

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, or an overnight or residential stay if your child has more complex needs.

Some short breaks can be accessed by any child with additional needs; some will require your child to meet certain eligibility criteria such as getting disability living allowance or getting it at a particular rate; some 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?

Things like holiday clubs or after school schemes do not require an assessment and you organise these schemes yourself directly with the play scheme provider. You should not expect to pay more for your child to attend than any other child.

If you want your child to access more specialist short breaks services such as a buddying scheme or overnight care, you will need to contact your local children's social care team for an assessment of need if they are under 18 or the adult social care team if they are over 18. Social services 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 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.



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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

- **Amaze** – the **Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offers impartial, confidential advice on anything to do with special educational needs and disabilities for 0 to 25 year olds. Parents, carers, children and young people under 25 with SEND living in Brighton & Hove or East Sussex can use the service. Email





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sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk, call **01273 772289** or visit our website at **https://amazesussex.org.uk**

- **Carers' Card** - a joint project between Brighton & Hove council, Amaze and the Carers Centre, this card gives carers discounts on leisure and other activities across Brighton & Hove. Young carers aged 8 to 25 also qualify for a Young Carers' Card. Call the Carer's Hub on **01273 977000**, email **info@carershub.co.uk** or apply online at **new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/adult-social-care/care-and-support-adults/apply-carers-card**. Parent carers of under 18s will need their Compass Card number to hand when applying.
- **The Carer's Hub** – offers a range of services and resources for unpaid carers in Brighton & Hove to improve their quality of life. For more information, go to: **https://carershub.co.uk** or call **01273 977000**.
- **Childminders** – the **Family Information Service (FIS)** keeps a list of registered childminders, with experience of working with children with special needs. Call **01273 293545** or visit **www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk**.
- **The Compass Card** – 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 Brighton & Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289 (Brighton & Hove)** or **0300 123 9186 (West Sussex)** or go to **www.compasscard.org.uk**
- **Crossroads Care** - can provide short break care in your own home. Call **01273 234021** or enquire via your social worker or care manager.
- **Direct Payments Advice** - available from Possability People on **01273 894050** or text **07769 612015**. See our companion fact sheet on **Direct Payments**, too.
- **Family Link Schemes** - matches selected families in Brighton & Hove (or sometimes a couple or single person) to families who have a disabled child. Your child gets to know the Link Family and gradually spends more time with them and leads to longer periods that will give you and your child a break. Access via your social worker or care manager, or contact Brighton & Hove Link Plus directly on **01273 411 767**.
- **Hospices** – many children who are not terminally ill but have complex physical and medical needs appreciate spending time in a place where they feel safe and there is specialist care. Enquire via your social worker or care manager.
- **Outreach service** – experienced workers provide children with disabilities with individual support, enabling them to access social and leisure activities within the community. Call the **Specialist Community Disability Service** on **01273 295550** .
- **Overnight or weekend respite** – at Drove Road or Tudor House, for children with complex support needs. Call the **Specialist Community Disability Service** on **01273 295550**
- **Personal Assistants (PAs)** – **Possability People** publishes a noticeboard that matches families who need care with carers who are looking for work. Visit their website: **https://www.possabilitypeople.org.uk/how-we-can-help/care-at-home/pa-noticeboard**
- **Social care assessments for short breaks** – Call the **Specialist Community Disability Service** on **01273 295550**



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Further reading and useful links

- **Amaze's fact sheets on *Direct Payments, Adaptations and Equipment*, and *Coping with stress*.** Download these fact sheets from <https://amazesussex.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets>
- **Local Offer** – the local authority's online listing of all the services and support that are available to families with children with SEND in the area. Visit new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities
- **My Life Brighton and Hove** - comprehensive online information about health and social care services in Brighton & Hove. Visit www.mylifebh.org.uk

