

Bracknell Forest Council – Short Breaks Service

Have Your Say: Proposed Changes to Targeted Short Breaks

Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council is reviewing and improving its Targeted Short Breaks offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families.

We want to make sure Short Breaks are:

- Easy to understand and access
- Based on children's needs
- Fair and consistent
- Sustainable for the future

This consultation explains what Short Breaks are, what we've learned from families and young people, and what changes we are proposing. We would really value your views.

What Are Short Breaks?

Short Breaks provide opportunities for children and young people with SEND to take part in activities, make friends, and have fun, while giving families a break from caring responsibilities.

There are three levels of Short Breaks support:

1. **Universal Short Breaks** - these are open-access community and leisure activities that anyone can attend. No assessment is needed.
2. **Targeted Short Breaks** - these offer additional support for children and young people who need more help to take part in activities.

Examples include:

- 1:1 support to attend mainstream activities (Inclusion Fund)
- SEND youth clubs for young people aged 12–25
- Commissioned Short Breaks services

3. **Specialist Short Breaks** - these are for children and young people who are open to Children's Social Care and have more complex needs.

They can include:

- Day or overnight Short Breaks
- Specialist agency support
- Direct Payments
- Short Break foster care

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Current Short Breaks Offer:

Level	Service	Description
Universal	Community & Leisure Activities	Open-access local activities; no assessment required
Targeted	Inclusion Fund	1:1 support to enable access to mainstream activities, funded by CSC
Targeted	SEND IT Youth Clubs	Social activities for young people aged 14–25 (Early Help service)
Targeted	Kids Play & Leisure	Commissioned Targeted Short Breaks service
Targeted	The Wayz SEND Youth Clubs (12–25)	Group-based SEND youth provision: Chillout (ages 12–16) and Hangout (ages 17–25)
Specialist	Larchwood	Specialist day and overnight Short Breaks in a registered Children’s Home
Specialist	Agency Support	Commissioned specialist support in the home or community
Specialist	Direct Payments	Personalised funding to meet assessed needs
Specialist	Short Break Foster Care	Specialist foster care provision

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What Did We Learn From the 2025 Review and Consultation?

In 2025, we carried out a review and spoke with parents, carers, and children and young people via an online survey (visual and text formats) and in-person focus groups.

We heard that:

- Demand for Short Breaks has increased
- Targeted services are currently full and need to expand
- Eligibility and access routes are not always clear
- Families want better information about what support is available

What Parents and Carers Told Us:

- Most (81%) prefer shorter, more frequent sessions, especially at weekends and during school holidays
- Barriers include cost, transport, anxiety, and unclear pathways
- More low-arousal and small-group options are needed
- Information should be clearer through the Local Offer, schools, and health services

What Children and Young People Told Us:

- They prefer activities at weekends, during holidays, and in the evenings
- They enjoy creative and physical activities such as art, sport, swimming, Lego, and dance
- They want smaller groups and opportunities to attend with friends

What Changes Are We Proposing?

Based on what families and young people told us, we are proposing to:

- Agree clear and consistent eligibility criteria for all Short Breaks
- Increase targeted provision with shorter, regular sessions
- Focus more on:
 - Low-arousal environments
 - Small group activities
 - Creative and physical sessions
- Improve information and signposting for families
- Work more closely with community and voluntary organisations
- Develop more support for older teenagers and young adults (14–18)
- Introduce a central application process so targeted places are allocated fairly and based on need

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How Would Targeted Short Breaks Work in Future?

We are proposing a graduated, needs-based pathway, with applications managed centrally by the Short Breaks Service. This helps make sure children and young people are offered the most suitable support.

Inclusion Fund (Ages 5–18)

- Provides 1:1 support so children can attend mainstream activities
- For children with an EHCP or on a diagnostic pathway
- Families pay for the activity; the Council pays for the 1:1 support

Targeted Holiday and Saturday Clubs (From April 2027)

We propose to commission four targeted clubs, offering:

- Small groups of 8–10 children
- Three-hour sessions on Saturdays and during school holidays
- A cost of £15 per session
- Support for children with an EHCP who cannot access mainstream activities

There would be:

- Two primary-age clubs
- Two secondary-age clubs
- Groups matched by need to support friendships and safe staffing

Places would be allocated through the Short Breaks Service, and providers would be closely monitored to ensure quality.

Developing Universal SEND Activities:

Over the next 12–24 months, we also want to grow universal SEND activities by working with local organisations and the Parent Carer Forum to help provide opportunities across a wider range of needs and disabilities.

This could include:

- Expanding SEND youth clubs for young people aged 14+
- Developing new universal activity clubs such as:
 - Lego
 - Dungeons and Dragons
 - Sports and fitness
 - Art and creative activities