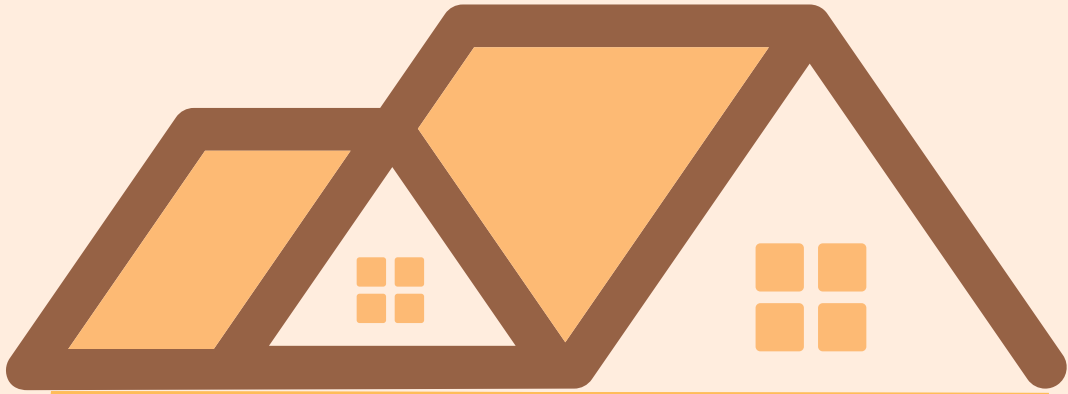




HSC Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

HSC Northern Ireland
Foster Care



Short Breaks Service



table of contents

what is a short break?

benefits of short break care

who can become a carer?

skills needed

support available

application & assessment

hear from a short breaks carer

frequently asked questions

our team

contact details

mission statement

"To provide safe, high
quality and responsive
support services to
children with disabilities
and their families"



what is a short break?

Short break care is a reliable and flexible service designed to give parents/carers of children with disabilities a regular overnight break.

We ask carers to commit to providing a minimum of one overnight of care per month in their own home.



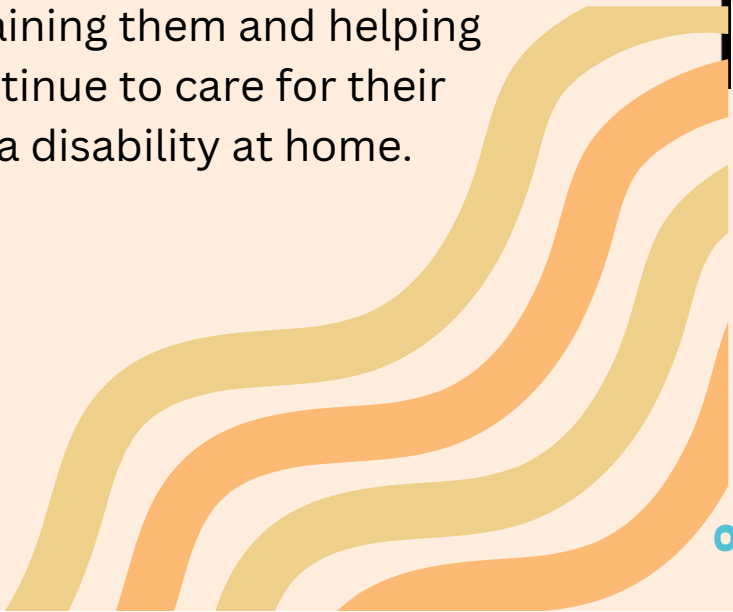
benefits of short break care

Many children with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as other children.

Regular contact with a carer and their family can be an enjoyable and positive experience for a child, boosting their self-esteem, providing new friendships and encouraging independence.

The break provided enables parents/ carers to recharge their batteries, spend time with other family members and do things which are not always possible when their child with a disability is at home.

A regular break can be a lifeline to parents, sustaining them and helping them to continue to care for their child with a disability at home.



who can become a carer?

