

Targeted Short Breaks: Frequently Asked Questions

Below are the answers to some frequently asked questions. You can read the short breaks statement and other helpful information by accessing the [Cumbria Local Offer](#).



[Short Break Activities and Overnight Breaks | Cumbria's Family Information Directory](#)

Why the service has changed

1. Why has the Targeted Short Breaks (TSB) service changed?

Our aim has been to make Targeted Short Breaks (TSB) activities available to more children with SEND and ensure that available resources are spread fairly around the county, ensuring equity of access.

This is something Ofsted inspectors told us we needed to do following their Local Area inspection in 2019.

2. How were parents, carers and children involved?

We sought the views from parent carers about this in late 2020 via a series of focus groups and a survey (which included the option for children and young people to give their own views). There was broad support for these principles.

To make these changes we had to change our Short Breaks Statement, which sets out the rules around short breaks. There was engagement with parents about this in spring 2021 and parent carer feedback resulted in changes to our initial proposals. There was also engagement with children and young people supported by our Children and Young People's Rights Officers.

The draft Short Breaks Statement was then opened to formal public consultation between May and August 2021.

3. Why are Targeted Short Breaks activities no longer available from some providers who have delivered the service for a long time?

Our old contracts with short breaks providers were coming to an end. Legally contracts must be for a set period. We therefore had to start a process to let new contracts.

In line with our principles of increasing availability and choice and ensuring equity of access around the county, we changed our approach to how we did this.

Rather than having a small number of long-term contracts with a small number of providers, we invited providers to bid to join a 'framework' of approved providers who would then have opportunity to bid for smaller contracts on a regular basis.

There are currently eight providers on the framework:

- Autus Cumbria Limited
- Barnardo Services Limited
- Bendorrig Trust
- Carlisle Mencap Limited
- Endorphins Group Limited
- The Oaklea Trust
- Sport Works Limited
- West Cumbria Care & Support (West House)

This gives the council more flexibility to contract services that meet the needs of children at that particular time (and that is why children must be re-registered each year, so we can understand what the needs are).

At the moment, there are only two providers delivering TSB activities as part of the new TSB offer, but we fully expect the number of providers and the range and location of activities to increase over time. Right now, we are in a transition phase and we know that is difficult.

4. How did the council choose the two providers currently available via the booking system?

We commission services through a competitive process where provider organisations bid to win contracts to deliver a service which we have defined, and which reflects the needs that parent carers have told us their children have.

Bids are judged on the basis of quality and cost. Quality accounts for 60% of the available marks, cost the remaining 40%.

All bids must meet a minimum threshold for quality before cost is also considered.

This process is common across the country and helps us make sure we get best value from the funding we have available.

As part of the 'quality' section of their bid, providers are required to provide comprehensive answers to questions on following areas - safeguarding, co-production, service design, mobilisation and finance.

There were also three specific questions which were co-produced with parents, carers and young people, where providers have to demonstrate their understanding of the needs of the family.

When we coproduced these questions with families, they also told us what they expected to be included in the answer and we use this to score providers' responses.

Direct Payments

5. What is the relationship between Targeted Short Breaks and Personal Social Care Budgets (Direct Payments)?

TSB activities are available to **all** children who:

- Are ordinarily resident in Cumbria, and
- Have a defined disability, and
- Have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan), and
- Are within the academic year groups Year 1 to Year 13 (at the time of registering for TSB)

All children who have been registered for TSB activities are able to access up to 76 hours provision in a year.

For children who also receive a Personal Social Care Budget (PSCB) following a Child and Family Assessment undertaken by a qualified Social Worker, if the TSB activities are used, then the PSCB will be reduced to reflect that level of use.

Their use of Targeted Short Breaks activities would be recorded on their Support Plan, along with the relevant reduction in PSCB. One hour of TSB activity is generally equated to one hour's worth of the child's PSCB.

If TSB activities are not used, then there is no effect on their PSCB.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Transition to new arrangements

With the implementation of the new TSB framework there will be a transition period from the old to the new system. During that time **all** eligible children will be able to access TSB activities, and for those who also receive a PSCB there will be **no impact** on the PSCB.

This will allow all families to try out the TSB activities offer as it develops, and the range of activities grows.

Our aim is to transition fully to the new arrangements by the start of the 2022/23 school year in September.

During this transition period, we will have individual conversations with families whose children receive PSCBs about their future use of TSB activities and how this could affect their PSCB.

If families wish to continue to use TSB activities, then their child's PSCB will be adjusted to reflect the level of intended use. This will give families clarity about the value of the PSCB going forward and allow them to plan for how it should be spent.

There will be no retrospective adjustment of a child's PSCB.

If this situation applies to your child, in due course you will be contacted your child's Social Worker or, if you do not have a Social Worker, your area Child and Family Worker, to discuss these arrangements.

Contact details are [available on the Local Offer](#).

This approach ensures that there is a fair system for all children across Cumbria.

6. What is the difference between Short Breaks and Overnight Short Breaks?

Targeted Short Breaks are the activities available to all children who meet the eligibility criteria.

Overnight Short Breaks are only available children who have had a Child and Family Assessment undertaken by a qualified social worker which has identified a need for overnight support services.

7. Are we able to use PSCB, or our own funds, to pay for sessions from providers that are not available through the commissioned Targeted Short Break offer?

You can use you own money to pay for any service you like for your child.

You can use Personal Social Care Budget (PSCB) to pay for support services identified in a support plan that you have developed and agreed with the local authority.

New providers

8. How can I find out more about the providers, their staff and how they operate?

Currently there are two providers offering Targeted Short Breaks activities (out of the eight providers on the framework):

- The Oaklea Trust
- The Endorphins Group

There is information about them available via their websites.

