.*' This duty was expanded by the 2011 Short Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations which specifically require local authorities to provide a sufficient range of short breaks services to enable family carers to study or undertake leisure activities, to meet the needs of other children, or to carry out household tasks. This duty is in addition to the requirement to have regard to the needs of carers when in crisis.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004, says we must provide a range of social care services to support children in need. The act also requires us to assess and prioritize the way we meet the needs of children in the local area and permits us to use 'eligibility criteria' to take into account available resources when deciding whether to provide services to a child in need.

This means that, although the act defines all disabled children as children in need, it does not oblige us to provide specialist services to all disabled children. In relation to short breaks, we fulfil this obligation by providing a range of short break provisions.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as '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. The Act places a duty on local authorities to 'safeguard and promote the welfare' of children in need, and 'promote the upbringing of these children by their families'. This duty can be met through a range of services that are appropriate to those children's needs.

The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004, obliges us to provide a range of services to support carers, including those who care for disabled children. This Act does not oblige us to provide services to all carers in the City of London, however, it does give all carers the right to have a Carers Assessment. A Carers Assessment can identify any additional needs that carers may have and the types of services that might meet them. One of the ways that we support carers of disabled children is by helping them to take short breaks from their caring responsibilities through universal, targeted and specialist short break services.

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires us to assess if parents and carers within the City of London have support needs and, if so, what those needs are. We must also take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are parent/carers within the City who may have support needs.

Under the Act, we must assess what support the parent needs as soon as we become aware that they need help to look after a disabled child or young person if the parent makes a request for an assessment. This is called a Child and Family Assessment. Once completed, this will determine what help the parent/carer might require. In conjunction with the family, we will then decide on the best form of support to enable the parents/carers to look after their disabled child or young person. The support could be signposting, advice or provision of a service.

### **3. City of London approach**

The City of London is committed to working in partnership to provide quality services that are responsive to the individual needs of children, young people and their families. Short breaks are administered by the Children and Families Team (both via Children's Social Care and Early Help), with other partners involved as appropriate. Our approach to support planning is based on the following principles:

- Children, young people and their families should be fully involved in all planning and decision-making
- Support should focus on achieving specific outcomes for the child, young person and family and will be reviewed and monitored accordingly.
- Support should be accessible, with clear and transparent pathways and procedures.

### **4. Eligibility**

Basic eligibility for Short Breaks from the City of London is as follows:

#### **Short Breaks 5-17 years**

- Age 5-17 years with a disability
- City of London resident
- Have an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (Not mandatory)
- Be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at Middle or High Rate care component or receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP) at Intermediate or Advanced and can provide an original copy of the child's DLA award letter or PIP award letter which covers the current year.

### **Short Breaks Under 5's provision**

- Children aged 3-4 will be able to access a range of universal services such as the Children Centre, nursery provision and child-minding services. Some 3–4-year-olds are also entitled to 30 hours free childcare a week.

If more support is required for your disabled child under aged 5, please contact the Children and Families Team on 0207 332 3621.

