

Short Breaks Assessment and Review Team Annual Report

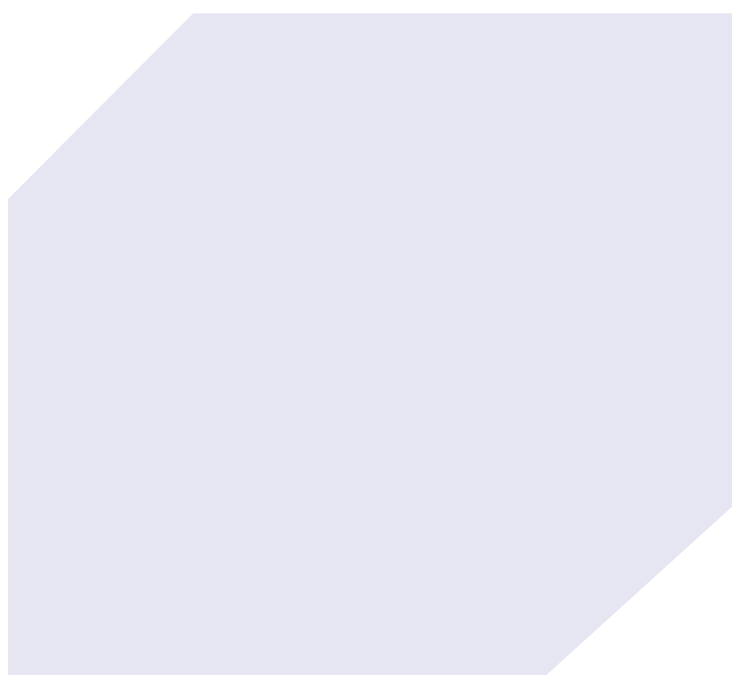
2021/22



Nottinghamshire
County Council

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1 Introduction

A short break is a planned break from the routine of caring for a child or young person and is intended to give the carer a break from caring and the child/young person the opportunity to experience new or different opportunities. In Nottinghamshire we are proud of this offer that can provide support and enrichment to families. Over the past two years the global pandemic has had an impact on the delivery of this service, and we know that has put a great deal of pressure on families, children and young people who valued and sometimes relied on these services. It is testament to the short breaks' providers, personal assistants, and families themselves that have been creative and flexible to deliver as much as they can in the most trying of circumstances.

We are particularly grateful for the support of the Parent Carer Forum for shaping the offer and making sure that parents have timely and understandable information on short breaks. Their challenge helps to

constantly improve the options available for respite, relaxation and a much-needed break for carers along with fun, fulfilling activities for children and young people.

Children and young people themselves tell us how much they value their time receiving short breaks and how this allows them new opportunities and strengthens their relationships with their family and community. Their voice remains critically important in making sure that the offer is successful and continues to make the lives of children with additional needs and their families better and brighter.

Laurence Jones

*Service Director,
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2 Background

In September 2016 the Local Authority decided to review its Short Break Offer. This was in response to feedback from parents and carers that the existing system was too complicated. To develop the new offer, a working group was set up so that co-production was at the heart of the review.

The working group involved colleagues from the local authority, Nottinghamshire Parent/Carer Forum and other parents and carers who were keen to be involved.

In September 2018, following on from the successful review, the revised Short Breaks Offer was launched.



The county and people of Nottinghamshire

The Nottinghamshire county (excluding Nottingham City) is 805 square miles, covering both urban and rural areas. 20% of the population live in the rural areas, mostly small towns, and villages. Nottinghamshire has a population of 833,377 of which children and young people make up 20% of the population. There is currently a total of 13,699 children

and young people who receive special educational needs support. (Source: School Census January 2021). According to the 2021 School Census the most common SEND need in children and young people who have an Education Health and Care Plan is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (43%).



3 Short breaks for children and young people with disabilities and their parents/carers in Nottinghamshire

Short breaks offer opportunities for children and young people with disabilities that encourage socialisation and support their independence, enables them to take part in activities and to spend time away from their families. It can also help them develop new skills and to prepare for adulthood. At the same time short breaks support parents/carers of disabled children and young people to continue to care for them by providing them with a break from caring.

