



# **Short Breaks Policy** for adults with care and support needs

**Communities, Health & Adult Social Care**

**Contact Officer: Adam Willison**

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If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the Communications Team at County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1YU  
Tel: 01296 382444 Email: [communications@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:communications@buckscc.gov.uk)

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<b>Owner</b>	Jane Bowie
<b>Author</b>	Susie Yapp/Adam Willison
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## **Introduction and purpose**

1. The Short Breaks Policy for adults sets out:

- our approach to providing short breaks to adults with care and support needs; including older people and adults with a learning, mental, sensory or physical disability and their carers
- what adults with care and support needs; including older people and adults with a learning, mental, sensory or physical disability and their families and carers can expect from Buckinghamshire County Council in the context of their assessed need for a short break
- how we can determine the most appropriate short break to meet identified needs

2. This policy has been developed in the context of our Short Breaks and Better Lives Strategies 2018-2022, with the intention of enabling service users to remain as independent as possible and reduce their reliance on formal care.

## **Developing the Policy**

3. We have worked with service users, their families, carers and professionals and our colleagues in children's services to determine what our strategy should be for supporting people who need short breaks.

4. As a result, we developed our Buckinghamshire Adult Short Breaks Strategy 2018-22. The Strategy contains a set of principles which will underpin the development of our Short Breaks Policy for Adults.

5. Our Strategy sets out our approach to the provision of Short Breaks in Buckinghamshire where we want: -

- people to be able to access a wide range of short break options, close to where they live, creating more opportunities for carers and vulnerable adults to build networks that connect them to the communities they live in.
- to provide services that are sustainable and provide value for money in order to meet growth in both current and future need – and that the money we have for short breaks is spent where there is the most need
- people who need to use short breaks to be treated fairly and consistently

6. Using the principles in the Strategy to guide us, we have developed this policy which sets out how we will make decisions about who gets a short break and what that short break may be.

## **Consultation and participation**

7. The views of service users and carers have been key in the development of the strategy and this policy and will continue to form part of our ongoing work in this area.

8. These are some of the ways we have involved them: -

- 6 week public consultation for strategy, utilising multiple channels of communication (117 responses)
- 10 week public consultation for policy, utilising multiple channels of communication (88 responses)
- 5 strategy drop in sessions at key locations across the county (30 attendees)
- 5 focus groups across the county, with independently invited users and carers and independent facilitation (26 attendees)
- 2 service user focus groups led by local service user advocacy provider (16 attendees)
- Engaged with local support and advocacy groups for feedback and advice
- Presented at Carers and Learning Disability Partnership Boards

9. This is some of what service users and carers have told us about short breaks: -

- There was broad support for all the principles and approaches in the strategy
- The importance of recognising the impact of caring on carers and supporting them well in order to maintain their caring roles
- It is important that staff delivering short breaks have the right skills and training and meet the needs of service users
- The importance of alignment and consistency of provision when transitioning from Children's Services into Adult Social Care or Health.

### **What do we mean by a Short Break?**

10. Short breaks can include day, evening, overnight or weekend activities. These could take place in your home, in the home of an approved carer or in a residential or community setting and would be constructed with regards to the support being provided by the carer.

11. Short breaks may be taken in a range of services, some of which are open to the general public, through to overnight or residential services.

12. Short Breaks give older people and adults with care and support needs an opportunity to:

- Make new friends
- Learn new skills
- Develop independence
- Relax, have fun and reduce loneliness

13. Short Breaks also help families and carers to:

- Take a break from their caring responsibilities
- Rest, unwind and spend time with other family members
- Provide the right support at the right time
- Build their family resilience

14. When we are talking about a short break, we mean a greater and more flexible range of breaks for adults. As detailed in our strategy, short breaks broadly fall into 3 categories; universal, targeted and eligibility based.

- Universal short breaks are breaks that are available through resources in the local community that anyone can access. This could include activities at leisure centres, community centres, faith groups and voluntary organisations, or even general access council services. The organisation who provides the activity may charge while others may be free.
- Targeted short breaks are often available through resources that have been designed to meet a specific needs of a particular group of people, for example older people, people living with dementia, people with autism or hard to reach groups. They are often funded by grants from the Council or the NHS and include things like cafes, support groups and luncheon clubs. Again the organisation who provides the activity may charge while others may be free.
- Eligibility based short breaks are for people who have care and support needs which cannot be met by universal or targeted short breaks and where the person with care needs or their carer are eligible for support. For the person with social care needs they will usually have a financial assessment and may need to pay towards the cost of the break. If eligible for financial support, people will have the choice of taking a Direct Payment so that they can buy the support that suits them best.

15. Activities that fall under these categories may form part of a regular package of care the service user receives.

16. Carers may also need a short break in order to enable them to do the things they need to do, but would not be able to because of their caring responsibilities. For example, being able to spend quality time with other family members, or attend medical appointments.

