



## **Suffolk County Council Short Break Duty Services Statement 2015 reviewed and updated 2017/18**

### **Introduction and Background**

To comply with the Children & Young Person's Act 2008 Suffolk Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide a range of short breaks to meet the needs, wants and wishes of disabled children and young people to enable their parents and carers to receive regular breaks from caring. Later the Short Break Regulations 2011 made it a requirement for all local authorities to publish a Short Break Duty Statement.

The Short Break Duty Statement is a guide for parents and carers of disabled children and young people and their families. It includes:

- Details of the range of services available in the local area for disabled children and young people and their families
- How the services respond to the needs of parents and carers
- How services can be accessed including their eligibility criteria.

For more details see Information Sheet 1.

## **What are short breaks?**

Short breaks enable disabled children and young people to take part in fun exciting activities. They give parents / carers and their families a valuable break from their caring responsibilities. In Suffolk we believe the short breaks should also support families to do things together.

The short breaks may take place afterschool, in the evenings, at weekends including overnight, in the school holidays, and can offer any kind of activity, or tailored befriending support. Short breaks are available to all disabled children and young people and young adults, up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

A range of specialist residential short breaks are available for disabled children and young people with complex needs who have been referred to the Disabled Children and Young People's Social Work Service and in most cases, have a named Social Worker.

## **How do I access Short Breaks?**

You do **not** need a Social Worker to access Activities Unlimited. If you are seeking a break from your caring responsibilities, then this is all you need to do.

- 1.** Register with the Activities Unlimited service by visiting the website [www.activities-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.activities-unlimited.co.uk) and clicking Join Us. You will be asked to complete some basic details about you, your child and family.
- 2.** You now have instant membership to AU and the range of short break activities and support on offer. You can search and book for breaks on our website or directly with individual providers. Based on the enrolment information you provide the website can make suggestions about activities of interest in your area.
- 3.** A range of short break provision can also be accessed via Customer First 0808 800 4005. The information you provide will be reviewed and your child's case can be referred to AU, or if appropriate your child's needs can be considered for a statutory assessment undertaken by the Disabled Children's and Young Peoples Social Work Service. The AU service is still accessible if you receive a social work service.

## **For more details see Information Sheet 5**

All activities promoted on the website will charge a fee for children and young people to attend. This is because they are either a mainstream provider who are already offering activities at a cost and would like to offer their services to disabled children and young people, or they receive investment from the Local Authority and adhere to Suffolk County Councils pricing strategy.

## **For more details see Information Sheet 2**

If you are unable to access the internet we can assist you to register your details and enrol over the phone.

### **How can I get a short break offer?**

Once you have registered your child or young person with the Activities Unlimited service you will receive a letter informing you of Suffolk County Council's Short Break Offer. The offer is dependent on your self-assessment of you and your child's support needs. We may be in touch to clarify information that is provided.

There are 3 short break offers available:

- Membership Offer
- Short Break Offer
- Short Break Offer Plus

Your offer is valid for one financial year and subject to an annual review and we will notify when you are required to undertake this.

**For more details see Information Sheet 3.**

### **What short break provision is available in Suffolk?**

Activities Unlimited is Suffolk County Council's Short Break Service and referred to by most families and professionals as AU. An interactive website supports the service providing information and advice about Suffolk's short break service provision [www.activities-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.activities-unlimited.co.uk).

Parents and carers of a child, or young person with a disability can enrol for the AU service, regardless of their level of need, or the services they are in receipt of. Once enrolled disabled children and young people become a member of AU and can then search the Activities Unlimited website, where they can choose and book from a wide range of leisure activities.

### **How are decisions made about commissioning short break services?**

We are committed to offering high quality short break services in response to the needs, wants and wishes of families with disabled children and young people in Suffolk. The commissioning of short break services is via a robust grant funding process and final decisions are made by a multi-agency panel which includes parents and carers. As the AU service continually evolves and develops, often in response to changes to government legislation, we consult and engage with our stakeholders (parent carers, disabled children and young people, providers and practitioners) to keep families at the heart of everything we do.

