



# Norfolk County Council

## Your views on changes to the way we assess and deliver Short Breaks for families

### Overview

Norfolk County Council is committed to making Norfolk a county where businesses, organisations and communities continue to thrive together. Our [Better Together, For Norfolk](#) strategy sets out the council's five, interlinked, priorities:

- a vibrant and sustainable economy;
- better opportunities for children and young people;
- healthy, fulfilling and independent lives;
- strong, engaged and inclusive communities;
- and a greener, more resilient future.

The council, along with its partners, has an ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can flourish and where the needs of families are supported early to prevent or reduce crisis.

As part of this ambition, and to comply with our statutory duty, we provide Short Breaks for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Short Breaks offer an opportunity for children with SEND to take part in out of school activities and provide opportunities for respite for their families.

Specifically, Short Breaks include after-school clubs, summer clubs, weekend activities, days out, specialist support and care, personal assistants and overnight/residential stays. Children with SEND can receive Short Breaks at home, at centres and in the community. The type of activities and services a child engages with, or receives, depends on their needs and preferences.

The service enables children with SEND to have fun experiences, establish friendships, and develop confidence, independence, and the social and emotional skills to enable them to transition to adult life successfully.

While children are enjoying their Short Breaks, their families can have time for themselves knowing their child or young person is safe and having an enjoyable experience.

## **Background**

Short Breaks is a £2.4 million a year service currently supporting around 1,700 families. Short Breaks are for children and young people with SEND aged from five to 17 with a physical or mental impairment that is substantial and has a long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily tasks.

In the last five years, there has been a 75% increase in applications. To make sure we can continue providing Short Breaks against a significant increase in demand, we have been considering ways to improve and modernise our processes to ensure the Short Breaks service is sustainable and able to support all the children with SEND and their families who need it. This is in line with our ongoing plan to move to a more inclusive care approach for children and families.

We want to improve the range of activities on offer in all localities across the county as well as give more flexibility for families, if they so wish, to use their Short Breaks funding for activities they can enjoy together as a whole family unit. We have recruited Short Breaks inclusion co-ordinators to help us do this and we also want to better use our budget to support more children and young people with SEND closer to their homes in the face of growing demand.

We have been reviewing feedback from families who use Short Breaks and talking to our partners about how we can ensure better delivery, particularly focusing on adapting the service for more families. Feedback from our partners, colleagues and importantly children and young people with SEND and their families, has highlighted that providing the right opportunities, at the right time, in the right place is key.

The Children's Act 1989 highlights the duty for local authorities to provide Short Breaks. [The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#) sets out how local authorities must provide Short Breaks and what they should provide.

## **What are we asking?**

We have and continue to talk to families and parent carer groups through working groups and surveys to develop our proposals for change. We really want to hear from many families using the service to tell us what they think of our ideas so far.

We are asking for your views on:

A proposal to change the way we assess the day-to-day needs of a child or young person with SEND by using a new framework called Circle of Support rather than the existing Resource Allocation System (RAS) questionnaire. This is outlined in our draft strategy, along with ideas for delivering the

service in a different way. The draft strategy can be viewed on our Consultation Hub

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/short-breaks>

We are consulting through:

- This online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy
- Writing to families who currently use Short Breaks

We are consulting from 27 June to 2 August 2023. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after 2 August we cannot guarantee we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence to help them come to a decision.

**If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email [haveyoursay@Norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@Norfolk.gov.uk), call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.**

The consultation should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

### **Our current approach**

Families make applications for Short Breaks either directly to the council or through a social worker completing an application form which is either posted or emailed to us.

We use the RAS questionnaire to work out the day-to-day needs of a child to help us determine an individual budget for them. This involves referring to health and education reports as well as a social worker or member of the Short Breaks team's own observations and assessments of need.

The questionnaire was originally designed as a tool to allow us to make sure children and young people and their families received fair and equitable resource. If there is more than one child with SEND in a family, each child will have a separate RAS questionnaire.

Children who score in the higher ranges of the questionnaire are more likely to need specialist provision. The [RAS funding tables](#) show different bands of scores and the level of support and budget for each band.

There are two RAS questionnaires – one for primary school children (Reception to Year 6) and one for secondary school children (Year 7 upwards).

- Primary school children
- Secondary school children

Once a budget is allocated, families can buy the activities or support they require using a pre-paid card. Families choose and find their own activities according to their child's preferences and needs and pay directly using the pre-paid card. Currently the card can only be used to buy Short Breaks for the child, not the whole family.

The budget is regularly reviewed as a child's needs change. The budget may increase or decrease after each review as a child's needs change.

The current RAS questionnaire unintentionally focuses on the budget a family receives rather than the best support to meet the needs of the child.

### **Proposed new approach**

The Circle of Support framework would create a plan of activities and support for a child or young person with SEND which meets their needs rather than only setting a budget for the child and matching support to that budget.

Using the Circle of Support framework, Short Breaks plans would be designed and agreed with children and young people with SEND and their parent carers. It is proposed the level of support and activity provision would remain the same but some of this could be delivered in a different way if it better meets the child's needs.

