



Norfolk County Council DRAFT Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026





Contents

Introduction

1. What are Short Breaks?

- The background and our duty
- Why have a commissioning strategy?
- The benefits of Short Breaks
- The current offer

2. Our evidence-based approach

- Mapping of area and need
- Listening to children, young people and their families

3. Delivering our Short Breaks Strategy

- Commissioning principles
- Outcomes focused
- Our vision and mission
- The 10 big objectives
- Key partners
- Measuring impact and continuous improvement
- The three-year road map



Introduction

This strategy sets out the plan to improve the commissioning approach to Short Breaks over the next three years, supporting our wider strategic ambitions that are found within:

- [Flourish](#)
- [Special Educational Needs Sufficiency Strategy 2019](#)
- [Norfolk Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disability \(SEND\) Strategy 2019-2024](#)

The Short Breaks Strategy will be implemented over the three-year period, allowing for reflection, co-production and collaboration. Yearly reviews of the strategy will allow for an evidenced based approach and proactive learning to take place.

1. What are Short Breaks?

The background and our duty

[The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#) sets out how local authorities must provide Short Breaks and what they should provide. They come in different shapes and sizes ranging from universal activities in the community that are available to everyone, to more specialist activities with trained staff and specialist equipment. They can be delivered in families' homes, at centres, or out in the community. Children and young people can take part in new activities, make friends, learn new skills, become more independent and have fun.

Current access to Short Breaks should be available to any child or young person who is between 5-17 years of age, who has identified special educational needs and/or a disability; and who lives in Norfolk. Within the second year of the strategy (2023/24), we plan to widen the breath of our offer from birth to 17 years of age, to allow for a fully inclusive and robust offer (see our three-year road map for details).

The following legislation is also in place to protect and support children, young people and their families:

- The Children & Young Person's Act 2008
- The Short Break Regulations 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- SEND Reforms 2014
- Children's & Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014



Why have a commissioning strategy?

Norfolk is working towards four key priorities for children and young people with SEND, articulated through the Norfolk Area SEND Strategy.

Norfolk County Council has been providing Short Breaks for children, young people and their families for many years. The service has evolved and changed over the years, adapting to the global pandemic and working hard to support the community.

Whilst our offer is good, we are always seeking to improve our service. The demand on Short Breaks services is growing and we work closely with partners to listen, learn and develop our offer. Reviewing allows us to be proactive, inclusive and grow our offer to support children, young people and their families.

Feedback from our partners, colleagues and most importantly the children, young people and their families demonstrates: *the key to an outstanding service is to provide the right opportunities, at the right time, in the right place for the right groups and individuals.*

This *Draft* Short Breaks Strategy sets out our vision, mission and 10 big key objectives that will be the driving force to improving our service. We are passionate and committed to providing an excellent service that is outcomes-focused, evidenced and allows children and young people with SEND in Norfolk to Flourish.

The benefits of Short Breaks

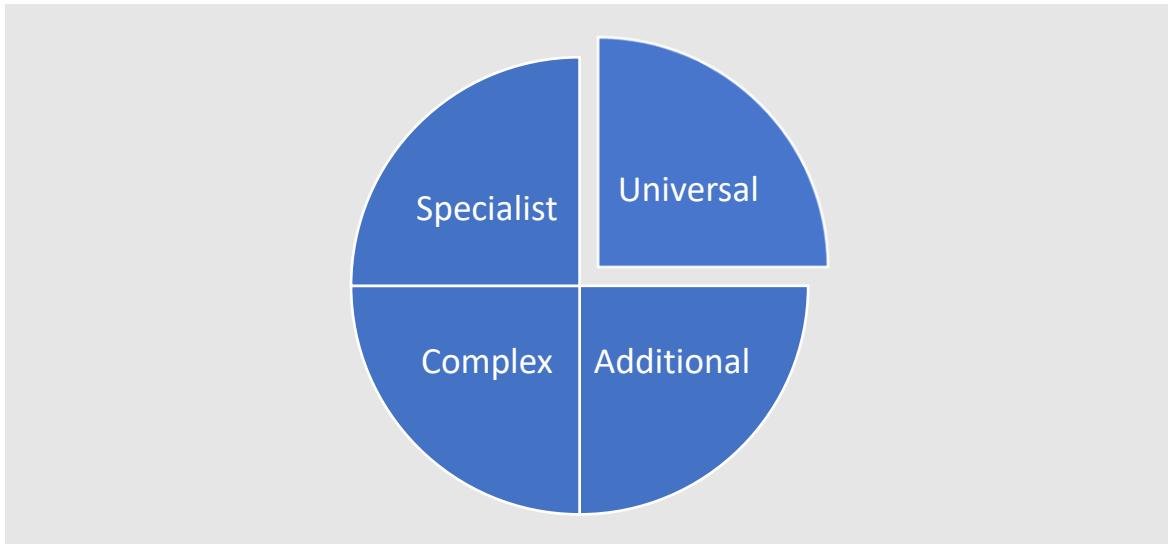
In Norfolk, Short Breaks offer a range of services which give children and young people with SEND positive experiences that support their personal development, whilst, at the same time, giving their parent carers a break.