**For more details see Information Sheet 4.**

### **Can I use short breaks for childcare?**

We understand that some working parents will access some of the short break activities to provide some of the childcare working parents might need. However, we would not expect a Short Break Offer to be spent wholly on childcare, Suffolk County Council has alternative services for [childcare provision](#).

## **What about transport?**

Parents are responsible for transporting their children to events and activities or for making alternative arrangements. We commission local activities to reduce the need for transport although as Suffolk is a very rural area this is not always possible. With this in mind if families are in receipt of an Activities Unlimited Short Break Offer or Short Break Offer Plus, they can use a percentage towards transport costs for their child to attend activities. If you are in receipt of mobility allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment you should use this to support your child's transport needs.

## **Information Sheet 1: Short break Duty Statement**

The following legislation underpins the responsibilities of all local authorities to provide short breaks for disabled children and their families:

- The Children & Young Person's Act 2008
- The Short Break Regulations 2011 - Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 - all Local Authorities are required to publish a Short Break Duty Services Statement from 1st October 2011 and undertake an annual review.
- The Equality Act 2010
- SEND Reforms 2014
- Children's & Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014

The Short Break Duty Statement must be a published assessment of the services provided to support families of disabled children and young people linked to individual local authorities Children & Young Peoples Plan, and kept under review.

Underlying principles are:

- Short breaks to be additional to universal provision.
- Short breaks should be preventative – not just a crisis intervention.
- Short breaks should support carers and provide respite.
- Short breaks should improve outcomes for disabled children, young people and their families.
- Short break services should consider siblings as part of a family assessment.
- Short breaks are personal to individual need.

## **Co-production**

Co-production happens when service providers and service users recognise the benefits of working in true partnership with each other. This process is adopted 'from the start', when planning, developing, implementing, or reviewing a service. It means that all the right people are around the table right from the beginning of an idea, and that they are involved equally to:

- Shape, design, develop, implement and review services.
- Work together right from the start of the process, through to the end.

Consultation is not the same as co-production. A stage of consultation can be part of an overall co-production process. It usually occurs after the early stages of co-production have been completed.

## **This definition was co-produced with the Suffolk Parent Carer Network. Publication and Review**

We will ensure that our Short Breaks Services Statement is published on the following websites:

- Suffolk SEND Local Offer
- Activities Unlimited
- Suffolk County Council website

The Short Break Duty Statement can be provided in accessible formats on request (please contact us to discuss your requirements), and in community languages to meet the needs of our local population. We will ensure that the Suffolk County Council workforce and that of its partner agencies is made aware of this important document that underpins our short break provision and commitment to disabled children and young people and their families. The Short Break Duty Statement is integral to Suffolk's SEND Local Offer and will be reviewed annually in partnership with disabled children and young people, the Suffolk Parent Carer Network, and associated parent forums to make sure that it reflects all the views and choices of our families.

## **Information Sheet 2: Short Break Service - Activities Unlimited**

We recognise that short breaks are a priority for families and should be delivered as part of a broader package of family support services. All recent research indicates the need for early intervention therefore our short break services need to be timely, appropriate and accessible. The promotion of family unity underpins the development of Suffolk County Council's Short Break services.

## **What does AU provide?**

AU caters for a wide range of needs and the activities promoted at concessionary prices are comparable to the activities in universal settings. Examples being leisure centres offering swimming sessions for all the family, sports, dance, music, technology & media opportunities. Parents and carers need to take into consideration their disabled children's support needs, as they may have to take someone along with them. There are details on the website about the levels of support available for individual activities, which include information about group sizes, staffing ratios, training and experience to help families choose what is suitable. Parents and carers and disabled children and young people have access to a regular school holiday programme detailing the short break activities available throughout the holiday periods. A star rating is used in the programme to give an indication of the level of support available in each activity. On registration and completion of the self-assessment questionnaire, families may be offered a funded award dependent on the needs of their child and the need of the parent carer.

Funding can be used to:

- Access activities
- Purchase certain types of leisure equipment
- Purchase occasional one to one support to access activities via an agency, or organisation.
- A contribution towards a family day out.

