This Statement has been produced by
Kent County Council - Social Care,
Health and Wellbeing Directorate –
Children’s Commissioning Unit.

You can view it online and also give your views at:
http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/ShortBreaks

Alternatively, you can contact the Children’s Commissioning
Unit to give your views as follows:

Tel. 01622 223457 or Text Relay 18001 03000 41 41 41
or you can e-mail: Commissioningfordisabledchildren@kent.gov.uk
or write to: Kent County Council, Disabled Children Team,
Room 2.12 Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ.
What is this document about?

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations (April 2011) require a local authority to provide 'so far as is reasonably practicable, a range of services which is sufficient to assist carers to continue to provide care or to do so more effectively.' Local authorities are also required to publish a statement about short breaks. This Statement is Kent County Council’s response to both of these requirements.

The Statement explains the principles behind how Kent County Council and our partners in the National Health Service propose to provide short breaks for disabled children and young people in Kent. It describes the range of short breaks we intend to provide, and how they are arranged. It also explains which services are appropriate for which children.

We are seeking the views of families about short breaks, and will take these views into account when preparing this final version of the Statement. We will continue to ask children, young people and their parents and carers for their views, and review and update the Statement in Autumn 2016.
What is a short break?

Looking after children with complex disabilities can be exhausting for parents and carers, and the local authority should be a vital source of support. A short break gives parents and carers a much needed break from caring – some ‘time out’. It also gives disabled children and young people the chance to have fun and make friends – something that most children can take for granted. This can be anything from a couple of hours a week at Brownies or Cubs, to going swimming on a Saturday morning, or attending a play scheme in the summer holidays, or sometimes spending the night with friends away from the family home: these are just some examples of short breaks.

You can see examples of the types of short breaks on pages 10-19.

The Regulations define a short break as:

- Day-time care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere
- Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes
- Services available to assist carers in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays

A short break is not the same as childcare that enables parents/carers to work.
Short breaks should have two main outcomes for parents and carers. They should:

- Enable them to continue to care for their disabled child as part of their family and local community
- To care for their disabled child more effectively

Short breaks can do this by:

- Providing parents and carers with a break from caring responsibility
- Enabling them to meet the needs of any other children in the family more effectively
- Giving them more time to carry out the day to day tasks which they must perform to run their household
- Giving them time to undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity

Short breaks can also help to support:

- Improvements in the mental health and emotional wellbeing of disabled children, young people and their siblings
- Promoting independence, allowing disabled children to take risks in a safe environment, to develop their social skills and have choice
- The development of active and healthy lifestyles for disabled children
- A reduction in the number of disabled children who need to be looked after by the local authority
- A reduction in the number of disabled children placed in residential care outside Kent
- Community acceptance of disabled children and young people as being equal and integral members of society
- Building the skills of disabled young people to prepare for future employment

Short breaks can help to reduce parental stress and help to avoid a family breaking up. Our approach is to work with families to develop their resilience and increase their capacity to help themselves. For disabled children and young people, short breaks should be about:

- Giving children a chance to have fun, whilst keeping them safe, and giving them…
- …A chance to try new things they haven’t done before (or things that they like doing but don’t get the chance to do very often)
Like all taxpayer funded services, Kent County Council faces challenging economic circumstances. This means that we have less money available to fund short breaks. We therefore propose to prioritise funding of short breaks for those parents/carers of children living with more severe and profound disability, and those parents/carers of children whose family resilience is at significant risk.

Although we will use the money that we do have to give as many parents/carers as possible a chance to have a short break, some children who previously had short breaks may not continue to have them, or not as many.

Some families have a ‘direct payment’, which is an amount of money paid to them so that they can choose and pay for the short breaks that suit them and their child best, instead of having an arranged service. This means that we have to balance the money spent on direct payments against the money that we use to fund organisations that provide services.

Some families have told us that they do not want a direct payment but wish to use services that are paid for centrally by Kent County Council. Other families have told us that it is difficult to find a suitable personal assistant to care for their child while they have a short break. To address these issues we will consider using some of the budget to contract with organisations to provide personal assistants to families.

Where Kent County Council buys a service such as a holiday play scheme or a club rather than the parent buying something using a direct payment we expect organisations to make a charge for the service, in the same way as they would for a service for a non-disabled child. We expect parents to pay this charge from their own resources.

