Short Breaks for children and young people aged between 0 and 18 with disabilities and their families

London Borough of Wandsworth

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www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer
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Introduction

The Wandsworth Short Breaks offer is designed to give families of children and young people with disabilities access to a range of different short break opportunities, wherever possible without the need for further assessment. It continues to be kept under review. This short breaks service statement is designed to tell you about the current range of short breaks available in Wandsworth and how they can be accessed. The Council has to publish this statement online and ensure that it is kept up to date.

What is a short break?

Short breaks are hugely beneficial to families as they give children and young people with disabilities the chance to take part in fun activities and develop new interests, skills, relationships and greater independence, whilst giving their parents a break from their caring responsibilities. There is a great variety in short breaks in terms of:

- when they happen i.e. evening, overnight, weekend, holiday period;
- where they happen i.e. in the family home or away from the family home;
- how they happen i.e. independent of other family members, as a family, with other families; and
- who provides them i.e. Council, voluntary or private sector.

Who can have a short break?

The Wandsworth short breaks offer is designed for families living in Wandsworth who are caring for children and young people with disabilities aged between 0 and 18 years. A child or young person is considered to have a disability if their condition has a substantial effect on their ability to carry out day to day activities. This may mean that they have a learning or physical disability; an autistic spectrum disorder; a hearing or visual impairment; complex health needs; or that their behaviour may be challenging as a result of their disability.
Some children and young people with very complex needs may need a high level of support to have a short break, or their families might need more help because of their particular circumstances. In these cases the Council’s 0-25 Disability Social Care Team will carry out an assessment so that children and young people can have a package of support that is individually tailored to their needs.

If you would like more detailed information about the short breaks eligibility criteria please click on the link below:

Wandsworth Council Short Breaks Eligibility Criteria

What short breaks are available in Wandsworth?

The following sections give you some general information about the types of short breaks available in Wandsworth. The Family Information Service (soon to be THRIVE Online) can provide more information and advice about the range of short breaks available, and which services may be best suited to your needs. You can contact them through their website www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer, by email at fis@wandsworth.gov.uk, by ringing on 020 8871 7899 or by visiting the Combined Reception, Wandsworth Town Hall, SW18 2PU, between 9.00am and 4.00pm. Please call or email to make an appointment if you need an interpreter or translator.

Some examples of the types of services available in Wandsworth are given below. For a full list of the short breaks services available in Wandsworth, with a brief description of the services offered and contact details, please click below.

Short Breaks Guide

Universal services

Many families with children and young people with disabilities can use the same services used by all families, to have a break. This could mean that children and young people attend their local children’s centres, after school clubs, holiday play centres, youth groups, or leisure centres. If you would like to use a universal service you should approach the provider direct.
In Wandsworth we aim to increase the ability of all play and leisure services and local community organisations to include children and young people with disabilities. For example:

- The Council’s Early Years and Intervention Support Service runs inclusive holiday play schemes. They offer places to children attending Wandsworth resource bases and can also provide some extra staffing to help a limited number of children with disabilities who attend other provision.

Parents have told us about their child’s experience of universal services:

**Holiday playscheme**
My son is 10 and has moderate learning difficulties. He spent two weeks at the Christ Church play scheme run by Play Services in the summer holidays. The organisers of the scheme had obviously thought about what kind of activities the children would enjoy, like swimming and cycling and new activities including day trips to London attractions.

**Targeted specialist services**

Some children and their families need more specialist provision to enjoy a short break. In Wandsworth we fund a wide variety of specialist services that can offer short breaks to families of children and young people with disabilities without the need for an additional assessment. We have tried to ensure that there is a mix of provision including holiday schemes, weekend provision and after school opportunities.

Specialist services may cater for children and young people of different ages and disabilities. Examples of the services include:

- A range of playgroups and specialist services for children aged 0 to 5, including the Enhanced Children’s Centre at West Hill School, Merton Road, SW18 5ST, and Early Years and Intervention Support Services at 1 Siward Road, SW17 0LA.
- Lady Allen Adventure Playground – adventurous play after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays.
• **Unique Youth at George Shearing Centre** – a youth club for young people with disabilities after school and during school holidays.

• **Generate Opportunities Ltd** – a youth club for young people with disabilities during evenings and the school holidays.

• **Specialist holiday play schemes** and **after school clubs** run by special schools.