## **For more details see Information Sheet 3**

Our short break services supporting disabled children, young people and their families include:

Out of school leisure activities – inclusive and specialist breaks during the week and weekends

School holiday leisure activities – universal (inclusive) and specialist

Overnight short breaks through residential and Family Link Services

Specialist assessment overnight breaks to determine the support needs of disabled children with more complex needs, and to identify activities that better encourage progression.

Activities for the family unit + Befriending + Personal (individual) Budgets and Direct Payments

## **At the Centre of AU**

The AU Service works with providers to offer a range of activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs in Suffolk up to the age of 25 years. At the hub of the service is the Activities Unlimited website, which houses the interactive database, storing information relating to the numbers of disabled children and young people in Suffolk, and their profile of need, this is also known as 'Suffolk's Disability Register'. The database also enables commissioners to identify new trends

in the needs of disabled children and gaps in services. Our engagement programme with parents and carers and disabled young people is then able to work in co-production in the co-design of new services to respond to the emerging need.

### **AU Quality Assurance**

Ensuring safe, quality services for children and young people with additional needs. Our approach to quality assurance has evolved through continuous quality improvement, including regular consultation with parents, carers, providers of leisure services and young people. Parents, carers and young people rightly want to access appropriate, safe settings, with competent staff. Providers of leisure services must meet our entry level standard (Provider Approval) in order to be promoted on the Activities Unlimited website. Any providers who secure grant funding from Activities Unlimited are required to complete a comprehensive safeguarding self-assessment form, providing evidence of compliance before funding is released

### **Types of Short Breaks**

AU promotes a range of mainstream activities on the Activities Unlimited website, a child or young person may need to take along additional support to some of these. Additionally, AU has brokered and commissioned a range of specialist provision. In response to what families have told us they want through annual surveys, face to face meetings, social media and support groups. The provision is funded by local authority grants.

Our grant funding does not directly support 1-1 work, however, a wide range of our subsidised activities offer tiered pricing, which allows families to purchase the support appropriate for their child's young person's needs.

### **Specialist Activity Breaks**

Providers are invited annually to submit applications for funding to provide short break activities. The AU team work alongside each provider to scrutinise and review each application to ensure they meet the requirements of the short break strategy, and are cost effective and of a high quality. The team then present the applications to a multi-disciplinary panel including parent carer representatives, professionals from Suffolk County Council associated departments who make final decisions about the allocations. To encourage sustainability of these services Suffolk has a pricing policy which requires each provider to consider a charge to families and offset this against their total amount of funding applied for.

Grant funded providers are asked to submit quarterly data detailing numbers of attendance along with the customers AU ID numbers. We use this data to inform the grant process as it provides valuable evidence of need.

### **Link Family Short Break Service**

The Link Service provides families with the option to access a family based short break whilst their disabled child visits formally approved foster carers, either for a short break during the day, or an overnight stay. Access to the service is based on

the disabled child's assessed level of need. This short break is accessed through the Disabled Children and Young Peoples Social Work Service.

### **Residential Short Break Service**

A small range of services are contracted from providers who specialise in the support and care of children and young people with complex health conditions, and / or challenging behaviour. These short break services are accessed through the Disabled Children and Young Peoples Social Work Service. Children and young people referred for these breaks have their needs considered by a Short Break & Resource Panel of health and social care professionals. It is usual for these children to receive a specialist overnight break first where the provider assesses their support needs.

### **Specialist Assessments**

In some instances, children and young people who are referred for regular overnight breaks are allocated a specialist assessment service.

- An overnight specialist assessment break. This offers families who may not feel confident to send a child or young person to an overnight break a chance to "try it out" with a small compatible group in a highly supported setting.

### **Disability Awareness & Activity Provision**

The Activities Unlimited service is on hand to support providers to find and access training to upskill and develop their staff to support disabled children and young people. The service assists the providers to apply for grant funding from a range of sources in addition to the Council to purchase equipment and fund adaptations to their buildings. AU believes this support enables providers of activities and services to support inclusion and contribute to the health and wellbeing, growth and development, enjoyment and achievement of disabled children and young people and their families.

