

SHORT BREAKS TEAM


Children's Disability
Services





Mission Statement

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



If you wish to proceed with your interest in short breaks please contact the short breaks team on;

028 37 564350 or

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Short Breaks Team
Children's Disability Service

I have children of my own, Can I become a short break 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 short break 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 is not essential.

What now?

Now that you have read the information on short breaks, we suggest that 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.

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What is a Short Break?

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

This can be anything from a few hours to overnight stays and may be provided in a family setting in a short break carer's home or out and about in the community with a befriender or as a member of an activity group.

I am currently working, Can I become a short break 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 short break 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 short term family based breaks.



Frequently Asked Questions

I am a younger person/ older person, Can I become a short break carer?

Yes. If you are 21 years or over you can be considered . If you are an older person, we would discuss your health and vitality to care for a child/ young person with disabilities. Older carers often have the experience of bringing up their own children, which can be useful.

I am currently unemployed, Can I become a short break 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.

What do Short Break Carers do?



Short break carers are ordinary people who are willing to open their homes to provide short term care to children and young people with a disability.

Short break carers are registered as foster carers for the purpose of short term care, specifically to provide family based respite for children and young people with a disability in their own home.

This could include staying overnight in the home of the carer.

How does a Short Break benefit a child and their family?



- ◆ Many children with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as other children.
- ◆ Regular contact with a carer or group can be an enjoyable and positive experience for the child, boosting self-esteem, providing new friendships and encouraging independence.

One parent who uses the short breaks scheme says:

“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.

These are activities which are difficult at home.

She looks forward to each visit with great enthusiasm, especially as she grows older.

I get more time with my eldest child.

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.

Respite care is totally and equally beneficial to all of us as a family.”

“There was the usual vetting process, inspection and training but once I was approved, the settling in period with each child has been straightforward as I knew the child in school.” Lisa adds.

“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 short break team, was very helpful. She also came to my house to assess its suitability for short breaks and I’ve been in contact with her frequently over the last two and a half years.”

The short breaks scheme allows children to enjoy a ‘home from home’ experience and short-break carers like Lisa are a lifeline to many parents of disabled children across the Southern Trust. They give parents a break from caring full time and the children benefit from meeting new people and gaining 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 Be A Short Break 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.

By offering a short break to a child, Lisa is supporting the parents while providing the child with new experiences in a home setting.

“The parents I support are very grateful for the time the short break gives them with their other children,”

“We have flexible arrangements so that if the usual afternoon or overnight break 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 and going to the park, cinema and indoor play areas.”

To become a short break carer, Lisa was allocated a link social worker and underwent the normal vetting process for everyone who works with children and vulnerable adults.

HEAR FROM ONE OF OUR SHORT BREAK CARER'S

Lisa uses her classroom assistant experience to offer short breaks to children with disabilities and provide their parents with a much needed break.

Lisa is a special needs assistant in the autism unit of a local primary school and has been a short break carer for two and a half years.

"I work with children with disabilities and know the support that their parents need especially when they have other children or other caring responsibilities such as older parents. Becoming a short break carer was a natural move for me as I like working with children and I was able to use my experience as a classroom assistant. At the moment I provide short breaks to two children and during the summer holidays the number of days will increase."



If you are retired - provided you are healthy and have plenty of energy to help children/ young people for a reasonable period.

If your own childhood was difficult - provided you have been able to reflect on the experience and can now use this in a positive way to help children / young people.

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 carers in the work they do.

What skills and abilities do you need to become a Short Break Carer?

Be able to provide a good standard of care to other people's 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.

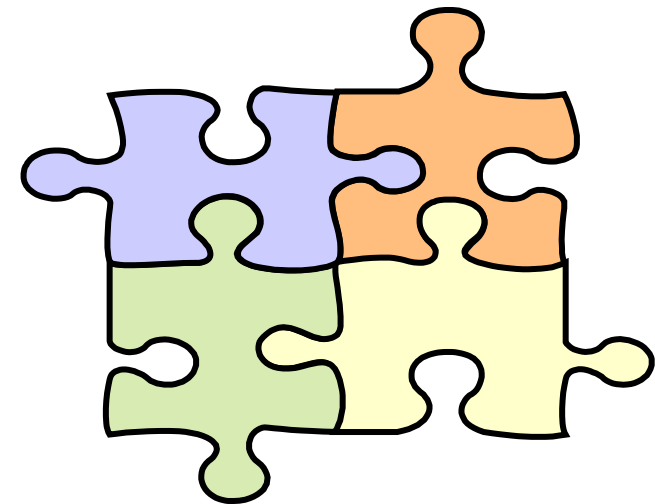
Ability to work with and understand the role of all the professionals and family of the child/ young person.

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 is made up 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 for the Southern Trust.

Your approval as a carer is reviewed every year.





Assessment

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

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

There may also be things arising from your assessment that the link social worker feels needs to be discussed with their line manager.

Sometimes the link social worker and line manager will bring concerns to the Fostering Panel for discussion and advice.

You will be kept fully informed throughout the process.

What Support is available to Short Break Carers?

You will receive support from the child/young person's social worker, health visitor and other professionals involved.

The main source of support will be the social worker allocated to you from the short break service.

There is a regional out of hours social work service that provides support and advice during evening, weekend and public holiday periods.

Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the break.

Fostering Network is a voluntary organisation who provide 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, any identified learning needs will have been highlighted by the panel. This will form part of your initial support and development package.



Assessment

A link social worker from the short break team will complete a detailed assessment on you and your family. You will work closely alongside the link social worker in completing this assessment.

It is important that you talk openly and honestly to the link 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 link social worker.



There are some other checks that we will ask for if they apply to you:

- ◆ In the event you are not the home owner you will need to inform the owner of the property of your intention to foster. It will also be necessary to reflect this in your home insurance documentation if you become a carer.
- ◆ If you are a parent and have school age children we will ask your health visitor for a report.
- ◆ If you have adult children they will also be interviewed as part of the assessment.
- ◆ If you have been in a previous relationship and there are children to that relationship we will wish to speak to your ex partner.
- ◆ If you have had involvement with social services the link social worker will explore the circumstances surrounding this and the implications for you in your role as a carer.

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.

ANNUAL REVIEW

All short break carers will have an annual review. This review will usually take place in your own home with your link social worker and the child's social worker and will explore the current situation. As part of this review an assessment of your learning needs will be undertaken.

Application

and

Assessment

Once you express an interest in providing short breaks, your suitability to care for children / young people will be assessed.

It is a thorough process but it is necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of any child / young person in your care.

Many applicants find the assessment experience very helpful in understanding their strengths and skills.



Initial visit

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

Training

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

Application

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

- *Full medical completed by your own GP*
- *ACCESS NI checks (known as police checks)*
- *References*
- *Health and Safety checklist*

