

Short Breaks Strategy 2023 – 2028

Disabled Adults



Our Vision

To provide a choice of services that offer trustworthy Short Breaks enabling Carers to get respite from their caring role, plan their lives, and have the security of a backup resource in an emergency. Short breaks will also deliver high quality, creative and enjoyable support that enables disabled adults to develop new skills and achieve the outcomes that are important to them.

1. About this strategy

Caring for a disabled person is life affirming but can also pose unique physical, social, emotional and economic challenges. The contribution of unpaid Carers is critical to the sustainability of Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) Disabled Adult Services (DAS) and to the health and wellbeing of disabled people. This Strategy sets out how HCC will ensure we have a clear, accessible Short Breaks offer to disabled adults and their Carers delivering a range of positive outcomes. First and foremost, this Strategy is driven by what Carers have told us they need to support them in their caring role and how services should be developed to better help disabled adults.

Short Break services are an important part of HCC's commitment and support to Carers and disabled adults and will reflect our **Connected Lives** ambitions for all Adult Care Services. Connected Lives focuses on enabling people to achieve desired outcomes and live their lives to the full. Short Breaks should be a positive experience for both the Carer and the person who receives support, mutually improving quality of life whilst supporting relationships and building skills.

This Strategy addresses the Short Breaks offer to working age disabled adults (18-65) who are cared for by an unpaid Carer or a Shared Lives Carer. The Strategy will be delivered in partnership with colleagues and teams across HCC, working together to ensure consistent standards and delivery across Adult Care Services. Co-producing service developments with people who access Short Breaks (both carers and disabled adults) and partner organisations is critical to achieving the outcomes set out in this strategy.

2. Who this strategy is for

This strategy is for:

- ✓ Disabled adults
- ✓ Carers (including *Shared Lives* Carers)
- ✓ Practitioners and social workers
- ✓ Care and support providers
- ✓ Our communities

A **Carer** can be anyone ordinarily residing in Hertfordshire (including a family member, friend, neighbour) who provides substantial unpaid support to a disabled adult.

A **Shared Lives Carer** shares their home and life with a person who needs support as part of HCC's Shared Lives Scheme.

A **person who needs support** for the purpose of this Strategy is a disabled adult (aged 18-65) who is eligible under the Care Act 2014 to receive services from HCC. This may include people who:

- Are learning disabled or physically disabled.
- As well as a disability, have needs relating to their Autism, Mental Health or Sensory impairment.
- And who, without the support of their Carer, would require significant support from paid careworkers to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

3. What do we mean by a 'Short Break'?

A Short Break offers a Carer respite from the physical, social and emotional demands of their caring role while also giving the disabled adult they care for, the chance to have a positive experience, potentially building new relationships, new skills or achieving other outcomes that are important to them.

Short Breaks sustain Carers in their caring role and are a fundamental part of making HCC's *Connected Lives* ambitions a reality: services on offer should be **risk-positive, innovative** and provide **a range of good quality options focused on achieving people's outcomes, promoting independence and preventing their needs from increasing**.

Short Breaks can be provided for a few hours, a day, overnight, or a number of days and nights, extending to a week or longer. Some services are not specifically commissioned as a 'Short Break' but offer the same benefits for Carers and disabled adults, for example, community day opportunities.

HCC's Short Breaks offer for disabled adults should provide the right mix of universal, targeted and specialist support in order to meet the diverse and bespoke needs of Carers and disabled adults.

Universal Short Breaks are activities in the community that everyone can access.

Targeted Short Breaks are activities designed to meet the needs of a group of people, such as lunch clubs, community cafes, support groups.

The focus of this Strategy, however, is on '**eligibility based**' (or **specialist**) Short Breaks. This covers breaks that HCC delivers directly through its Council run overnight short breaks units; commissions from the external Private and Voluntary Sector; or funds via a Direct Payment, in order to meet eligible care and support needs under the Care Act.

4. The current picture

Table 1 below gives an overview of the number of people supported in specific Short Breaks services between April 2022 to March 2023. It also includes the number of people who were waiting for a Short Break service to be sourced at the end of March 2023:

Total number of working age adults who received a commissioned short break	377
Learning Disabled people	264
Physically disabled people	113
People accessing HCC's overnight Short Breaks	198
People accessing externally commissioned Short Breaks	179
People currently waiting for a Short Break service to be sourced	88

Table 1

The types of Short Break currently funded by HCC include:

- Overnight Short Breaks provided 'in-house' by HCC: four Short Break Schemes, offering 30 placements to disabled adults in total per night:

Isabel Court in Hoddesdon
Scarborough House in Stevenage
St Michael's House in Welwyn Garden City
Tanners Wood in Abbots Langley

- Overnight Short Breaks from externally commissioned market providers
- Day or weekend activities, outings, trips
- More occasional / informal support purchased via Direct Payment

Between April 2022 and March 2023, HCC spent **£3,742,042** on commissioned Short Breaks. Of this amount, HCC's expenditure on services provided by the Council cost **£2,632,721**. Short Breaks commissioned from the external wider market accounted for **£1,109,301**.