Short Breaks can be provided in the family home, in the home of an approved carer, in a community setting, or in a residential home. Depending on eligibility, needs and interests, a Short Break can last from a few hours to a few days.





In Norfolk we want to support children and young people to have fun experiences, establish friendships, and develop confidence, independence, and the social and emotional skills to enable them to transition to adult life. Short Breaks enable parent carers and siblings to have much needed time away, whilst knowing their child or young person is safe and having an enjoyable experience.

The current offer

Norfolk spends approximately **£2.4 million** per year on its extensive Short Breaks offer.



Short Breaks Complete Circle of Support

	<p>Universal</p> <p>Support to access a wide range of services within the community, from after school and summer clubs, weekend activities and prepaid card for families to use on specific activities.</p>
	<p>Additional</p> <p>Community activities as well as some respite offered. Combination of activities and personal prepaid card to support with a rounded additional offer to support families.</p>
	<p>Complex</p> <p>A variety of activities and respite offered to children and young people with complex needs. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access to tailored activities to support the family.</p>
	<p>Specialist</p> <p>Targeted support for children and young people with specialist support and care. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access to tailored activities to support the family.</p>

Full details of these current offers can be found on the [Short Breaks webpage](#). The Short Breaks offer stretches across the range of needs to deliver outcomes and improve the lives of children, young people, and their parent carers, and aims to prevent or reduce crisis by offering as much community-based inclusive support as possible.

Within our universal offer we have a dedicated team that works with community groups and schools to encourage a more inclusive approach in supporting families who wish to access local clubs and activities.



2. Our evidenced-based approach

Meeting the needs of the Norfolk community is a key priority of our commissioning strategy. Our Short Breaks offer is informed by our understanding of the number of children and young people with SEND, where they live and their individual needs.

To know what services we need to provide, we first need to understand the children and young people who are using the service. Using this information, we can apply an evidenced-based approach to commissioning services that better meet the needs of our community, allowing us to understand how our service needs to change over time.

In December 2022, 1,700 children and young people accessed Short Breaks. Out of this total, Social and Emotional Mental Health Needs (SEMH) was the highest primary need. This need is reflected among the growing number of children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Norfolk. In June 2022, 8,751 children and young people had an identified primary need of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) (27.3%), closely followed by Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (27.1%). Out of approximately 123,233 school aged children in Norfolk in 2020, 13.1% accessed Special Educational Need (SEN) support and 3.8% had an EHCP.

The number of young people aged 0-25 with EHCPs in Norfolk has increased by around 21% (from 6,689 to c8,500) between 2020 and our current estimate, which is similar to the national increase.