### **Information sheet 3 Eligibility**

We wish to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of our disabled children and young people so that they can fully participate in family life and the communities in which they live. To prevent family crisis parent carers need the right level of support at the right time, this takes into account their individual family circumstances. The services available to them need to be fair, clear and equitable, and linked to local needs identified within Suffolk's Carers Needs Assessment. Our Short Break funded offers are available to children and young people in Suffolk up to the age of 18 years, who have disabilities. Disabled young people between the ages of 19 and 25 can continue to access activities as detailed in the AU Membership Offer. Suffolk County Council's Offer to disabled children and young people is based on 3 defined levels of need.

### **Short Break Membership Offer**

Is awarded to children and young people who require information, advice and guidance about the range of inclusive leisure activities available within their communities. These children and young people are able to attend all of the activities listed on the website and access them at the concessionary price however have needs that do not require leisure providers to make more than reasonable adjustments to their environment or, require support from a one to one carer to enable their participation in activities.

From April 2016 we have introduced Max Cards into our introductory membership offer for families, the Max Cards are discount cards for families to access attractions within the UK for reduced rates.

### **Short Break Offer**

Is awarded to children and young people who can only access leisure activities when the provider has a skilled and competent work force and has made more than the required reasonable adjustments to their environment to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. The award enables these children to purchase all the services available under the Membership Offer at a concessionary price. The award can be taken as:

- A Direct Payment or;
- As a Personal Account, whereby funding is held by the local authority and services are arranged on the family's behalf or;
- A Managed Account where the funding is held by an independent Direct Payment Support Provider.

The award is based on the needs identified within the on-line self-assessment and will be reviewed annually or, as children and their family's needs change.

Additionally, information, advice and guidance are provided about the range of leisure activities available within their communities suitable to their level of need.

### **Short Break Plus**

Is awarded to children and young people who can only access leisure activities when the provider has a skilled and competent work force, and has made more than the required reasonable adjustments to their environment to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act; and depending on the skill base of the provider may need to be accompanied by a one to one carer. The award enables these children to purchase all the services available under the Membership Offer at a concessionary price, and to use this flexibly to pay for a one to one carer depending on the skill base of the provider. The award can be taken as:

- A Direct Payment or;
- A Personal Account, where funding is held by the local authority and services are arranged on the family's behalf or;
- A Managed Account where the funding is held by an independent Direct Payment Support Provider.

The award is based on the needs identified within the on-line self-assessment and will be reviewed annually or, as children and their family's needs change.

Both of the above offers enable children to purchase the services available under the Membership offer at a subsidised price.

These offers can be taken as:

- A Direct Payment or;
- A Personal Allowance, whereby funding is held by the local authority and services are arranged on the family's behalf or;
- A Managed Account where the funding is held by an independent Direct Payment Support Provider.

The offer is based on the needs identified within the online self-assessment and will be reviewed annually or, as children and their family's needs change. Additionally, information, advice and guidance are provided about the range of leisure activities available within communities suitable to level of need.

#### **Information Sheet 4: Consultation & Engagement**

As part of its commitment to co-production AU has developed a variety of methods used to gather the views of disabled children and young people, parent and carers, professionals and voluntary organisations to inform service strategies and development.

- Regular ongoing consultation and engagement tools:
- Parent/carers, professionals and children and young people are encouraged to offer general feedback and views about short breaks via Activities Unlimited
- E-news, Social Media and website
- A periodic family survey asks specific questions about short break services.
- A periodic provider survey collates views of providers about the support they receive from the brokerage service informing development to gain the best outcomes for families.
- The short break grant application process includes specific questions which require providers to details how they will develop their service in line with customer feedback and need.
- Attendance of parent/carer representatives at strategic steering group meetings.
- Parent / Carers regularly attends multi-disciplinary meetings regarding short break commissioning decisions and monitoring of services.

#### **How We Measure Outcomes**

Suffolk County Council has laid out a set of local outcomes that we expect our short break services to achieve, aligned with families' expectations, underpinned by national short break government legislation and guidance.

- To contribute to the monitoring of these outcomes we ask families to complete an online annual survey. We ask families for their views in relation to the outcomes listed below. The results are collated and analysed to inform future commissioning and development.
- Family outcomes include better family unity, more enjoyable places to visit as a family and improved relationships.