The draft strategy proposes the council would increase funding and support for community-based activity providers so children with SEND with a range of needs can attend sports and interest clubs closer to their homes either for free or at a much lower cost. It also proposes the council would create a new mobile Short Breaks service in rural areas which would provide new activities and the council would directly commission more provision, allowing us to reduce cost due to economies of scale.

This means it is possible some families may receive less money on their Short Breaks pre-payment cards because they may not need to find and purchase activities themselves if the council can provide alternative more suitable activities which meet their child's needs as part of a Short Breaks plan.

Therefore, a Short Breaks plan for a child could include, for example, a mixture of funding and locally provided activities paid for or commissioned directly by the council.

The other element of the new approach is the proposal that families would for the first time be able to choose activities to enjoy together, including siblings, rather than Short Breaks only being focused on the child with SEND. This means families could use Short Breaks for holidays in the UK.

We are working on a streamlined online application process and an expansion of the Short Breaks service to include children from birth to five. There is still the option for paper applications for those people who prefer paper applications rather than digital applications.

Families will still be able to choose the provision they prefer and pay for some of this directly using pre-paid cards. All current activities, clubs and providers will still be available. And there will be no change to access to specialist care and support.

More details about changes and things that will remain the same, are listed in the grid below.

|  | <b>Current approach</b>   | <b>Proposed approach</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| How the types of support and services are identified | A budget is identified for each family based on our current RAS system and the evidence that is provided. | A new framework, called Circle of Support will be used to identify the types of service a child can receive rather than a financial banding. Each child's plan will look more at the needs of the child and what services or activities will best support the identified outcomes, rather than focus on the money available. There will also be more flexibility to offer an individualised approach to the offer. |
| How families can use their Short Breaks funding      | Funding can only be used for the named child.   | Funding can be used to pay for parents, carers or siblings to attend alongside the named child. Entire families can also use the funding to pay for a holiday in the UK.   |
| How families book a                                  | Families find a   | Families will still be   |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Short Breaks session</p>   | <p>local provider through their own research, contact them and pay them directly from their pre-paid card.</p>  | <p>able to use local providers through their own research, contact them and pay them directly from their pre-paid card.</p>   |
| <p>The amount of money families receives to spend on Short Breaks</p> | <p>After the council assesses a family's needs, families receive a set amount of funding to spend on Short Breaks which is reviewed on a regular basis or with a change in a child's needs.</p> | <p>The council will assess a family's needs and work with a family to assign a package of support that meets the needs and outcomes for the child and family, this can still include direct payments.<br/>The direct payment amount currently received may change due to how the new package is put together and whether some of the services can be directly commissioned by the council rather than the family to provide better value for money for all through economies of scale. Importantly, the overall package will be designed to meet the needs of the child and families. Short</p> |

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|---|---|--|
|   |   | Breaks plans will not change until a family's next review. They will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis or with a change in a child's needs.   |
| How the council supports organisations to ensure they can support families using Short Breaks | The council doesn't currently play a role in training or upskilling Short Breaks providers.           | If families tell the council they would like their child to attend a local activity, such as a Scout group or football club, but the providers don't currently have the skills to support a child's needs, the council will offer to advice and practical solutions to that group to try to break down barriers and enable the family to attend safely where possible. |
| The location of Short Breaks  | There are Short Break providers available across most of Norfolk with some gaps in Swaffham, Dereham, | The Council aims to commission more providers and a wider range of providers, so that families have access to services closer to home and a  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Downham Market and Thetford.   | bigger choice of activities.   |
| How families in rural areas access Short Breaks                                  | Families currently find their preferred Short Break providers and travel to them. We acknowledge in some areas there are few to choose from. | The council plans to commission a new mobile service for families in rural areas.<br>The Council's new Inclusion Co-ordinator will be tasked to approach community groups to offer to support them to make reasonable adjustments. |
| The types of activities included in Short Breaks                                 | A variety of activities, clubs and providers.  | All current activities, clubs and providers will remain.   |
| Specialist care for children and young people who need specific support and care | Families can access specialist care and support – including social care support  | No change proposed. Families can continue to access specialist care and support – including social care support  |
| The quality of Short Break activities  | We work with our commissioned providers through our Performance  | The council will offer to support mainstream schools and clubs to improve facilities to try to allow   |

|                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
|                      | Management Frameworks.                              | <p>them to be accessible and inclusive where possible.</p> <p>We will continue to provide robust quality assurance for those on our approved provider list.</p>  |
| Frequency of reviews | Currently this is done for all children every year. | <p>Development of a RAG review system allowing for changes to care plans in line with the needs of the child to enable quicker changes to care plans when required.</p> <p>Red - one full review per year<br/> Amber - review and make small changes as needed<br/> Green - review every three years</p> |

**Who would be affected by our proposal and how?**

Children and young people with SEND who qualify for Short Breaks and their parents, and those who will apply to use the service in the future, will be impacted by our proposed changes.

If approved, they may receive support in a different way (as set out on in our 'proposals') and the direct payments they receive may be increased or reduced in line with the child's needs and new Short Breaks package.