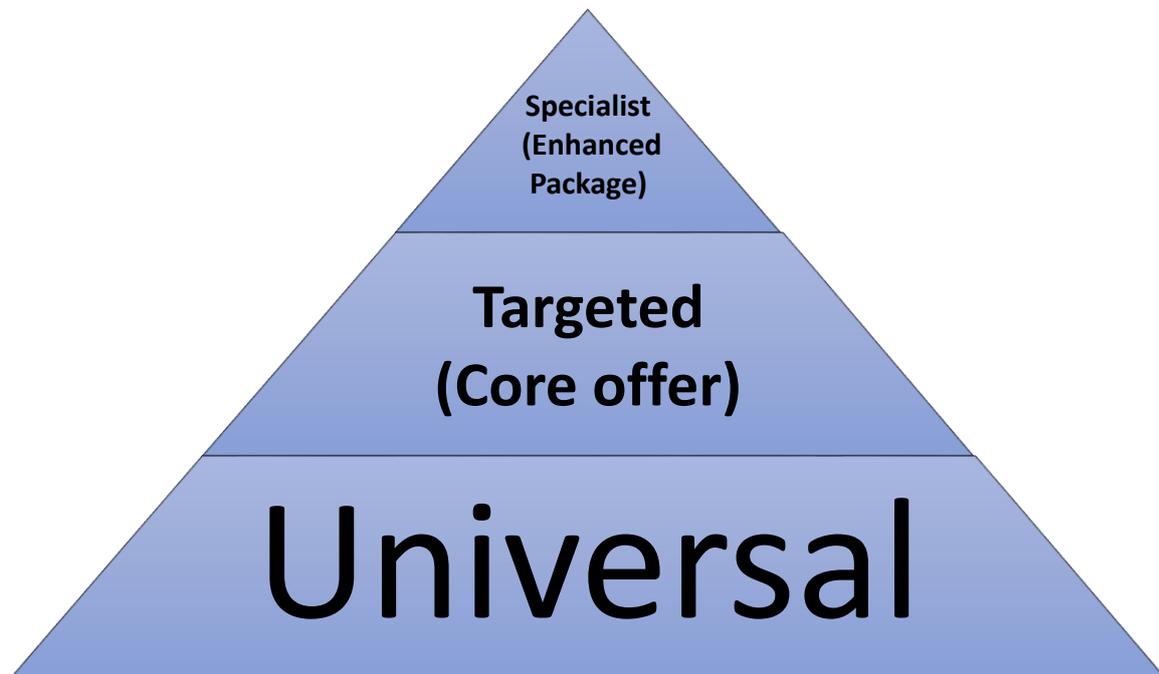
### **18+**

There are a range of social and leisure activities available for adults aged 18 and over. For more information, please visit [www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

[If more support is required, please contact the Adult Social Care Team on 0207 332 1224](#)

### **There are three tiers to the City of London Short Break offer**

Short Break three-tiered system: Universal/Targeted/Specialist



## 4.1

### ***Universal services - open to all children and young people***

Universal services are available to all, including children with SEND, and can be accessed without the need for assessment. These are services delivered in various settings which can be accessed independently. Families can seek advice from involved professionals or from the Family and Young People's Information Service and the Local Offer to help them decide which activity to access.

Examples of these services may include:

- Children's Centres Services
- After school clubs and Extended Services
- Sports and leisure activities
- Youth provision
- Commissioned services available in neighbouring boroughs.

The core specification for services commissioned for children and young people requires service providers to ensure that their services are inclusive, accessible and flexible to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND so that they can easily participate in the activities/services available.

The City of London can seek support from the Hackney Integrated Targeted team (HIT Squad). They offer a support service to short break providers which includes specific tailored training and advice. This is to enable disabled children to fully participate in their services.

## 4.2

### ***Targeted - Core offer of funding for up to 120 activity hours per year***

The Core offer is available to those who meet the eligibility criteria, who may not be able to independently access services within their community. Support to access the Core offer will be designed to meet the specific needs of a child or young person. Services might include a targeted short break, such as a specialist play scheme, one-to-one outreach service or help to access a universal service. The Core offer can be accessed through a successful short break application and assessment. Some children who access the offer may have an EHCP or will have been assessed via a Child and Family Assessment (Children's Social Care) or a Family Early Help Assessment (Early Help). All families accessing the Core offer will have an allocated worker from the Children and Families Team (Children's Social Care or Early Help). Further assessment and support may be required where young people or their families would like to access the Short Breaks offer via a direct payment. Direct payments are accessed through a pre-paid card or our third-party accounts manager.

### 4.3

#### ***Specialist - Enhanced offer***

The Enhanced offer is for children and young people with severe and complex needs who require significant support to enable them to access a short break in a mainstream setting or within a specialist service. The short breaks available for this group of children and young people could include additional top-up activity hours or an overnight short break.