- Child and young person outcomes include choice, engagement, improved confidence and independence, making friends and improved sibling relationships.
- Parent carer outcomes includes more time for themselves, education, hobbies and social activities. Quality time with siblings and other family members, better able to cope and improvements in health and wellbeing.

### **Information Sheet 5: How to access further support**

How to request support through the Disabled Children & Young Peoples Social Work Team

If you are accessing short break services through Activities Unlimited and feel your needs and the needs of your child are not being met, you can ask for a statutory social care assessment.

Your details will be passed to the Disabled Children and Young Peoples Social Work Service and a Social worker will contact you. The AU Service work together with the Disabled children and Young Peoples Social Work Team to ensure families are receiving the correct level of service to achieve the best possible outcomes. If you are receiving funding from one service this will be taken into consideration if you apply to, or are escalated to the other.

There are circumstances where families may be in receipt of support from both services, which is taken into consideration when a further assessment is undertaken by the social worker.

[A flow chart on the Local Offer website](#) explains the referral pathway to access Disabled Children and Young People's services. For the threshold guidance for children and young people with a disability in Suffolk please see [this document on the Local Offer website](#).

To request a Social Care Statutory Assessment, contact Customer First Service on 0808 800 4005. More information on Social Care can be found on the [Local Offer website](#).

### **Information Sheet 6: Personal budgets**

In line with the government's personalisation agenda and the introduction of the SEND Reforms it has been agreed that self-directed support and personal budgets will be implemented within social care services for children young people. A Personal Budget is an amount of funding made available to support a child or young person with disabilities and additional needs to achieve their aspirations and agreed outcomes. Families could be offered a personal budget through an Education Health and Care Plan, or through another form of assessment, i.e. a social care assessment.

There are three ways in which you can receive the Personal Budget:

1. You can choose to take the personal budget as a direct payment and manage it yourself, you can choose to have your direct payment as a pre-paid card (with options for support to do this). You can choose to have a split payment
2. You can ask a third-party service or organisation to manage your personal budget on your behalf.
3. You can ask the local authority to manage it on your behalf.

If you would like more general information on personal budgets you contact the AU Service and a team member will be on hand to offer you advice and information.

### [Suffolk County Council Personal Budget Policy](#)

#### **Personal Budget Support Service**

If you receive a personal health budget or a budget through social care:

1. You may choose to take some or all of it as a Direct Payment and use it to pay someone to look after your child or young person.
2. This means that you will become that person's employer and have certain responsibilities.
3. This option suits some people as it gives much more choice and control.

Below is a list of the things you may need to do:

- Initial recruitment – advertise and interview etc.
- Employment set up – organise employment contract,
- purchase liability insurance, register with HMRC etc.
- Payroll – set up a payroll system Managed (Supported Accounts) Monitoring and Record Keeping Ongoing Support

The AU service can provide information to help you with your decision.

For more details visit the [Activities Unlimited website](#).

#### **Information Sheet 7: Moving into adulthood**

There are a number of opportunities available via the Activities Unlimited website, offering short break opportunities for those young people moving into more age appropriate activities. Many of these offer life skills and volunteering opportunities to help with their progression into adulthood. Examples of these are the "Teaming Up" service, where young people from the age of 16 to 25 choose where they would like to visit for days out, and help to arrange this whilst also receiving support with money handling and travel arrangements.

There is a dedicated Moving into Adulthood section on the Activities Unlimited website, where providers can promote their services specific to young people of this age group.

#### **Contact Us**

Activities Unlimited Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Floor 4 Gold, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

[www.activities-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.activities-unlimited.co.uk)

**Other useful resources:**

[Emotional & Wellbeing Gateway](#)

[MENCAP](#)

[National Autistic Society \(NAS\)](#)

[Scope](#)

[SENDIASS](#)

[Suffolk Infolink](#)

[Suffolk Local Offer](#)

[Suffolk OnBoard](#)

[Suffolk Parent Carer Network](#)

[Suffolk Parent CPD](#)

[Young Carers](#)