We will buy services using competitive processes that comply both with the law and the guidance contained in the Kent County Council document ‘Spending the Council’s Money.’ All services will be subject to a signed contract between Kent County Council and the service provider which will set out clearly what is expected of the service. We will manage and review how well services perform, to ensure that they give value for money.
How we assess and meet the needs of disabled children

Disabled children and young people in Kent may have their needs assessed under the Common Assessment Framework. This is a process that ensures that children, young people and their families receive the most appropriate support from the most appropriate organisations and professionals. The majority of these assessments will be undertaken or arranged by professionals working in settings such as children's centres, schools and health settings. These are the places where children's and young people's needs are best identified at an early stage. Our intention is that disabled children receive sufficient appropriate early help so that in future fewer children need social care protection or need to be taken into care.

Kent County Council also has a service – the Disabled Children’s Service - for disabled children and young people who have more severe and complex needs related to their disability (see Appendix A for which children can have this service). Your child can only have some specialist services, such as overnight says in a short breaks unit or attend a specialist play scheme, if they have had a specialist social work assessment which concludes that this is the best way to meet their need. A care plan will then be written which clearly sets out the kind of short breaks that are most appropriate for your child. These could range from the local community services in your area that are available to all children, to highly specialised breaks. This plan will be kept under review and changed if there is a change in the needs of your child or your family.

The Government has brought in a new law which will be effective from September 2014 - The Children and Families Act. Part of the Act is aimed at services for disabled children and children with a special educational need, and Kent County Council was one of the council’s selected to test the changes during the two years leading up to the new law. One of the changes is aimed coordinating all the different assessments a child has, and where appropriate, a child will have a single plan for education, health and social care. For these children the plan may include short breaks.

The new law also requires local authorities to publish a ‘Local Offer’ that sets out what services are available for children with special educational needs and their families.

Kent County Council will publish this on a website: http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/about-the-local-offer

The information will include details of short breaks provided in your local area.

Children who have an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework may be offered support to go to a club or activity for all children e.g. Brownies.

Or they may be directed to a service just for disabled children, such as a weekend club. If the assessment identifies that the service required is a more specialist service, perhaps from Kent County Council’s Specialist Children’s Services, then this will be explained and permission sought for a referral to be made.

Specialist Children’s Services has a system for measuring a child’s level of need, which can range from a low level to a very high level of need. Sometimes the needs are so high that children are deemed to be ‘at risk’.
How we intend to plan, develop and support Short Break services

We will look at what services already exist and where they are, with a view to trying to ensure wherever a child lives in Kent they have the same opportunity to enjoy a short break. One of the ways we will do this is by working with community and voluntary organisations to ensure that the services they offer can provide for a wider range of needs and ages.

We will continue to involve parents, carers and children and young people in all aspects of short break planning and delivery. Parent representatives will have a say at the meetings where key decisions are taken about the planning and development of short breaks. We will bring together the planning of short breaks for children with the planning of breaks for young adults to improve the experience of transition between two services when children reach the age of eighteen and become adults.

We will introduce the Kent Card as a means of receiving a direct payment (this is a bank Visa card that can be ‘loaded’ with an agreed amount of money to spend on short break services).
How Short Breaks are structured

There are four types of short breaks:

1. Mainstream/universal

A key element of our short breaks planning will be to encourage services such as leisure centres, youth clubs, children’s centres, District Council play schemes, to include disabled children. Working with young people, we have developed a Young Inspectors Programme, in which disabled young people themselves visit mainstream short breaks settings and assess how inclusive they are.
Emma is a nine year old who has Down’s syndrome and a moderate learning disability. She attends a mainstream school with support from a learning support assistant.

She has no difficulty with her personal care needs, such as going to the toilet, but sometimes needs to be reminded. Emma has a communication book which explains that she finds it easier to understand instructions in picture format.

Emma’s local council run a summer play scheme for 5-11 year olds every year, and Emma wanted to attend. Before the play scheme started, all the play workers attended a training course about how to include disabled children. Because the organiser knew that Emma wanted to come, the training course specifically covered Down’s syndrome.