#### **Overnight Short Breaks**

All decisions to award overnight short breaks will need to be agreed by the Short Breaks Panel. Overnight short breaks are also known to some as overnight respite. This is usually only awarded in a very small number of cases, where children have the most complex medical or high-level needs. In these cases, children will usually have an EHCP or be subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. City of London does not commission providers to deliver overnight breaks. If overnight short breaks are awarded, a carer will usually be provided to deliver overnight respite within the child's family home. We will also consider providing direct payments for overnight short breaks to a maximum cost value of £20 per hour. All payments for overnight short breaks will have to be paid through our third-party accounts manager.

If families do request more than the Core offer of up to 120 hours per year, or would like to access overnight short breaks, a social worker will complete a Child and Family Assessment to determine eligibility, and will recommend an appropriate support package. The recommendations will then need to be approved by the Short Breaks Panel. In most cases when a family has been awarded overnight short break/respite, the Core offer of up to 120 activity hours will cease, and/or will be reduced. Typically, the core offer maximum of 120 activity hours will reduce to **70 activity hours per year**, in addition to the allocated overnight respite hours, awarded as part of a new Enhanced offer.

Families who receive the Enhanced offer could have an EHCP and may also have additional social care or continuing care needs. Those accessing the Enhanced offer will usually have an allocated social worker and will receive ongoing appropriate professional support to access Short Breaks services.

## **5. Access to short breaks provision**

### ***5.1 Who can apply for short breaks?***

Children and young people, or their parents/carers can apply directly for the Targeted (Core) and Specialist (Enhanced) short breaks offer from the City of London using the short breaks application form. Short breaks requests can be made using the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF). Please ensure you have checked the eligibility criteria before making an application. Alternatively, if the child/young person is already receiving support from professionals in the City of London and have a current EHCP, an Early Help Plan with a diagnosed disability, or are being supported by a social worker under Child in Need (section 17) or Child Protection (section 47) then the involved professionals can recommend short breaks as part of the support plan.

## **5.2 How do you apply?**

A completed short breaks application form can be returned by email to [short.breaks@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:short.breaks@cityoflondon.gov.uk), given directly to the allocated worker, or sent by post to the below address:

**Children and Families Team, Department of Community and Children's Services,  
City of London, Po Box 270, Guildhall, London, EC2P 2EJ.**

If a professional is requesting short breaks on behalf of a child or young person, they can either do this as part of your support plan or can complete a short breaks application for you. All applications should have the original documentation, to confirm eligibility, attached to the form. All original documents will be copied for our records and returned securely to the applicant.

## **5.3 What happens next?**

The Children and Families Team will acknowledge receipt of all short break application forms within five working days. All requests for short breaks need to be approved by the Service Manager for Children's Social Care and Early Help (the budget holder) and will be considered by the Short Breaks Panel. A decision to approve or decline provision of the short breaks offer will then be made. In some cases, it may be necessary to gain further information from Education, Health or other partner agencies as part of the assessment process. If appropriate, they will also be invited to attend the Short Breaks Panel. When further information is required, consent will be obtained from the child or young person and parent/carers as appropriate.

All children and young people who are eligible for support under the short breaks offer will be allocated a named worker if they do not already have one. The allocated worker will arrange to meet with the family and will confirm the level of support to be provided under the short breaks, offer within 30 working days. Short breaks provision should be accessible as soon as possible within these timescales. If it's not possible to confirm the short breaks offer within 30 days, you will be notified of the delay by your worker or a member the short breaks team.

Once the level of support is agreed, a full support plan, including timings and costs, will be co-produced with the family, identifying specific outcomes to be met through each aspect of short breaks provision. All support plans will be authorised by the Service Manager for Children's Social Care and Early Help.