Children and Young People's needs and support required to meet them will be reviewed at each child or young person's review meeting with a focus on making sure their package is achieving the best possible outcomes for the child or young person.

### **Tell us your views**

We would like to hear your views on our proposals.

1. Do you currently, or plan in the future, to receive funding from Norfolk County Council for Short Breaks for your child(ren)?

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to say

2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the way families' needs are assessed?

More details about this have been shared throughout this consultation. You can also read them in our draft strategy. The draft strategy can be viewed on our Consultation Hub (<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/short-breaks>)

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

| <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither agree or disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Don't know</b> | <b>Prefer not to say</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
|                       |              |                                  |                 |                          |                   |                          |

3. As a result of our proposals to change the way families' needs are assessed, the Short Breaks package could be delivered in a different way, which could result in direct payments for families potentially increasing, remaining the same or decreasing due to some services being paid for directly by the council. We aim to increase the availability of community activities which will be inclusive, lower cost or potentially free in a bid that families will be able to use their funding on a wider mix of activities closer to their homes.

How do you think this part of our proposal might affect you?

Please write in the box below:

4. How far do you agree or disagree with the potential change in Short Breaks which could include an increased amount of inclusive, low cost or free community-based activities closer to home?

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

| <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither agree or disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Don't know</b> | <b>Prefer not to say</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
|                       |              |                                  |                 |                          |                   |                          |

5. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to give people the choice to use their Short Break funding to pay for other family members (adults or children) to attend activities alongside their child with special educational needs and disabilities.

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

| <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither agree or disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Don't know</b> | <b>Prefer not to say</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
|                       |              |                                  |                 |                          |                   |                          |

6. How, if at all, do you think our proposal might affect you?

Please write in the box below:



7. Are you able to access Short Break activities in a location close/convenient to your home currently?

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

- Yes – a wide range
- Yes – but not many
- No – there are some available but unsuitable for my child
- No – there are none available
- Prefer not to say

8. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to offer increased support to community activity providers, so that they can be inclusive and children with special educational needs and abilities can attend?

Please choose one answer only, from the list below:

| <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither agree or disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Don't know</b> | <b>Prefer not to say</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
|                       |              |                                  |                 |                          |                   |                          |

9. How, if at all, do you think our proposal to might affect you?  
Please write in the box below:

### About you

To make sure we are learning from a wide range of people – we'd like to ask some questions about you. These are optional questions (so you may choose not to give this information), but this information is helpful to understand who is responding to our consultations.

1. Are you responding as...? Please tick one answer only:

- An individual / member of the public
- On behalf of a voluntary or community group
- On behalf of a statutory organisation
- On behalf of a business
- A Norfolk County Councillor
- A district or borough councillor
- A town or parish councillor
- A Norfolk County Council employee

2. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

3. How did you hear about this consultation? Please select one of the following:

Local media (e.g newspaper, radio)

From a social media post (e.g Facebook)

From a friend

From a group I belong to

From my place of work or education

The Norfolk Residents' Panel

District council web page

Norfolk County Council web page

My parish council

From an email I received

**4. Are you...?** Please tick one answer only:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

**5. How old are you?** Please tick one answer only:

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

85 or older

Prefer not to say

6. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

Please tick one answer only:

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

7. If yes which of the following best describes your condition or disability? Please tick all answers that apply

Blind or partially sighted

D/deaf or hard of hearing

Limiting health condition *e.g.*

*heart disease, asthma, stroke, osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia*

*and myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) etc.*

Learning Disabilities

Neurodiversity *e.g. autistic*

*spectrum disorders, dyslexia, dyspraxia*

Mental health conditions –  
*e.g. depression, schizophrenia,*   
*bipolar affective disorders,*  
*eating disorders,*  
*obsessive compulsive disorder*

Physical disability *e.g. limb disorder,*  
*amputee, wheelchair user, cerebral palsy,*  
*motor neurone disease,*   
*muscular dystrophy*

Other, please write here:

Prefer not to say

**8. How would you describe your ethnic background?**

Please tick one answer only:

**Asian or Asian British**

Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, please describe here:

**Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African**

Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background, please describe here:

**Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed or multiple ground, please describe here:

**White**

English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Roma

Other White background, please describe here:

**Another ethnic group**

Arab

Any other ethnic group please describe here:

Prefer not to say

**9. Which district/borough/city do you live in?**

Please tick one answer

Breckland

Broadland



- Great Yarmouth
- Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
- North Norfolk
- Norwich
- South Norfolk

10. **Do you have caring responsibilities?** Please tick one answer

- No
- Yes – for children with additional needs
- Yes – for older family members/ Adults
- Yes - Parent Carer
- Yes – for a disabled adult(s)

Yes, other. Please write here:

11. **Which of the following best describes you?**

Please tick one answer only:

- Employed (full time)

Employed (part time)

Self employed

Unemployed

Student

Looking after the family home

Long term sick

Retired

**12. What is your first language?**

English

Other, please write here:

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.

**You can fill in our online feedback form at:**  
**[www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget)**

**You can send back a paper feedback form to:**

Short Breaks Consultation  
Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council,  
Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane,  
Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

**Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.**



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please email us at [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk) or contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.