Compared to national figures, in 2020 (our most recent data) Norfolk's young people with ECHPs or SEN Support:

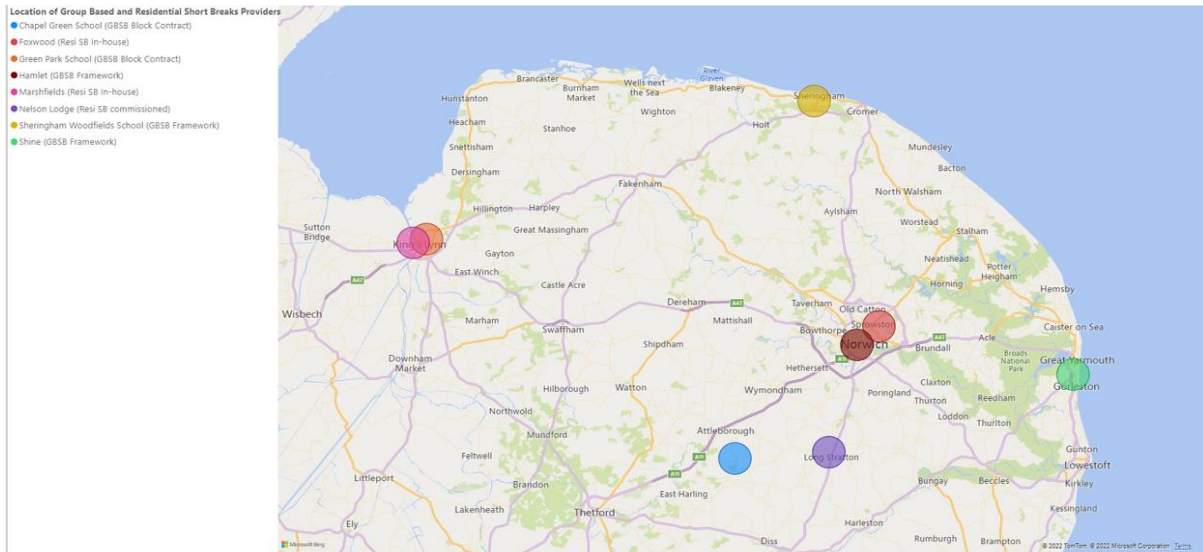
- are less likely to be in mainstream education settings (35.4% compared to 43% nationally)
- are more likely to be awaiting provision (0.9% v. 0.4%) - are more likely to be educated at home (1.3% v 0.8%) - are less likely to be in a special school (31.1% v. 41%) - are more likely to be in alternative provision (2.5% v. 0.9%)

The number of children and young people with disabilities accessing Short Breaks is increasing nationally and locally. This is why our service needs to respond in a proactive way to support families, prevent the escalation of need, and reduce the risk of families reaching breaking point.



Mapping of area and need

Providers on the framework offering group based Short Breaks.



Cross referencing the information on this map this with the locations of children and young people who are currently accessing Short Breaks shows some of our current commissioned services, most of whom are group-based (correct as of August 2022), there are gaps in provision in certain areas of the county including:

- Fakenham
- Swaffham
- Dereham
- Downham Market
- Thetford

A key part of the Short Breaks Strategy will be working with providers of Short Breaks services to set up pilot projects. In addition, we want to enable our current commissioned services to grow, as well as engage with new providers.



Listen to children, young people and their families

As a part of our ongoing commitment to listen to our community, we ask children, young people, parents and carers and wider service users to feedback to us regarding their experiences.

Over a thousand different families access our Short Breaks service. Through engagement events we continuously monitor and listen to their feedback. Here are some of the key messages that we have received.

Support to services to be more inclusive to:

- Enable children and young people to have a break without their parent carers
- Offer more services across different locations.
- Encourage mainstream schools to be more inclusive and provide support to do this.
- Provide a more flexible service.
- Provide more support to fill in forms and simplify forms.
- Improve the way we communicate about the services on offer.
- Support with improved access to services, including support with travel.

“I want professionals to take us seriously and listen to our views.”

“Safe space for young people to meet up without being judged.”

“It's wonderful that my son has his own time supported by his two PAs. It also gives the family some respite. Thank you.”

“More options for activities in North Norfolk. There's a gap between starting school and then being able to attend youth groups - more extra-curricular activities.”



“Thank you so much! This will help our daughter to develop her social skills, balance, coordination, and help me give her more enjoyable ways to help.”

“More employment and volunteering opportunities.”