<https://oakleatrust.co.uk/>

<https://endorphins.uk/>

We are developing the booking system so that it provides more information, and we will also be adding more information about providers to the short breaks section of the Local Offer.

During development of the new service, we were not able to confirm who the new providers were until legal contracts had been signed. Going forward will try to ensure more notice is provided about new providers of TSB activities.

9. How will my child be supported to transition to a new Targeted Short Breaks provider?

We know this is a significant concern for many parent carers, particularly where a child has been attending the same service for a long time.

Once you have booked onto an activity, and *at least* 48 hours before the activity starting, the provider will contact you and complete a 'get to know you' form with you to help them understand and record your child's needs and preferences.

This is where you can ask questions and the provider will get lots of details about you and your child (or children) who will be going to the activity. The aim here is to start to build a strong relationship.

The details collected by the provider enables them to complete an individual risk assessment for your child.

There will also be the opportunity for follow up calls as well; our providers understand you may have lots of questions and they would encourage you to talk to them directly.

10. Why are there only two providers available to select from, will there be more in future, and will the geographical spread improve?

Through the course of the year, we will invite the eight providers on the framework to bid to deliver activities in each of the county's six districts.

From the first round of bidding, two providers were successful and TSB activities are available to book from them now.

The bidding to deliver activities in February half-term has closed and successful providers will be added to the system soon.

There are currently opportunities open to providers to bid to deliver activities in the Easter holidays and other opportunities for activities to be delivered later in the year will continue to be advertised to all providers on our framework.

We will be engaging with the Parental Advisory Groups through this process to get their input on what services we should be asking providers to deliver.

Recognising that some children will be significantly impacted by these changes, we are currently reviewing whether it would be possible to offer interim TSB activities provision in areas of the county not currently covered by the new providers. We will keep families updated.

11. How are services from West House affected and what do I do now if my child is currently using those services?

West House are part of the new Targeted Short Breaks framework but are not yet delivering activities.

Because West House are on our new provider framework, they will have the choice to bid for future contracts. If they are successful in future bids, then the service they deliver would be a new service, not a continuation of services previously provided.

Separate to their contract with the council, West House may be able to continue to provide a service to children who had been accessing TSB activities from them for a further short period, this should be discussed with them direct.

12. Why has one of the new providers been advertising for staff to provide the service, so close to the service starting?

Endorphins Group are a new provider for Cumbria but well established elsewhere in the country.

In their bid they had to show that they could ensure sufficient numbers of competent staff to deliver the service at all times.

Endorphins Group have been recruiting locally since they were awarded the contract at the start of January. The activity leaders are qualified to Level 3 in a relevant qualification (for example health and social care or childcare and education). All staff complete an enhanced DBS check and complete an induction and training programme before the activities begin. The activities are delivered using a 1:3 staff ratio.

A member of the Endorphins Group senior team attends every session for the first four weeks of each activity to make sure delivery teams are adhering to strict delivery standards. In addition, their Operations and HR Manager undertakes quality assurance visits to all Short Breaks sessions at least every 4 weeks in the first six months of new contracts and 6 weeks thereafter.

In Allerdale there has been more difficulty recruiting staff and recruitment advertising has been continuing. As a result, the start of the new service in Allerdale has been postponed pending completion of staff recruitment.

13. Are the venues that the new providers are using risk assessed for this group of children?

Providers are required to deliver activities from accessible venues throughout Cumbria. The venues are usually local community centres or schools.

Providers will discuss with families whether the needs of their child can safely be met in the premises being used.

If due a child's particular needs there is no service available, please contact shortbreaks@cumbria.gov.uk and we will discuss your situation.

Hours

14. Why does every child have 76 hours provision and what period do we have to use this within?

The 76 hours equates to two hours per week during term-time (or an average of 6 hours per week during school holidays) for one year.

Every child who is eligible receives the same to ensure equity (children who register in April, see FAQ 11, will be allocated 38 hours up to October).

Registration

15. I did not register my child for the new Targeted Short Breaks service. Is my child now unable to access the service?

There was extensive communication about registering for the new service in autumn 2021.

If you did not register, your child will not be able to access Targeted Short Breaks services, even if they have been using them before 1 February 2022.

The next opportunity to register will be in April 2022. Any child who has not yet been registered can be at this point.

In future, there will be an annual registration window in October each year. Families will have to re-register every year.

Each following April there will be a further opportunity to register, but *only* for children who have moved into Cumbria or had an EHCP agreed between October and April.

If you have an urgent need for support, you can contact the Safeguarding Hub and request a Child and Family Assessment.

Recognising that some children will be significantly impacted by these changes, we are currently reviewing whether it would be possible to offer interim TSB activities provision in areas of the county not currently covered by the new providers. We will keep families updated.

General

16. Is transport provided to Targeted Short Breaks?

No. Parent carers are responsible for transport children to and from Targeted Short Breaks.

17. Will further services be available to under age 6. Yr. 1 as this is limited

To be eligible for Targeted Short Breaks provision children must be within the academic year groups Year 1 to Year 13 (at the time of registering for TSB).

For children under the age of six, services are also available through the Child and Family Support Service and delivered at local Children's Centres.

This service is commissioned by the Local Authority to provide Portage services for children with disabilities under 4 years of age and targeted groups / 1 to 1 sessions for those under 6 years of age.

Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEND and their families.

18. If I cancel a Targeted Short Breaks session will my child's hours still be reduced?

If you cancel *within* 24 hours of the activity taking place the hours will be reduced.

ENDS