On the first morning Emma was a bit anxious about going, but as soon as she arrived a play worker welcomed her and introduced her to the other children, and her dad left. Emma made friends with another girl who goes to Emma’s school, and when her dad picked her up in the afternoon she told him about all the things she had done in the day and that she wanted to go again the next day.

We will encourage settings working with pre-school age children such as nurseries and playgroups to increase the number of young disabled children accessing their services. It is generally expected that pre-school children will not require any funded services to meet their needs, as all children of this age need a level of support from their parents/carers. In exceptional circumstances an Early Support assessment may identify that a child needs specialist support.

We recognise that some children may need support to access mainstream services e.g. a befriender to accompany them. This support should be temporary, aiming to increase the confidence of the service so that it can successfully include a disabled child.
Matthew is nine years old and lives with his grand-parents and younger sister. He attends the local mainstream primary school.

He is a chatty, friendly and caring little boy and has Asperger’s Syndrome. His behaviour at school is sometimes challenging and he has difficulty with both verbal and non-verbal communication. Matthew has difficulty making friends and he gets upset about this. Matthew’s grandparents have no time for themselves as all their energy goes into bringing up their grandchildren.

Dee is sixteen years old and studying for her AS levels. Dee decided to volunteer with the buddying project as she wanted to develop and learn new skills which she can use in the future, and was matched as a buddy for Matthew.

After a couple of home visits, playing board games and getting to know each other, Dee went along with Matthew to the local cub pack. Matthew coped really well in the first few weeks being supported by Dee. He joined in with the activities, initiated conversations with other children that he recognised from his school, and started to build positive relationships with the leaders. When Dee went to collect him Matthew would be standing at his bedroom window looking out for her, all ready to go.

Matthew took advantage of every opportunity he was given. His grandparents bought him a bike so he could take his bicycle safety test and go on bike rides with the other cubs. He also went swimming at his local leisure centre and gained numerous swimming badges and went canoeing. His biggest achievement of all was going camping in the school summer holidays on his own for a weekend with the rest of his cub pack.

Matthew’s grandparents said that the buddying project had changed their lives and given the whole family a lot more confidence. Dee really enjoyed her volunteering, and although she was unable to carry on due to her studies, she said, “I am leaving with so much more than I came with.”
2. Targeted

These services are aimed at disabled children whose needs are less complex than those of children where an assessment has shown they require a more specialist service.

For example, short breaks in this category include weekend clubs that are specifically for disabled children and young people. Targeted short breaks tend to be run by voluntary organisations or groups of parents, and families can approach them directly without having to go through a social worker or health professional.
‘My son Danny has Autistic Spectrum Disorder and is now 14 years old. He has been coming along to the Weekend Fun Club for almost two years, and it is the highlight of his month.

Danny is reasonably sociable, and he enjoys new experiences, but needs things explained to him in simple terms. He has a brother and sister who are able to go to Scout and Brownie events, and it is lovely for him to have something that he can go away to in his own right. As he is growing older he particularly enjoys being able to attend events and activities without needing his parents to go along with him, and he has made some friends at the Fun Club, whom he looks forward to meeting up with.

His confidence has grown enormously; he was nervous the first time he went along; now that he knows other children and the volunteers, he looks forward to going to the club each time. Increasingly he is telling us about what he has been up to on his weekends away, and it is great that he has the opportunity to spend a night away from home. He has coped well with looking after himself and I have no worries now when he goes off on a Fun Club weekend.

Danny has learned new skills and had some really special experiences; he likes his food and really enjoyed preparing his own dinner at Kench Hill. He loved the barbecues at Rippledown and has had a lot of fun with the outdoor activities.

Weekend Fun Club has given Danny a whole new dimension to his life; he can go away like other children of his age, and is developing a sense of independence from us as his parents. He really loves going and we very much appreciate how it is helping him develop.’

Danny’s Mum.
3. Specialist

These services are aimed at children with a severe and complex level of disability whose needs are over and above what can be met by universal or targeted provision or where the family resilience is at significant risk. Access to these services is usually by referral from a specialist social worker from Kent County Council’s Disabled Children’s Service, or a key health professional. The eligibility criteria for the specialist social work service are attached as Appendix A.

For example, services in this category include daytime or overnight breaks in a short breaks unit, short breaks with a Kent County Council approved foster carer, or the provision of a direct payment to purchase a service that meets a child’s needs, following a 1989 Children Act assessment by a specialist social worker.