Key areas of change requested includes:

- ✓ Increase the number and types of activities on offer.
- ✓ Improve the way we communicate and share information about our service and the activities on offer.
- ✓ Lower the minimum age to access our service from 5 years to birth.
- ✓ Improve support for young people to transition to adult life, including further education, work, independent living etc.
- ✓ Provide a more inclusive offer.
- ✓ Parent carers want the opportunity to be able to go on Short Breaks as a whole family.
- ✓ More learning visual aids for parents and carers supporting how to access Short Breaks.
- ✓ Opportunities for children and young people to develop their employability skills.



3. Delivering our Short Breaks Strategy

Commissioning Principles

Our Short Breaks Strategy is aligned with Norfolk County Council's core commissioning principles. These are:

- ✓ Outcomes focused
- ✓ Leading an inclusive offer
- ✓ Early help intervention and prevention
- ✓ Safe and secure service
- ✓ Equality and diversity
- ✓ Working with key partners
- ✓ Co-production
- ✓ Embedding social value within our services
- ✓ Financially sustainable now and in the future

Outcomes focused

The Norfolk Children and Young People Partnership Strategy *Flourishing in Norfolk 2021-2025* sets out a shared ambition for children and young people to Flourish by achieving the following overarching outcomes:

Family and friends	Children and young people are safe, connected and supported through positive relationships and networks.
Learning	Children and young people are achieving their full potential and developing skills which prepare them for life.
Opportunity	Children and young people develop as well-rounded individuals through access to a wide range of opportunities which nurture their interests and talents.
Understood	Children and young people feel listened to, understood and part of decision-making processes.
Resilience	Children and young people have the confidence and skills to make their own decisions and take on life's challenges.
Individual	Children and young people are respected as individuals, confident in their own identity and appreciate and value their own and others' uniqueness.
Safe and secure	Children and young people are supported to understand the risk and make safe decisions by the actions that adults and children and young people themselves take to keep them safe and secure.
Healthy	Children and young people have the support, knowledge and opportunity to lead their happiest and healthiest lives.



Outcomes for parent carers:

- ✓ Parents/carers receive a break confident that their child is safe and having fun, whilst having their individual needs met.
- ✓ Parents/carers have improved wellbeing.
- ✓ Parents/carers are supported to continue to care or to do so more effectively.
- ✓ Parents/carers have some 'me time' – this can mean different things to different families, including resting and recharging, spending time with siblings and family members, following their own hobbies and interests, undertaking everyday household tasks.
- ✓ Parents/carers are assured that their child is being supported to experience different places and activities and develop relationships outside of their family.
- ✓ Parents/carers are assured that their child is experiencing things they cannot experience at home.
- ✓ Parents/carers see their child Flourish

Our vision for Short Breaks...

Providing opportunities for breaks where children and young people with disabilities can thrive, grow, achieve and have fun in the community with their peers, whilst supporting their families to have a break from caring.

Our mission for Short Breaks...

Delivering an inclusive offer of community-based activities and respite breaks to children and young people with disabilities in Norfolk. Supporting them to have fun whilst providing a break from caring for their families.

For us to deliver an outstanding service we have developed our 10 big objectives that we are committed to achieving:

1. Parent carers, children and young people have the opportunity to access and choose more inclusive universal services across Norfolk, such as after school clubs and holiday clubs.



2. Parent carers, children and young people that are eligible for Short Breaks access a community clubs and activities offer, making friends and having their needs met enabling good outcomes.
3. Parent carers are able to have a break in the knowledge that their child(ren) is/are safe and well-cared for by trained staff.
4. Providing community Short Breaks and respite for families at the right point in time, reducing escalation of need and reducing chances of families reaching breaking point.
5. Children and young people with disabilities are supported to become more independent, achieving positive outcomes moving into adult life, but recognising this will mean something different for every young person.
6. Parent carers, children and young people are communicated with effectively and feel involved in the application and review process.
7. Giving opportunities and support to access Personal Assistants or pre-paid cards through a Direct Payment Scheme (families are aware of the Direct Payment Support Service and how to contact it for advice/support and making it clear that Personal Assistants will be appropriately trained).
8. Families in need of more intensive or specialist respite are supported to access provision that meets their needs, which may include overnight respite.
9. Supporting families and siblings to enjoy activities that are fun and inclusive, providing a break for all.
10. Creating opportunities for all children and young people with a disability to Flourish in Norfolk.