You may apply:

- Whatever your marital status.
- Whatever your sexual orientation.
- Whatever your religious / cultural or ethnic background.
- If you already have children of your own - provided your children are happy to accept a child with disabilities into your home.
- If you have a disability or medical condition - provided it is stable and does not affect your ability to care for a child / young person.
- If you are in employment or are currently unemployed.
- If you are retired - provided you are healthy and have plenty of energy to help children/ young people for a reasonable period.

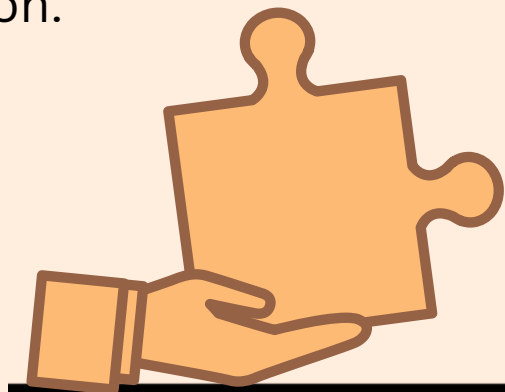
It is essential that:

- You enjoy the company of children and young people.
- You do not have a police record for violence or sexual offences.
- You attend training courses designed to help short break carers in the work they do.



skills needed

- Be able to provide a good standard for children and promote their health, education and leisure interests.
- Be able to listen and communicate with children/ young people with disabilities in a way that is appropriate for their age and understanding.
- Be willing to learn new skills.
- Be able to put boundaries in place in order to manage behaviour in an effective and positive way (link worker and child's social worker will assist with this).
- Have energy and motivation to remain committed to a child/ young person.
- Ability to work with the family of the child/young person and with professionals involved in the child/young persons care and understand the role of professionals and family of the child/ young person.



support available allowances

An allowance is paid which covers the cost of caring for the child or young person. There are circumstances where additional money is paid e.g. nappies or bedding. This will be explained to you by your link social worker.

bespoke training

Pre-approval and post-approval training will be provided to equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care.

link worker support

The main source of support will be the social worker allocated to you from the short breaks service. You will receive support from the child/young person's social worker and other professionals that are involved. There is a regional out of hours social work service that provides support and advice during the evening, weekend and public holiday periods.

Fostering Network is a voluntary organization that provides advice, information, training and support to foster carers.



training



Pre-approval

During the initial phase of assessment you will be invited to complete pre-approval training.

This will give you the opportunity to explore whether short breaks is right for you and your family.

You will also get to meet and hear from short break carers who are doing the job and gain some awareness of the support and training which will be offered to you as a short break carer.

Post-approval

Once you are approved by the Trusts fostering panel, you will be offered relevant training on a regular basis and any specific learning needs associated with the child placed with you will be arranged.

application & assessment

Once you express an interest in providing short break care, your suitability to care for children/ young people will be assessed. It is a thorough process but is necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of any child/young person in your care. Many applicants find the assessment experience helpful in understanding their strengths and skills.

Initial Visit

A link worker from the team will visit you in your home to discuss short breaks and answer any questions you may have.

Training

If you and the link social worker from the team both agree to continue your application you will be invited to complete a pre-approval training course.

Application

Once an application form has been received the following checks will commence:

- Access NI checks (known as police checks)
- References
- Health & Safety Checklist
- Landlord check (if applicable)
- Health Visitor check (if applicable)



application & assessment continued...

Please note:

If you have adult children they will also be interviewed as part of the assessment process. If you have been in a previous relationship and there are children from that relationship, we will wish to speak to them, and if appropriate, your ex-partner.

If you have had involvement with social services previously, the link worker will explore the circumstances surrounding this and the implications for you in your role as a carer.





application & assessment continued...

A link social worker from the team will work to complete a detailed assessment on you and your family.

You will work closely alongside the social worker in completing this assessment.

It is important that you talk openly and honestly to the social worker about your life and family during this assessment process; which is usually completed within four to six months.