EXAMPLE

Charlotte is a 14 year old with a severe learning disability. She also has epilepsy. Charlotte has very little verbal communication.

She also has behaviours that are challenging. Charlotte attends a special school. She needs active support with all her personal care needs such as going to the toilet and feeding herself. She also has difficulty sleeping more than two hours at a time which can be exhausting for parents.

Charlotte has a younger sister Jane. Her mum provides all her care and sometimes feels guilty that Jane doesn’t get as much attention as she needs because of the demands of looking after Charlotte at home.

Charlotte’s teacher told her mum about a special resource centre run by the council where children can stay overnight for a couple of days to give their parents a break.

Charlotte’s mum then phoned the council and a referral was made to Specialist Children’s Services. A social worker from the council’s service for disabled children came to see Charlotte and her family to assess her needs. It was arranged for Charlotte to spend a weekend every other month from Friday after school to Monday morning at the resource centre. Charlotte has her own room and the other five young people staying that weekend are all teenagers like her. Her sister Jane now has some special time with her Mum while Charlotte is there.
Stacey is an eight year old with cerebral palsy and a learning disability, and is on the autism spectrum. She lives at home with her mum and dad and two brothers, one of whom has Asperger’s syndrome.

Stacey goes to a special school. Her parents made a referral to Specialist Children’s Services because they felt their family was in danger of falling apart and they were worried that they would not be able to care for Stacey any longer.

A social worker from the council’s specialist service for disabled children came to see Stacey and her family and assessed their needs. It was agreed that Stacey would best have her needs met by overnight stays in a specialist foster home where she stays for two nights a month. Every summer, Stacey goes to a specialist play scheme with other disabled children, run by a local charity. Stacey’s family have told us that the short breaks have made all the difference and they can now cope with looking after Stacey at home.
4. Multi-agency children’s continuing care packages

There will be a need for a small group of disabled children who have highly complex health, social care and education needs to receive a children’s continuing care package. The National Framework for Children’s Continuing Care requires the National Health Service to work together with the local authority to jointly commission children’s continuing care packages.

A children’s continuing care package is provided for disabled children and young people whose complex needs cannot be met by universal, targeted and specialist services alone. In this case a Health Assessor will undertake a holistic assessment of the child’s and family’s needs, working closely with the child’s social worker, teacher and other professionals working with the family. The case will then be presented to a multi-agency panel. The panel will determine whether the child meets the eligibility criteria for a children’s continuing care package and the size of the package that will be offered.
Stuart is a three year old child who has Chondrodysplasia punctata, a hereditary condition that affects infants and young children.

It is a skeletal abnormality, and Stuart’s symptoms include restricted growth, shortening of limbs, cataracts, dry and scaly skin. Stuart has a tracheostomy and requires 24 hour artificial ventilation via his tracheostomy to help him to breath. Stuart also has to be fed via a gastrostomy tube into his stomach and has various medications which are also administered via his gastrostomy.

Stuart’s mother is a single parent and also has a nine month old baby. Stuart requires 24 hour care which means that he needs a one to one carer to look after his health needs. The carer also takes Stuart to nursery school and stays with him in order to keep his airway safe and to administer his medications.

During the day Stuart’s mother is able to provide the majority of this care, although she does receive some day support in order to maintain her family life with her other child and other routine tasks at home. Stuart receives overnight care seven days a week, which allows his mother to sleep, so that she can safely care for him during the day.
Information and advice

How families can find out about Short Breaks:

Kent is a large county and so that information is available locally we have funded a consortium of five organisations to provide the main source of information about short breaks in different parts of the county. These organisations are:

Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley: The Parents Consortium

- Telephone: 01322-668-501
- E-Mail: admin@parentsconsortium.co.uk
- Website: www.parentsconsortium.co.uk

Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks: SPACE

- Telephone: 01732 758130/07770 847118
- E-Mail: info@spacecharity.org
- Website: www.spacecharity.org

Maidstone: M4S

- Telephone: 01622 764566
- E-Mail: info@m4s.org.uk
- Website: www.m4s.org.uk

Canterbury, Thanet and Swale: 4Us2

- Telephone: 01227 741748/07519 716186
- E-Mail: info@4us2.org
- Website: www.4us2.org

Ashford, Shepway and Dover: Includes Us 2

- Telephone: 01233 898792
- E-Mail: info@includesus2.org.uk
- Website: www.includesus2.org.uk
Which children/young people may require a short break?