Objective 1: Parents/carers, children and young people have the opportunity to access and choose more inclusive universal provision across Norfolk, such as after school clubs, holiday clubs.

What is this objective about?

Through our engagement with partners, including families, it is clear that a more inclusive universal offer is needed. We have designed a universal element of our Short Breaks service that is working towards being accessible and inclusive for all.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Supporting mainstream schools and clubs to improve facilities to allow them to be accessible and inclusive.
- ✓ Introduction of a key role within the Norfolk County Council Childrens Services Commissioning team that will support the more inclusive universal approach working with providers, mainstream schools and wider stakeholders. Link the



offer together, listening carefully to feedback and responding in a proactive manner.

- ✓ Engaging with providers of mainstream services to identify how their provision can be made more accessible for children and young people with disabilities.
- ✓ Providing more funds to support the development of existing providers within the universal offer.
- ✓ Linking wider services such as Holiday Activity Fund, to providers allowing for support for all families.

Objectives 2: Parent carers, children and young people can access a community Short Breaks clubs and activities offer, making friends and having their needs met enabling good outcomes.

What is this objective about?

In Norfolk there is a wide range of providers and opportunities for children and young people to access Short Breaks. As Norfolk is a very large rural county, accessing some services is a challenge for some families due to the location of some services.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Introduction of new services that will support travel with Short Breaks, such as mobile services and provision that can move around the county.
- ✓ Developing new services and expanding existing services in rural communities.
- ✓ Listening to our parents/carers and young people accessing Short Breaks, allowing for an evidenced based approach to developing new and sustainable offers across the county.

Objective 3: Parent carers are able to have a break in the knowledge that their child(ren) is safe and well-cared for by trained staff.

What is this objective about?

Keeping children and young people safe and well cared for by qualified trained staff is a key priority and commitment of Norfolk County Council. Listening to parents and carers we know that it is very important for families to have the confidence and reassurance that their child or young person is having fun but is also secure and safe throughout.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Robust, consistent quality assurance.
- ✓ Pathways for access to training for all settings.
- ✓ High quality training working with partners to deliver a child centred approach.
- ✓ Clear routes to support with specialist training of staff across all settings.



Objective 4: Providing community Short Breaks and respite for families at the right point in time, reducing escalation of need and reducing chances of families reaching breaking point.

What is this objective about?

Short Breaks are vital in supporting families at the right time, when they are needed, in the right way. They are fun and engaging whilst also supporting de-escalation of pressure points.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Supporting families at the right time offering a robust service at the earliest opportunity.
- ✓ Using a whole family, relationship based, outcome focussed, whole system, strengths orientated approach. (Vital Signs for Children)
- ✓ Being open and honest at all times.
- ✓ Signposting and linking families to wider services.
- ✓ Listening and responding to feedback.
- ✓ Consistently working on an evidenced based approach to provide the right service in the right area at the right time.
- ✓ Good communication and links with partners and wider services.
- ✓ Commissioning more providers and a wider range of providers via a new Framework Contract so that families have access to services closer to home.

Objective 5: Children and young people with disabilities are supported to become more independent, achieving positive outcomes moving into adult life, but recognising this will mean something different for every young person.

What is this objective about?

Outcomes are the changes we expect to see because of our Short Breaks Strategy. Our Short Breaks services currently support children from 5 to 17 years (up to their 18th birthday). It is crucial that the service supports children and young people to become more independent allowing for a positive transition into adult life.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Ensuring that our Short Breaks offer supports the development of life skills which will assist with preparing young people for adult life.
- ✓ Exploring a range of options to ensure a smooth transition.
- ✓ Development of our new Adult Life Support Programme that will focus on wider partnership work with connecting services to ensure a seamless, young person centred, transition.
- ✓ Improving information and support for parents and carers going through this transition with their young person. Listening to feedback and learning, making amends to our offer as needed.



Objective 6: Parents/carers, children and young people are communicated with effectively and feel involved in the application and review process.

What is this objective about?