Targeted or specialist services will usually require some evidence of your child’s disability, but you can provide this by using an existing assessment. Examples include Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment; Education, Health and Care Plan; support from a professional who knows your child.

Parents, children and young people have told us about their experience of specialist services:

**Generate Opportunities Ltd**

‘The Generate team helped to make my son’s summer holidays enjoyable, interesting and varied, and of course, enabled me to get some respite.’

‘It’s like a second home. There are loads of people that know me. They know what conditions I have got. They are friendly. I just like being with them.’

‘His experience of working with his Buddy for independent travel training has changed his life! In less than 2 months he was able to travel independently and not just independently but most of all confidently and that’s where the Buddy’s experience has really made the massive benefit.’

**Unique Youth, George Shearing Centre**

‘It’s great! I like football sessions, youth club, residential and the new banner in the large hall!’

The staff are nice and friendly! I like going on the computers and listening to music on YouTube.’

‘I like coming to the disco on Friday’s and dancing with friends and having a good time.’
Services and support across universal and targeted specialist

Some organisations provide both universal and targeted specialist short break opportunities or the Council gives funding opportunities to provide either of these. Examples of these services include:

- Wandsworth Enable Sports Development Team has developed a range of sporting and leisure activities for children and young people with disabilities. Among the activities on offer are:
  - free recumbent cycling sessions at Battersea Park for young people with a disability and a carer or sibling;
  - swimming clubs for children with disabilities;
  - a disability sports session at Battersea Sports Centre, run by Disability Sports Coach;
  - football sessions run by Chelsea FC Foundation;
  - dance sessions for young people with disabilities;
  - watersports sessions for young people with disabilities.

Further information about these is available on the Family Information Service website or by ringing Enable on 020 3959 0041 jcarterwright@enablelc.org, www.enablelc.org.

- Local organisations can submit bids as part of the Short Breaks Small Grants programme to assist children and young people with disabilities access universal services through funding such things as staff training or specific equipment to running specialist sports, theatre or music groups.

- The Council funds schools, specialist services and parent groups to organise days out and activities for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that enable them to have fun together as families, sometimes with other families with children with SEND. The Council arranges events for families to get together. These events include sessions at:
  - ‘Flip Out’, a trampoline facility in Earlsfield;
- ‘Go Ape’, an adventure facility in Battersea Park;
- ‘Putt in the Park’, a mini golf course in Battersea Park;
- Kaspa’s, an ice cream parlour in Tooting.

Details are publicised through the Disabled Children’s Register (DCR). Members of the DCR who have a higher level of need can apply for a WAND card (or, once they are over 18 and up to 24, a WAND+ Card). As well as being a convenient form of ID, which indicates that the holder has a high level of SEND, a number of organisations offer free or discounted activities for WAND card holders and their carers. Details are available on the local offer website, www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer.

Families have told us about their experiences of family days out:

**Go Ape free session for DCR members**

‘I took my 14 year old son, who is a WAND card holder, to the tree top adventure today and it was great. I took his sister who doesn’t have a Card and they let both her and me on for free. Everyone was really kind and it was a really good experience.’

‘We’ve just done our Go Ape session and the kids LOVED it! We would never be able to afford it otherwise and we just feel so blessed to live in Wandsworth and have such amazing support from the council.’

**Cineworld free film show for DCR members**

I have a son aged 9 who is severely autistic and attends a local special school. His disability has a real impact on the sort of activities we can access in the holidays. The free film show at Cineworld was a great opportunity for him to try out how it felt to see a film - even if he only managed 20 minutes!
If you would like more information on the DCR and WAND Cards please contact the Family Information Service. You can contact them through the website [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer), by email at [fis@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:fis@wandsworth.gov.uk), by ringing on 020 8871 7899 or by visiting the Combined Reception, Wandsworth Town Hall, SW18 2PU, between 9.00am and 4.00pm.

**Services which need to be accessed using an additional assessment**

**0 - 25 Disability Team**

Some children and families need more help than is available through general specialist services. If you think that this applies to your family then you can request a social care assessment from the 0-25 Disability Social Care Team by ringing the Initial Point of Contact (IPOC) on 020 8871 6622 and asking for Children and Family Assessment, with a view to short breaks. You may also be referred to this Team by a professional working with you. A social worker will carry out an assessment and will discuss with you a range of issues including:

- your child’s disability and the impact on their life and the life of your family;
- your needs as a carer;
- what support you have available to you;
- how many other children you may have, including whether any of your other children may have a disability, or whether you have any other caring responsibilities;
- whether you have any concerns about your child’s safety.