All children and their families are unique, and their particular circumstances will sometimes need to be assessed to ensure that the appropriate service can be offered.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Children?</th>
<th>Disabled Children aged 0-4 who:</th>
<th>Disabled Children aged 5-18 who:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are ordinarily resident in Kent and who are not yet at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are ordinarily resident in Kent and at school (in or out of county), or are entitled to be at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have been assessed as requiring specialist services through the Early Support process at a core level and/or</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who attend a special or mainstream school, maintained or non-maintained, and are disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Require additional support to access a mainstream pre-school provision</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are educated at home or currently not attending school and are disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The above includes children with complex health needs. The nature and level of any short break which may be offered will be determined by individual assessment of a child's and family's circumstances</td>
<td></td>
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How you can give your views about this draft statement:

We will seek your views on this Statement again via an e-questionnaire on the main Kent County Council website http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/ShortBreaks

We will ask practitioners in social work, occupational therapy, and community nursing services to talk with children and their families about short breaks, and encourage them to give their views.

Some of the things children have previously told us about short breaks:

- Adults who run clubs need training on disabilities like autism because it’s not obvious as a physical disability.
- If you run a club equally you need to support everyone. Each person needs the right amount of support.
- We don’t want special clubs; we want to get supported and have a good time.
### Some of the things parents/carers have previously told us:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ensure that children who can access mainstream activities with some support / additional training of mainstream staff (and perhaps parents) get that opportunity, so that specialist provision is provided specifically for children with complex / severe needs.</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am concerned that for people in my position, with disabled children with a high level of need who cannot be accommodated by any usual means of childcare provision, there does not seem to be any reliable provision for school holidays particularly the 6-7 week summer break.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would welcome the opportunity to purchase the short breaks of my choice if I were given a payment to do this because I could then chose what my child wants to do, not what someone else thinks he wants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Direct payment helps, but we still struggle to find things that my son can enjoy / do since he has severe learning disability and complex needs. He is in danger of missing out on activities with his peers who have similar disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give funding to the small groups that put on events and activities for our kids, they work damn hard and don’t get paid, and the funding you give to larger charities and organisations goes on overheads and staff before the kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is nice to do activities where you don’t have to watch your child like a hawk all the time. You can chat with other carers, make friends and know that if your child ‘kicks off’ people understand and won’t criticise or have a go at you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can improve short breaks by running them at county level.</td>
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Appendix A
Eligibility criteria for Kent County Council’s Disabled Children’s Service

Access Criteria
Referral to the Disabled Children’s Services may be made for any disabled child or young person from birth up until their 18th birthday who is resident within Kent County Council boundaries and whose disability is permanent or long term and meets at least one of the following criteria:

• A severe and profound learning, physical or sensory disability

• Complex medical needs or severe and profound long term condition expected to disable the child for more than one year

• Life limiting or threatening illness

• Severe communication disabilities or severe behavioural difficulties related to the child’s disability (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder)

• Severe global developmental delay

The criteria do not include children with:

• A disability or disabilities that is not severe

• Behavioural problems due to social/environmental factors (i.e. not associated to a disability)

• A diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Attention Deficit Disorder unless in conjunction with a severe learning, physical or communication disability

• Mental health needs alone

• A diagnosis of specific learning difficulty alone, e.g. Dyslexia

• Where the primary need is assessed as being related to social factors, e.g. parenting difficulties, difficulties with siblings

• In cases where it is not clear whether or not a child/young person meets the above eligibility criteria there may be a joint initial assessment to determine the most appropriate service

• Children who do not meet the eligibility criteria for a service from the Disabled Children Service may, nevertheless, be assessed for services as children in need.

Where the young person is approaching adulthood, it is expected that consultation would take place between Kent County Council’s Specialist Children’s Services and Adult Social Services and, it may be agreed that a joint assessment would be appropriate in such circumstances.
This publication is available in other formats and can be explained in a range of languages. Please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 41 41 41 for more information.

Short Breaks Statement for parents and carers of disabled children and young people in Kent.