Nottinghamshire's short breaks offer is delivered via a menu of services and is designed to meet the differing needs and complexities of children and young people. This includes provision through both direct payments and with providers. This provision includes one to one support or holiday, play and community-based activities and is countywide.

Message 1: Nottinghamshire short breaks key trends

- The number of short break hours given to individual children and young people continues to rise.
- Children are presenting with increasingly complex needs and/or challenging behaviours.
- Provision varies across the county. The right provision to meet a child's needs is not always available in the right location. Provision for children and young people living in rural areas of the county is particularly challenging.



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What children and young people say about their short break

Nottinghamshire County Council believes that every child and young person should be able to give voice to their lived experience and be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

We have been working in creative and innovative ways to ensure that children and young people are given a platform to share, what is important to them, their dreams for the future and what support they need.

The Short Break Assessment and Review Team gives children and young people accessing a short break the opportunity to share their views and wishes via the Mind of My Own App. These views and wishes are also embedded in assessments, review, and provision within the short break offer.

“ I love going out with my carer and youth club. ”

“ Short breaks is good because I am able to be out and do the things I enjoy. ”

“ I enjoy going out and talking to my carer. ”

“ I am able to do different activities on my short breaks. ”



5 Working with parents and carers to improve outcomes for children and young people

When the Local Authority revised its Short Breaks Offer in 2016, it did so by working with parents, carers, children, and young people. Many of the suggestions made by parents and carers were included; clearer information designed to be easier to access and understand, an initial online assessment, and the regular review of packages over specified thresholds. It was redesigned to ensure that available resources are distributed fairly and targeted to where they are most needed and to make sure the offer is sustainable, parent and carer input continues to play an important role in the development of the offer.

The Short Break and Assessment Team has strong links with the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum and continues to strengthen those links by working closely with them. The Chair of the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum is a member of the Short Breaks Steering Group to ensure the parent/carer views are represented. For further information on the Nottinghamshire Parent/Carer Forum please click on this link [Notts Parent Carer Forum \(nottspcf.org\)](http://nottspcf.org)

What parents and carers say about their child's short break in 2020/2021

We now can function as a family. My child gets a break from his brother and manages to do some activities without worrying about his autistic brother.

My son discovered he was great at table football, and we never knew.

Short breaks has helped my son access activities he wouldn't be able to do and give him the confidence to start doing things with other people and not mainly with his parent.

Having the service has helped us immensely. Having two children with special needs is not an easy job and having the flexible short breaks support has made a massive difference to us and to the boys.

My child is taking part in activities independently. He is developing friendships. I have been able to spend some much-needed quality time with my other child.

6

Short breaks offer during the Covid 19 pandemic

During Covid 19 Nottinghamshire County Council has continued to give families access to short breaks, however the availability of the providers was seriously impacted by the pandemic. As a result, an alternative offer of support was developed in the way of a cash payment. Following the initial lockdown a survey was conducted with parent/carers and young people, and consequently the offer was changed to support families in a more flexible way.

These comments demonstrate the value of short breaks offer.

- My lessons have continued online and this has actually been better than in person.
- The restriction of my child's physical exercise and contact with other people, and reduction of 'experiences' such as horse-riding, theme parks and theatre trips has affected him immensely.
- The lack of routine and being unable to go out and visit places has been very stressful. Some days were good and others my child had constant meltdowns.
- It was hard to explain that she couldn't go anywhere. To begin with the change was hard and caused lots of meltdowns.





How our short breaks are delivered

Nottinghamshire County Council currently (December 2021) supports 1,244 children, young people, and their families, through the short breaks scheme. Direct payments are provided to 965 children and young people, split between 965 children/young people receive direct payments (DP), split between 693 receiving funding to access activities and 272 who use their DP to employ a Personal Assistant (PA). Directly commissioned provider services are provided to 279 children and young people from a council approved provider, and 226 children and young people split their funding and receive a mix of the above.

Since the launch of the new short break offer in September 2018, which was developed to ensure all families eligible for a short break have access to one, the council has maintained its breadth of offer in terms of the number of children and young people who access a short break, but many of these now receive larger packages.

As of September 2021, there has been an increase of 18% in new applications compared to the previous six months.