Where an application for short breaks is made but a child or young person is assessed as not being eligible (for the targeted or specialist offer), the Early Help Team or Social Worker will signpost the family and encourage them to access universal services.

## **6. Available provision and commissioning approach (Sufficiency Strategy)**

### **6.1 Funding for Core offer / Enhanced offer**

The Core short breaks offer is up to 120 activity hours per year and this is reviewed on an annual basis. Access to the Core offer is single source funded from the Short Breaks

Budget (Children and Families Team). The total annual cost available for the Core offer will be £2,400 per year (120 hours x maximum hourly rate of £20). Activity hours may be less than 120 hours per year if the hourly rate from the short breaks provider exceeds £20 per hour. Families are welcome to 'top up' their current provision with other funding, this would be an arrangement between the parent/carer and provider directly.

For those children with multiple and/or complex needs who access the Specialist/Enhanced offer, it may be that Short Breaks form one element of a much broader package of support and funding may be split across other budget areas (for example in Children's Social Care the child is supported under Child in Need (section 17) or Child Protection (section 47)). There may also be a situation where funding is sought from Health (for example, if there are complex medical needs supported by a continuing care package).

## **6.2 Commissioning approach**

The City of London and Hackney have now jointly commissioned a range of specialist short breaks services. This will mean that children, young people and their families will get to choose an activity from a range of providers. The full list and details of these services and/or activities can be accessed via the Short Breaks pages on the Local Offer website. Further information can be obtained from the Children and Families Team. Please see contact details at the end of this document.

- *Other local authorities – Tower Hamlets / Islington*  
Many residents of the City of London live very close to the border with Tower Hamlets or Islington. For this reason, some families may prefer to access provision within these boroughs. Commissioning are building links with these local authorities and the Children and Families Team are already aware of providers within both areas that are happy to accept City of London resident children.
- *Bespoke*  
Where none of the above options are appropriate for the child or young person, the City of London Corporation may consider sourcing bespoke provision for a child or young person. This option will need to be considered by the Short Breaks Panel.

## **6.3 Access to provision**

Some families choose to request all or part of their short breaks entitlement in the form of a personal budget – this is an amount of money allocated for the provision of support and enables the child or young person, together with their family and allocated worker, to plan, arrange and pay for their own specialist short break activities. For further details of this, please see the City of London Corporation's Personal Budget Guidance, which is a joint document covering both the Children and Families offer (including short breaks) and the Education and Early Years offer (including education provision).

Personal budgets from the City of London Corporation are accessed in two main ways:

- **Personal/individual budget - direct payments**

A personal/individual budget is available to some families who are eligible for short breaks. Any direct payments will be placed on a pre-paid card (evidence of personal budget spend on short breaks will be required quarterly. Misuse of short breaks money will be fully investigated. If money is not being spent on the agreed regular short breaks activities, the account will be frozen, and the City of London will discontinue any further payments. The City of London will take all necessary steps to recoup all misused monies.

- **Personal budget - managed account**

The Children and Families Team can refer families to a third party (Barry Bookkeeping) if you would prefer someone else to manage your budget. All families who may require a carer to provide support, will automatically be referred to Barry Bookkeeping & Payroll Solutions Ltd.

*(The City of London can also arrange to pay short breaks providers directly)*

### **What is a Pre-Paid Card?**

A pre-paid card is a short breaks allocation converted into money which the family can use to directly purchase short break support and services (it cannot be used for the purchase of goods) of their choice. It gives the parent/carer greater control and choice of the short break services that are best for their disabled child or young person. All decisions to award a direct payment will be made at the Short Breaks Panel.

### **Universal services**

Families can access a range of universal services including play schemes, sports/youth clubs, Police cadets as well as many others within the City of London as part of their Short Breaks package.