You will then have the opportunity to read the report and add your own comments. During this time you will be able to consider how providing short breaks will affect you and your family and friends and reflect on topics raised with you by the social worker.





application & assessment continued...

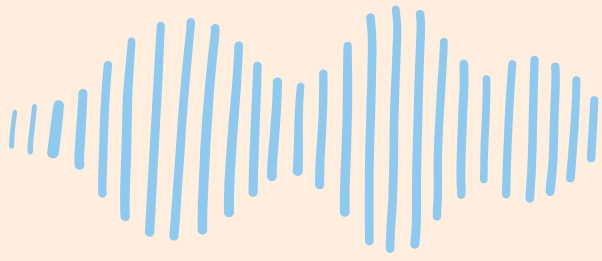
During the assessment, the link social worker will also spend time talking to your children to ensure they understand how short breaks will affect them and to answer any questions they may have.

You are free to withdraw from the process at any time.

There may also be things arising during your assessment that the social worker feels needs to be discussed with their line manager. Sometimes the social worker and their line manager may bring concerns to the fostering panel for discussion and advice. You will be kept fully informed throughout the process.

The completed assessment is brought to a fostering panel for approval. In most instances, you will have the opportunity to attend the panel. The panel consists of mostly senior social work staff and an experienced carer. The panel considers your assessment and makes the decision whether to approve you as a short break carer.

Your approval as a carer is reviewed annually.



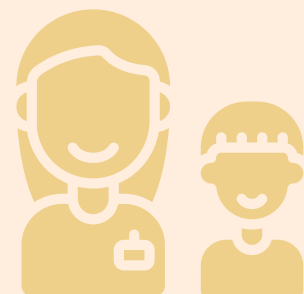
hear from one of our carers...

Lisa, 37, a classroom assistant from Cookstown, uses her work experience to offer short breaks to children with disabilities and provide their parents with a much needed break. *"I work with children with disabilities and know the support that their parents need, especially when they have other responsibilities such as other children or older parents. Becoming a carer was a natural move for me as I enjoy working with children and I was able to use my experience as a classroom assistant. I provide short breaks to two children for one weekend a month and a bit more over the summer holidays."*

Short Breaks allows children to enjoy a 'home from home' experience and carers like Lisa are a lifeline to many parents of a child with a disability across the Southern Trust. They give parents a break from caring full-time and the children benefit from meeting new people and gaining independence. Lisa stated, *"The parents are very grateful for the time the short break gives them with their other children"*.

Lisa was allocated a link social worker and underwent the normal vetting process for everyone who works with children and vulnerable adults. Lisa reflected, *"One of the interesting parts of the process was writing a profile on myself, this was something I hadn't really thought about before but the social worker from the team was very helpful. She came to my house to assess its suitability"*.

Lisa stated, *"We have a flexible arrangement so that if the usual afternoon or overnight doesn't suit then we can arrange an alternative time. I enjoy being with the children and they enjoy being at my house. We do everyday activities like playing games, going to the park, cinema and indoor play areas."*





meet some of our amazing carers & hear their story



Name: Lauren & David Shanks

What does fostering mean to you?

It's a fun way to be involved in a child's life and to help a family who needs a little bit of support. It's been lovely to build a relationship of trust with the child and their family and to play a small part in the child's development. I look forward to my short break weekends and it's a real privilege to be part of something like this.

What motivated you to want to foster?

I had the time and space in my life to get involved in fostering and was excited by the prospect of supporting a child and their family. I found out about the charity 'Home for Good' and they told me about Short Breaks care, which was a really good fit for me. I didn't realise before then that there were so many different types of fostering.

What would you say to someone interested in becoming a carer?

Short breaks care is really fun! You'll get to be a part of seeing a child develop, become more independent, get out and about in the community and feel safe and happy in your home. There is loads of ongoing support from the Short Breaks team so you never feel alone. It really does make a difference in a family's life.