Children and Young People Accessing Short Breaks

	April 19 - April 20	April 20 - April 21
Total number of children accessing short breaks	1007	1000
Total number of children accessing the standard offer of 24 hours per year	114	155
Total number of new applications received through Firmsteps	373	303
Total number of boys accessing short breaks	684	671
Total number of girls accessing short breaks	323	329

Reviews

The Short Breaks Assessment and Review Team currently (December 2021) has a cohort of 767 children and young people that are accessing a short break of over 96 hours, that need reviewing annually.

In addition, the team receives a number of referrals from the Children’s Disability Service. These children and young people no longer require a Tier 4 service from

social care, but their short breaks packages need to be reviewed annually. These referrals, known as step-downs, have increased by 85% since November 2018.

Due to the increasing numbers of reviews required, the Team has received additional funding to increase its staffing. This has meant the amount of money available for short breaks has not been reduced.

8

Short break service financial spend for 2020/2021

Provider service spend	£379,146.00
Direct payment	£1,089,024.00
Total annual expenditure	£1,468,170.00

Staffing costs

The team consists of 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager, 3 FTE Reviewing Officers, 2 FTE Assessment Officers, 1 FTE Service Organiser, 1 FTE Business Support Officer and 0.4 Service Organiser Assistant. Total staffing costs for 2020/2021 are £268,699.

Message 2:

- Requests for personal care support e.g., assistance with toileting needs has increased.
- Demand for short breaks significantly increases from the age of eleven and throughout the teenage years.
- Short break provider services are predominantly being accessed by males (69%) compared to females (31%).
- In terms of the SEN Primary Need of children and young people accessing provider services, over half of (54%) are children or young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, followed by Other Difficulty/Disability (36%), Physical Disability (26%) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (21%).



9 Provider feedback

There are currently 24 commissioned providers on the short breaks' framework, ranging from charities to private social care organisations.

The Mill Adventure Base is one of the commissioned providers. The project is aimed at children and young people with learning disabilities and additional support needs who have been identified as being entitled to commissioned short breaks hours.

Staff at the Mill have shared some of the positive encounters that our children and young people have experienced.



"Short Breaks at the Mill Adventure Base has been a wonderful programme that has allowed our staff to meet and work with a number of truly inspiring young people."

"Short Breaks never feels like work; instead it is something to look forward to at the end of each week, a chance to catch up with how our friends have been getting on at school since we last saw them, and an opportunity to see these young people grow in confidence and ability."

"As project lead, a very pleasant surprise was seeing just how much these young people have come to care for and support one-another. To any outside observer, the group would seem like they've been friends for years, rather than only having met a handful of times since Spring."

"The staff who work on short breaks with me have brought with them a great deal of experience with young people, and skill in different adventurous activities; this has allowed us all to see tremendous growth in all of the participants with us. Before the summer break, we saw one young person finally conquer the zipline; last week, for the first time, one of our young people attended a session without their dad there to support; and, week on week, we have one brave young person building up the confidence to take the 12-metre leap from our quick-flight."

10 Future developments

1. The Short Break Assessment and Review Team will continue to review and develop internal processes to improve the outcomes for the children and young people accessing the service.
2. The Council will continue to work with both existing and potential providers to develop short breaks provision across the whole of the county to meet the current identified areas of needs and to address gaps in provision. Providers will continue to be engaged through market development discussions and meetings, and provider workshops.
3. A short breaks market position statement was recently produced, which provide an informed baseline for discussions between providers and the council. The statement offers key market intelligence to providers by highlighting the short break provision that the council wishes to commission in the future, and this will be reviewed and updated next year to reflect changing needs.
4. A short breaks newsletter has been produced to keep those families eligible for short breaks up to date with the latest developments in service provision across the county and to share any other relevant short breaks information. In the future, the aim is to produce the newsletter on a quarterly basis.



Comments from young people attending community short breaks:

The Snowdome trip was the best day of my whole life, and the panto was the funniest thing ever.

You just get it, you get us.

I really enjoyed the escape room night at the laurels and can we go to on a trip to one in real life.

I love going out with my carer and going to the youth club.

I love the short breaks, I wouldn't know what to do without them, its something I can do ,I don't get judged, I can be myself and people there understand me.

I love coming to The Laurels, meeting new friends, and hanging out with my mates doing Christmassy stuff like the Christmas quiz.

I like talking about stuff with my carer.

I enjoy going to see the horses and going out riding with some other children.



Further information

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