## **7. Review of Support**

Short breaks offered by the City of London are planned to meet specific needs and outcomes agreed by the child or young person, their family and the allocated worker. In addition to this, good support via short breaks should be both enjoyable for the child or young person and beneficial to the involved carers. To monitor outcomes and service quality all new short breaks agreements will be formally reviewed at three and six months from the date first arranged. Following successful initial reviews, short breaks will be reviewed on an annual basis as an absolute minimum. Where an EHCP is in place, the short breaks will be reviewed in line with the annual review of the EHCP. Where a child or young person has ongoing involvement from professionals from the City of London (e.g. a social worker), short breaks provision may also be informally reviewed during visits and other contact with the child or young person and their family.

If a child or young person accesses specialist services (such as a SEND play scheme) funded by the City of London either directly or via a personal budget, the allocated worker will visit the child at the provision on an annual basis to monitor the provision and assess whether the identified outcomes are being met.

Where short breaks provision is offered as a personal budget and administered as a direct payment, the parent/carer or young person will be supported by the City of London to understand the joint agreement as to how the money will be spent and how the short breaks will be monitored. For example, every three months families must show what the direct payments have been used for when short breaks are accessed via direct payments.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Can I get support with transport arrangements?**

The City of London promotes and encourages independence and can provide independent travel training where appropriate. In most cases, we expect parent/carers to take responsibility for travel arrangements to and from the chosen short break activity. The mobility element of DLA is to help assist in the transportation of children with a disability.

### **Will the City of London need evidence of what I have spent the money on?**

Yes, we will request copies of statements from the pre-paid card account as well as all receipts you have from paying for short breaks activities. Statements and receipts will be requested by your allocated worker after an initial three month period and on an ongoing quarterly basis.

### **Can I use my direct payment to cover costs for a sibling or for myself?**

Direct payments may be used to pay for a sibling if you consider this to benefit you as a short break. We also understand that, on some occasions, covering your costs as a parent/carer might be necessary (i.e. entrance fees). We expect you to contact your short breaks worker to discuss covering costs of a sibling. We also expect that the parent/carer contacts the places of interest in advance to make sure you get the best concession rate possible.

### **Can I employ a respite carer with direct payments for short breaks?**

Yes, direct payments can be used to employ a respite carer – this is more common if your child is eligible for the Enhanced short breaks offer, and may need to be considered alongside continuing healthcare needs as detailed in your child's EHCP. Within the Core offer, some families have used direct payments to cover the costs of a registered childminder or carer for respite at the weekends or in school holidays. Please note that, if you are using direct payments for respite care, you will be referred to our third-party organisation to manage the account and to offer support to employ an appropriate carer.

### **Do I have to choose an activity from the City of London list of Short Breaks Providers?**

Some children and families will need more specialist provision in order to enjoy a short break. In the City we have a range of specialist services for children and young people with disabilities

from which families can choose. We aim to promote choice and independence in the provision of our short breaks and encourage children and families to select their preferred short break from the list of providers approved by the City of London. In some circumstances, where the families are not able to choose from the list of providers, direct payments will be offered.

**Can direct payments be used to pay for holidays and school trips?**

Direct payments cannot be used to fund family holidays. Short breaks money is to be spent on regular social, leisure and daytime activities only. The money can also not be used to fund school daytime or residential trips, as this will be considered an educational trip.

**Please contact your allocated worker or email [short.breaks@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:short.breaks@cityoflondon.gov.uk) if you have further questions.**

Visit our Local Offer website pages for information, advice and support for children with SEND aged 0-25 living in the City. [localoffer.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://localoffer.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

**Testimonials**

Whilst my child is at after school/holiday club. I use the spare time to run some errands and just relax.

We are very grateful to be receiving Short Breaks Support from the City.  
  
It is fantastic!

Short breaks support has allowed my son, who has Autism, to learn how to swim, which has developed his confidence and coordination. He is very proud of his progress.

I love trying different sports, activities and meeting new people. I also use short breaks to have sessions with my Mentor who supports me.