Communication is crucial in the success of an outstanding service. Long unnecessary application forms can cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. As a service we are moving away from this to a simpler smarter system.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ We are working hard to make key changes to our application and review process introducing a NEW online Parent carer portal.
- ✓ Development of a two-pathway application system avoiding long and unnecessary questions when some parts don't apply to everyone.
- ✓ Development of a traffic light review system allowing for quick changes to care plans.
- ✓ Development of key communication and support published at each stage to allow parents and carers to quickly seek help when needed.

Objective 7: Giving opportunities and support to access Personal Assistants or pre-paid cards through a Direct Payment scheme (families are aware of the Direct Payment Support Service and how to contact it for advice/support and making it clear that Personal Assistants will be appropriately trained)

What is this objective about?

For some parents and carers, the support of a Personal Assistant is vital in providing a much-needed Short Break. These will be accessible through our Direct Payment Scheme.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Clear communication and information given at point of application.
- ✓ Support through the process with a dedicated team.
- ✓ Families will be offered a direct payment / personal budget.

Objective 8: Families in need of more complex or specialist respite are supported to access provision that meets their needs, which may include overnight respite.

What is this objective about?



Families who are assessed by a specialist Children with Disabilities Social Worker as requiring complex or specialist provision such as overnight respite and Domiciliary Care (personal care).

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Ensure high quality service and support through robust quality assurance.
- ✓ Seek to ensure a range of high-quality provision that allows families to have a choice of support and overnight respite that caters for their child or young persons' needs.
- ✓ Increasing sufficiency through wider provision offer.

Objective 9: Supporting families and siblings to enjoy activities that are fun and inclusive, providing a break for all.

What is this objective about?

Short Breaks are not only for the child or young person but for the whole family to enjoy. This may come in the form of allowing parents and carers a break away from their day-to-day caring responsibilities and or time with other children. It is an ambition to have a service that not only supports children and young people with disabilities but also siblings, allowing for a full family support package.

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ Providing flexible care and support allowing for choice.
- ✓ Introducing opportunities where siblings can attend specific events to enjoy activities that are fun and inclusive.
- ✓ Proactively looking at travel arrangements and opportunities to maximise parents and carers' breaks from caring responsibilities.
- ✓ Support the whole family to access the Short Break together e.g., UK family holidays, days out, weekends away.

Objective 10: Creating opportunities for all children and young people with a disability to Flourish in Norfolk.

What is this objective about?

The Norfolk Children and Young People Partnership Strategy [Flourishing in Norfolk](#) 2021-2025 sets out a shared ambition for children and young people to Flourish by achieving the following overarching outcomes (see p9/10).

How will we achieve this?

- ✓ It enables us to agree and use a common language to define our aims and the outcomes we want to achieve.
- ✓ It helps everyone think about their contribution, as part of a wider set of services and agencies, to enable children and young people to Flourish.



- ✓ It informs how we best use our collective resources to achieve the impact we need to see for children, young people and families.
- ✓ It helps us understand the impact of our services and work together – so that we know what difference we are making and what else we need to do.

Key partners

Our Norfolk Short Breaks Strategy cannot improve the experiences of children, young people and families who access our Short Break offer without working in partnership with a range of other agencies. To design this strategy, we have worked with key partners to develop a service that is responsive and coproduced. To implement this strategy, we will engage with these partners to encourage them to work alongside us and consider what more they could do to bring about improved outcomes. Key partners we will engage with are:

- Health
- Education
- Social Care
- Providers of short breaks services
- Families and carers
- Children and young people
- Voluntary Sector

Measuring impact and continuous improvement

Evidencing impact and continuously improving our Short Breaks service is crucial. We will use a range of data to measure whether the changes delivered by this Strategy are effective and impactful. This includes:

- ✓ Developing our data systems which will allow for improved reporting and analysis of data linking needs to the right service offered.
- ✓ Implementing a focused Performance Management Framework and quality assurance tools with providers that will allow for a detailed look at the quality of service being delivered.