Name: Ana Costa de Oliveira

What motivated you to want to foster: Ana and her family wanted to provide care for children living with a disability, and went to an open night in the Seagoe Hotel to find out more. Ana says, *"it's very important for my kids to learn to share and care, to help others and give back, we have so much and we feel it's important to help out where we can."*

What is the best thing about fostering for you: We love giving young people a short break in our home where they can spend time with me and my family and being able to give back.



Name: Sandra Hollingsworth

What would you say to someone interested in becoming a carer?

I would say to just go for it! It seems daunting at the start of the process but it is so rewarding when you start to care for the kids. It is a joy to see the thanks on the foster carers/parents face for the respite you provide them. It is also a joy to see the smiles on a child's face when you spend time and have fun with them. It is very rewarding and satisfying to know you are helping others.

What motivated you to want to foster? My 5 year old daughter was severely disabled and sadly passed away when she was just 5 years old. I lived in the shoes of a parent who needs support and respite. I fully understand the need for carers in the community. I also know that even one session now and then of respite can help the parents mental health to enable them to keep caring for a complex child longer than if they had no support. I myself had respite and carers when my daughter was living. I most definitely could not have sustained nor cared for my daughter as well as I did for so long without this support. In my opinion, it is vital for families to have carers.

What does fostering mean to you? It means the world to me as I have walked the shoes of a parent needing respite and carers. I understand how important the service is to keep you looking after a complex child. I am delighted to be able to give back to parents/foster carers the service I received in times of need.

Have you got what it takes to care?



parent feedback

"we would be lost without it"

"for me it is a welcome break to restore my energy and relieve some of the stress"

"the scheme is very welcome by all the family."

"my daughter looks forward to each visit with great enthusiasm as she gets to do activities which are difficult at home"

"my daughter enjoys her time away from the family; she is able to go out and do physical games; go swimming; and go to the park"

Be part of something amazing!



FAQ

frequently asked questions myths vs facts

- *I am a younger person / older person, can I become a carer?*

Yes! If you are 21 years or over you can be considered. We have no upper age limit. Older carers often have the experience of bringing up their own children, which can be useful. As long as you are fit and healthy and able to carry out some of the physical tasks of providing care we would love to hear from you!

- *I am currently unemployed, can I become a carer?*

Yes! Being at home can offer flexibility as some of the children and young people with a disability may need a short break with short notice.

- *I am currently working, can I become a carer?*

Yes! We understand that carers need to work and we accept this to be part of life. Short breaks can be offered around working commitments at a time which is suitable for both the carer and the child and their family.

- *I do not own my own home, can I become a carer?*

Yes! You should advise your landlord of your intention to ensure there is no restriction in your tenancy agreement to prevent you from having additional children in your home.

- *What is the difference between fostering and short breaks?*

While short breaks carers go through the same assessment process, short break carers are approved at panel to provide overnight short breaks for children with a disability.

- *I have children of my own, can I become a carer?*

Yes, but it is important that you discuss your interest in short breaks with your children and ensure they are happy with your decision.

- *I own pets, can I become a carer?*

Most pets are considered to be a valuable addition to a household. However, we will need to be satisfied that your pets do not pose a threat to the health and safety of a child/ young person in your care.

- *Do I need to own a car?*

A car is an advantage but it is not essential to become a carer.

- *I am already an approved foster carer - can I do short breaks too?*

Yes! You can become a dually approved carer that provides different types of foster care. Since you have already completed an assessment all that is required is a top-up assessment.

- *What now?*

Now that you have read the information, we suggest you take some time to think seriously about whether short breaks is right for you. Discuss it with your family and friends and see if they would support you in an application.

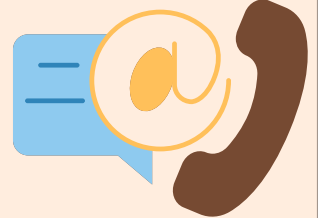
WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Get in touch with our team today



Contact details:

Call: 02837 564350



Email: shortbreaks.team@southerntrust.hscni.net

Visit:

www.southerntrust.hscni.net/children-with-disabilities/short-breaks-team/

For further information:

SCAN ME



Giving a child a brighter future

Thank you for your interest