This information will be used to decide whether you need additional services, and what level of additional services should be provided. These services might include:

- support in the home;
- overnight breaks, either at Oakdene, the Council’s overnight short breaks centre, with a short breaks foster carer, or if necessary with a specialist provider;
- extra staffing to enable your child to attend a short breaks provider if they have very complex needs or challenging behaviour; or
• **direct payments** to enable you to purchase the services that you need.

Here is some feedback from a parent who uses direct payments:

My son is 13 and has severe learning difficulties and visual impairment. He attends a local special school. We have received direct payments for Short Breaks. We accessed these through a Social Worker. Direct payments meant that we employed carers for our son, rather than the council. This gave us control over who we used to look after our child. It works best if you have a potential supply of workers – e.g. school contacts or people studying courses like education and physiotherapy.

**Moving on – short break services for young adults and their carers**

Planning for a young person’s transition into adulthood will start from when a young person is around 13 years. A child’s school should give parents a copy of the Booklet “Time to Prepare”, which has been designed with and for young people in transition and their parents/carers.

Planning for a young person’s transition into adulthood is done to maximise personal independence and choices, and includes consideration of possibilities around housing and support, day support and opportunities within the community including help to obtain employment, leisure opportunities, and short breaks for carers.

Once a young person reaches 18 years they transfer to Adult Social Care Services. The criteria for access to adult care services are known as the “Fair Access to Care Services” and are different to those for children’s social care services. This should be discussed with the young person, their parents or carers as part of the transition review. Once it has been agreed that a young person is entitled to services, parents or carers will be offered a carers assessment.

The Adult Care Information Service (ACIS) is an easy to use directory on [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/acis](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/acis) and provides information and contacts about services for adults.
The Council offers a range of services to carers of adults with disabilities. More information can be found at [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/carers](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/carers). Services include a care at home scheme and some residential respite. Access to these services is via a social work assessment.

There are a number of organisations in the borough working with young people with disabilities over the age of 18 years. Some of these may already be known to you – for example Unique Youth at the George Shearing Centre works with young people aged 13 to 25 years. Further information about the services available can be found in the “Things to do” section at [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/acis](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/acis).

More options have been provided for the 18 and over age group, with the introduction of the WAND+ card.

**Consultation and working in partnership**

The range of short breaks on offer continues to be developed in consultation with children and young people with disabilities and their families. This is done either on a small scale where short break providers seek the views of their service users in order to influence their future planning; or on a large scale where the Council consults all interested parties and gives them the opportunity to influence the Council’s short breaks commissioning decisions and ensures the offer continues to meet the needs of Wandsworth families and provides value for money.

The outcome of the Council’s most recent short breaks consultation was very positive with parents and carers giving good ratings to services, both in terms of their child’s enjoyment and the quality of the break. The findings from the consultation were shared with Positive Parent Action (PPA), the local SEN parent forum and subsequent recommendations produced in discussion with them. Actions following the consultation included:

- publication of the annual Short Breaks Guide, which rebranded Short Breaks as “Short Breaks Activities for children, young people and families” to assist parents
knowing what was available and address the confusion about the term short breaks;
- increased opportunities for families to go out and have a break together, enjoying the same activities as other families, as this was the most highly rated part of the offer;
- a more strategically planned targeted short breaks offer with a focus on personalised progress outcomes for the children and young people;
- staff qualifications, experience, knowledge and training forming part of the service standards set when the Council commissions short breaks and is part of the agreed monitoring process.

Parents and carers and young people can continue to have a say in Wandsworth’s short breaks offer through:

Positive Parent Action is a Wandsworth Parents’ Forum that works with the Council to improve provision for children and young people with disabilities and their families in the borough, and to ensure that parents working together can support the improvement of services. More information about the Forum, including how to join, is available from their website www.positiveparentaction.org.uk or by ringing the Parent Facilitator on 020 8947 5260 or emailing positiveparentaction@yahoo.co.uk.

We will continue to ask users what they think of our services and how we can improve them. We also expect organisations we fund to provide short breaks services to seek feedback from families and young people about the services offered to them and how they could be improved.

The Council has a Disabled Children’s and Young People’s Register (DCR). If you join you will receive regular information about events and services, newsletters, and if you are interested, you can receive consultations about service developments.