17. Short breaks are different for different people and are linked to an assessment of their needs. This is because requirement for short breaks are dependent on the specific needs of the cared for person or the carer.

18. Although this policy applies to people over the age of 18, including older people and adults with a learning, mental, sensory or physical disability, it does not sit in isolation. It has been developed alongside our partners in Health and the Children's Services Short Breaks offer, to ensure that young people have a smooth transition into appropriate adult services. Our Transitions Team will work with them to ensure this is the case.

## **Access to short breaks**

19. Short breaks can be accessed by adults with care and support needs and their carers through an assessment process with the Council, where details of available services will be discussed. Alternatively, they can be accessed without involvement from the Council for those people who fund their own care using various information sources e.g. [www.careadvicebuckinghamshre.org](http://www.careadvicebuckinghamshre.org)

## **Legal & Policy Context and Policy Scope**

20. The need for short breaks is covered under the wellbeing and prevention principles of the Care Act 2014. Anyone who appears to require care and support and their carers are statutorily entitled to an assessment under the Care Act, which will determine whether a person is eligible for support, including a short break.

21. Where a person has a carer who is eligible for an assessment, the carer's need for a short break will be automatically assessed alongside that of the disabled person.

22. Any care plan for the adult with care and support needs, and/or carer's support plan which are produced following an assessment will, so far as possible, integrate and coordinate the assessed needs of both the adult with care and support needs and the carer(s).

23. This policy applies to all adults assessed as eligible for care and support ('service users') and carers in accordance with Care Act 2014 (Part 1, Sections 9, 10, 12 & 13). This policy also links to the Adult Social Care 'Better Lives' Transformation Strategy.

24. The objectives set out in the Adult Short Breaks Strategy are:

- support vulnerable adults to develop independence, learn new skills, make new friends and reduce loneliness
- support carers with their caring responsibilities
- involve vulnerable adults and their families with decisions
- be certain staff are qualified and skilled to deliver services
- make sure services are safe and high quality
- provide short breaks that meet the needs of carers and vulnerable adults
- provide the right mix of universal, targeted and specialist support
- make sure access to short breaks is fair and priority is give to those in most need
- improve the quality of short breaks and achieve good value for money
- help people to try new things, be innovative and achieve good outcomes

25. The Short Breaks Strategy for children and adults may differ in some instances due to differing legislative requirements, however, they have been designed to promote a smooth transition between services.

### **Principles of policy**

26. The following principles apply to any short breaks request:

26.1. Someone is assessed as needing a short break following a service user or carers' assessment; If the service is for the carer, then it is not chargeable, as we don't charge carers. If the service is for the cared for it is chargeable.

26.2. Following assessment, assessed needs and how they will be met, will be set out in a person's individual Support Plan;

26.3. The Council has an obligation under the Care Act 2014 to meet identified assessed needs, including providing, commissioning, or funding short breaks for service users to meet the needs of that person and/or carer(s).

26.4. Short breaks will be appropriate, high quality, provided by suitably skilled and trained personnel.

26.5. The Council will endeavour to source placements as close to the service user and carer's home as possible;

26.6. Travel assistance to access short breaks will only be provided if this is identified as an assessed need;

26.7. If the service user or carer requests a preferred short breaks placement that is more expensive than that determined by the Council, they will need to pay the top up to meet this request; (The difference between the cost of their chosen short break and the cost at which the Council can procure a short break to meet their needs).

26.8. The Care and Support plan will be reviewed at regular intervals (6 week and annual review) to determine whether the service provision, including short breaks, continues to meet assessed needs;

### **Short Break Options**

27. For many people, the need for a short break can be suitably met from a menu of day time short break opportunities lasting for a few hours, up to a full day. For some, the most suitable option will be a personal assistant to accompany them to access universal or specialised services for people with a range of disabilities, or to provide personal care and support in their own home during the day. For others with more complex needs, or who require a high level of support from their carers, a break will be important to allow the carer or family member to recharge their batteries, or to allow the cared for person a chance to have a different day to day experience

outside their family home. For some, an overnight stay in a residential short breaks facility will be the most appropriate option.

28. The level of a short breaks intervention offered will reflect the impact of the caring responsibility on the carer and the cared for. A range of factors will be taken into account including:-

- If care provided is physically demanding
- The level of support someone requires when they are awake
- If the carer is required to wake at night to provide care during the night
- Extent of sleep disruption and ability or otherwise to manage this
- Level of complexity and behaviours, e.g. someone who cannot be left alone
- Whether the carer is a single carer
- The potential impact on the wider family.
- What other support the family may receive

### **Overnight Residential Short Breaks**

29. Overnight residential short breaks may form part of the Short Breaks offer for an individual. At assessment, if there is evidence of need for residential short breaks in excess of 28 nights per annum, these will need to be approved by the relevant Director on a case by case basis and be subject to an annual review. Allocation for each case will be dependent on the outcome of an assessment and individual need.