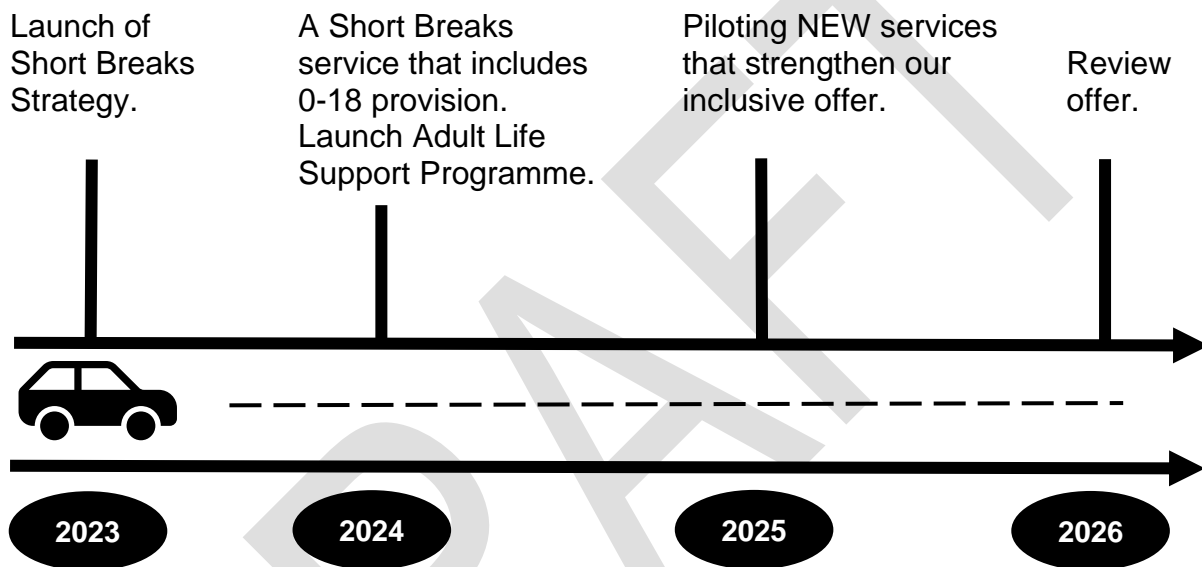
We will know that we are seeing successful impacts when:

- ✓ Children and young people with disabilities are accessing appropriate community-based provisions as part of our Early Help offer. This will be evidenced through increased attendance of children accessing Short Breaks at universal provision. Short Breaks is aligned with other Norfolk County Council commissioned service that provides a holistic and inclusive offer of support.
- ✓ Parent carers, and their children report confidence in the quality of our Short Breaks offer. This will be evidenced through six-monthly Short Breaks commissioning surveys.



- ✓ Community provisions (our universal offer) feel supported in becoming more inclusive and the clubs and activities offer across the county. Evidenced through an increased number of services offered.
- ✓ The offer is clear to services, practitioners, and families alike, and families report that they understand what the offer means for them. This is evidenced through our six-monthly surveys and feedback working groups.
- ✓ Individual outcomes for children and young people and families are delivered and progress is measured at their review, through feedback and through regularly performance monitoring.

The three-year road map



Details of next two-year improvements...

Phase 1: From April 2023

- ✓ Move from Resource Allocation System (RAS) to the Circle of Support.
- ✓ Update website - working with Special Educational Needs / Disabilities (SEND) local offer- to have a focused 'getting advice' section for parents/carers that do not have an application approved (e.g. 0-69).
- ✓ New parent and carer portal system set up for applications and reviews.
- ✓ Two pathways for applications 'Pathway A and Pathway B' - internal filtering system through new portal.
- ✓ Standard approach to prepaid cards to allow focus on group activities rather than personal budgets.
- ✓ Focusing provision and services supporting a universal offer.
- ✓ Reviews to be traffic light system working on a **Red** = full yearly review, **Amber** = review and make small changes as needed, **Green** = review every 3 years.

Phase 2: From April 2024



- ✓ Review of 0-5 providers and registered childminders with the focus being to move the service to 0-18.
- ✓ Pilot new services linked with families and children and young people for more inclusive commissioning practices. Services to be linked to data and mapping of high need areas.
- ✓ Create an adult life support programme to support children and young people aged CYP 14 and over moving out of the service.

DRAFT