Somerset’s Short Breaks Statement
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In Somerset we are currently providing short breaks to approximately 1300 disabled children and young people\(^1\). This represents 1.2% of the children’s population in the county.

From 1st April 2011, the Children’s Act\(^2\) and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, requires local authorities to provide short break services designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children\(^3\).

This short break statement is for families living in Somerset who have a disabled child aged 0-18 years and will explain:

- What services are available
- How these services were designed
- Who is eligible to use these services

What is a Short Break?

A short break can last from a few hours to a few days, evening, overnight, weekend, and school holiday daytime activities.

Short breaks provide an opportunity for disabled children to spend time away from their carers, try out new things, have fun and make new friends. Short breaks can also provide families with a chance to do ordinary things together.

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\(^1\) Source: Somerset Aiming High for Disabled Children data, March 2011
\(^2\) Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 of the Children’s Act 1989
\(^3\) Parents, carers, primary carers, families
In Somerset we aim to:

• Support disabled children to do new things, have fun, make new friends and do things without parents / carers

• Support families to do ordinary things together

• Support short break providers, such as: leisure centres, charities, outdoor activities, etc, to become more inclusive, offer a range of activities and to promote them effectively to families

• Improve information sharing about the services on offer to families

• Work together with disabled children and their families, to make sure we are meeting their needs and to see how we can improve what we offer

• Help families with transport where possible

• Monitor activity providers to make sure they are offering a good quality service that is value for money. Use a variety of methods, e.g. family feedback, mystery shoppers, etc

• Continue to offer training and development opportunities to activity providers and volunteers, to increase skills in meeting the needs of disabled children, young people and families
Consultation and promoting better outcomes for families

Through the Aiming High for Disabled Children’s Programme in Somerset, we consulted with a wide range of disabled children and their families about what they want from a short break. The following key messages emerged:

Parents / carers
- To have more choice, opportunity and access to reliable short break activities
- To have information readily available to be able to plan ahead and access services when needed
- To do ordinary and fun things as a family
- To enable their children to try out new things, have new achievements, improved confidence, feel brave and feel happy
- To have a trusted and skilled ‘extra pair of hands’ and improved family support
- To use short breaks to reduce family stress levels and sleep deprivation and improve family life

“We seeing my daughter being able to have a go, have fun doing it and to achieve this without me helping or hovering like a shadow was my highlight”

“We had a fabulous weekend…by the end of the stay we did things we thought we could not do and we’re feeling really good about it” (Family who visited the Calvert Trust, Exmoor)

Children and young people want:
- To feel listened to and understood
- To do ordinary things
- To try out new things
- To be more independent
- To go to more accessible places

Ongoing consultation with short break activity providers takes place through Provider Events, where there is a mixed audience of activity organisations and parents / carers, who work together to help improve provision. Key messages emerging from consultation to date have been:
- Recognising the importance of pre-planning with parents prior to an activity, to build confidence for both the parent / carer and the provider to ensure the child has a positive experience
- Providing a wide range of activities and focusing on inclusion where possible, to ensure a range of children are accessing provision
- Offering fun and developmental activities, enabling children to try out new things, have new achievements and build their confidence

“Getting the children out on the bikes had a dramatic and positive effect on them…the bikes seem to really improve the quality of life for the children…they allow them to do something they wouldn’t normally be able to do” (Manager of an all ability bike hire shop)

“90% of parents will continue to use the short break activity providers they have been introduced to” (Feedback from the Short Breaks Partnership Team Pilot 2010, impact questionnaire)
# Short Break Services in Somerset

There are three levels of short break support, as detailed below. Children eligible at level 2 or 3 can also access services at lower levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Assessment / access to services</th>
<th>Examples of services</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Universal:</strong></td>
<td>No assessment required, access to service directly via Somerset Direct (see below for contact details).</td>
<td>Short Breaks activity calendar, Short Breaks newsletter, Places to Go Map, access to equipment loan store, inclusive play parks, all ability cycle hire. This information can be posted to families upon request.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open to everyone, services for all disabled children</td>
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<td><strong>2. Targeted:</strong></td>
<td>Child must be receiving specific support, such as: Disability Living Allowance; School Action Plus Level 2 funding; have a Statement of Special Educational Need.</td>
<td>Short term(^4), personalised support for the child via Short Breaks Coordinator, holiday activities with group supervision, signposting to short break activities for both the child and the family in their local community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More specific support for some disabled children</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Specialist / complex:</strong></td>
<td>Assessment by a Social Worker and / or health professional assessment.</td>
<td>Medium–longer term support: 1:1 support for the child; specialist activity provision; family support and overnight stays with a foster carer; in a residential unit; or hospice. Packages of direct payments can be made to families as an alternative to specialist / complex support services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialist help for a small number of disabled children</td>
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\(^{4}\) Up to 12 weeks

This statement will be kept under review and revised as appropriate. If you have any comments or feedback about this document, please email AHDC@somerset.gov.uk

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**Somerset Direct Children and Young People’s Service: 0845 345 9122**  
Advice and services for Education and Children’s Social Care.