30. Overnight short breaks, whether in a residential setting, Shared Lives<sup>1</sup> or using a Personal Assistant in ones' own home, are mainly agreed where a carer is assessed as requiring this type of short break. Following assessment, cases will be considered depending on individual circumstances and requirements and the extent of the impact on the carer. Those carers who support individuals with very complex needs and/or behaviours which challenge are likely to require a greater level of short breaks. Consideration for overnight short breaks will also be given in relation to family resilience.

### **Personal Budgets**

31. The funding for short breaks is included in the service user's Personal Budget. This is how much the council thinks it will cost to provide the care needed to meet the identified needs for short breaks of a service user. The amount of money in a Personal Budget will be determined after the assessment and support planning, where suitable services to meet the identified needs are agreed between the service user, carers and family.

### **Financial Contributions**

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<sup>1</sup> Shared Lives is a way of providing accommodation, care and support for vulnerable adults, in the ordinary family homes of carefully selected, trained and supported Shared Lives carers.

32. The service user will be financially assessed against the policies detailed below to see whether or not they will need to contribute towards the cost of their care.

33. The charging policy for residential services applies when the short break is taken in the form of an overnight service. If the short break is taken in the form of a service not involving overnight, then the non-residential charging policy applies.

34. More detail on charging can be found in the following links: -

- <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/4514267/chasc-charging-policy-residential-services-v113.pdf>
- <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/4514268/chasc-charging-policy-non-residential-v113.pdf>
- [Choice and Top Up Policy](#)
- [Direct Payment Policy](#)
- [Assessing and Supporting Your Needs](#)

### **Unplanned Short Breaks (e.g. in an emergency)**

35. Occasionally, unplanned access to short breaks may be required when the usual carer is unavailable at short notice, for example if they are unwell, leading to a potential breakdown in caring arrangements. Where a needs assessment identifies that a carer is providing support, a contingency plan will have been developed as part of the support plan and put in place to provide cover in an emergency. Where there are some concerns about the sustainability of the care arrangements, an appropriate amount of the Personal Budget may be saved for contingency purposes.

36. If a short break is included in a service user's support plan, an alternative care giver may already have been identified. This may for instance be a care home of their choice, which will have already undertaken their own assessment of the service user's needs and can offer the support needed.

37. If no short break is included in the service user's support plan, or if contingency arrangements have failed, the Council will make arrangements with a provider who can provide the type of care needed at short notice. Where the cared for person is not an existing service user, a needs assessment will be undertaken and suitable temporary care arranged.

### **Travel assistance**

38. Most people will not require travel assistance to access short breaks. Service users will be able to use their usual travel methods, by making their own arrangements for transport. Should there be a need for travel assistance to access a short break, this will have been identified during the assessment and how this will be addressed will be detailed within the service user's support plan. In the exceptional circumstance where transport is provided by the Council, the cost would be met by

the Service Users Personal Budget and would be subject to the Council's charging and social care transport policies.

## Conclusion

39. The aim of this policy is to give clarity and better understanding of how respite short breaks will be allocated within Buckinghamshire. It explains the types of provision available and how these could be delivered.

40. The policy aligns with our new Short Breaks and Better Lives Strategies which promote giving people access to a wider selection of services in order to meet their needs and to create more opportunities for them to build self-sustainable networks of support that connect them to the communities they live in.

41. The Policy is in place to give clearer guidance to professionals, service users, carers and the general public.

## Definitions

**Carer:** A carer is someone who provides help and support to a relative or friend who could not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. Paid staff may be called Personal Assistants (PAs), Support Worker, Care Worker, Support Staff, etc.

**Indicative Budget:** Following an assessment, the system produces an Indicative Budget figure to start support planning to meet a person's assessed eligible needs.

**Support Plan:** This is a detailed plan that tells the Council how an individual wishes to use their Personal Budget to meet their assessed eligible needs and improve or maintain their wellbeing. It also sets out how the Council will fulfil its statutory obligations. It is a complete picture of the hopes and aspirations an individual has for their quality of life and allows them to plan their own route to achieving a better quality of life. Support plans must be agreed by the Council before any payments are made.

**Personal Budget:** After support planning, this is the amount of money that the Council agrees is needed to meet an individual's social care needs. An individual can choose to receive their Personal Budget via commissioned services and/or a Direct Payment.

**Direct Payment:** Money paid (in lieu of a commissioned service) to an individual (service user/representative) to purchase care services from a Care Provider of their own choice to help meet their eligible social care needs. The service user/representative can receive their Direct Payment through an online payment system (Virtual Wallet), a pre-payment card or a bank account. Direct Payments offer flexibility, choice and control over how the Personal Budget is used to meet a person's assessed eligible social care needs.

**Charges for short breaks:** This is the amount of money an individual in receipt of the service is required to contribute towards the cost of their short break following a financial assessment.