Table 2 below sets out the total number of Direct Payments that HCC funds for disabled adults and carers as at March 2023 (this includes *all* Direct Payments; only some of these will be used to purchase a 'Short Break'):

	Learning Disabled	Physically Disabled	Total
Disabled Adult Direct Payments	738	736	1464
Carers Direct Payments	184	215	399

Table 2

There are currently gaps in our knowledge. A key aim of this strategy is to address these and gather more complete data to inform and drive service development and investment. We need better information on the following:

- The needs profile of under-represented groups in our Short Breaks services
- The number of young people approaching transition who will require specialist Short Breaks provision
- The range and nature of Short Breaks services purchased via Direct Payment
- Where in the county there are specific pressures in terms of access and availability
- Utilisation of Short Breaks in emergencies
- Usage of Short Breaks allocations
- Future demand for Short Breaks based on demographic profiling

5. Short Break Drivers and Values

Local drivers

All adult care services provided or commissioned by HCC are aligned with our **Connected Lives** model and principles¹.

Connected Lives means Short Breaks services will focus on:

- Independence and citizenship: learning new skills to build independence and maximise own potential
- Choice and control: empowered to make informed choices; and real choice from different options where possible
- Innovative and ambitious alternatives to traditional care services: working with disabled adults and their Carers to explore options to meet assessed eligible needs in different and creative ways
- Working with partners and providers to deliver positive outcomes and trusted, reliable support
- Offering value for money, effectiveness and efficiency so short breaks can be enjoyed by more

This Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the objectives set out in the new *Carers Strategy for Hertfordshire 2022-2025*², which states that Carers will be enabled to:

- Carry on caring if they want to
- Get good quality information and advice when they need it
- Be recognised, feel respected and heard as Carers and partners in care and experts in the needs of the person they care for
- Have a life outside of/after caring, including being able to access their local community and services
- Be safe and stay mentally and physically fit and healthy
- Receive consistent, joined-up services

¹ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/campaign-toolkits/connecting-lives.aspx>

National drivers

The *Care Act* 2014, requires HCC to:

- Prevent, reduce and delay people's support needs from increasing
- Promote wellbeing
- Support any Carer caring for someone who is resident in that local authority's area.
- Assess a Carer's own need for support, regardless of how much care they provide.
- Consider the impact of the caring on the Carer.

The *Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act* 2004 states carers assessments should always consider a carer's outside interests when carrying out an assessment, for example work, study or leisure.

The National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care 2012 provides four principles supporting carers:

- Principle 1 - Carers and the cared for person will be respected and listened to and be at the centre of their care and support planning process to define and achieve outcomes relating to their eligible needs.
- Principle 2 - The carer and cared for person will be treated fairly and equitably, recognising their individual circumstances and will be offered respite based on their eligible health and care needs.
- Principle 3 - The cared for person who has been assessed and eligible will have choice and control over respite care to meet their needs, which will help achieve their outcomes and enable independence appropriate for them.
- Principle 4 - Staff will work with partners across health and social care in the best interest of the carer and the cared for person.

² [A Carers Strategy for Hertfordshire 2022 - 2025 V4](#)

6. Our approach to developing this Strategy

This Strategy has been coproduced by HCC colleagues in partnership with *Carers in Herts* who have acted as experts by experience, ensuring the voice of Carers and the people they support remains at the heart of this work.

HCC:

- Met with Carers in December 2020 to identify ways in which HCC's Short Breaks offer and the services available needed to improve (the follow on co-production and strategy development work was paused during the COVID pandemic).
- Met with groups of Carers again in October 2022 to evaluate the current offer and co-produce key priority areas for improvement. This included two focus group sessions that looked at what Carers and disabled adults who use services value most about Short Breaks and how the offer should be developed to improve access, quality and choice.
- Had further focus group sessions in July 2023 to develop final draft of strategy and initial priorities for the delivery plan, as well as multi-agency project group meetings
- Consulted a range of stakeholders, including Carers in Herts, 0-25 Together, Children's Services and Adult Disability Service operational colleagues to identify priorities, issues and challenges for HCC in-house services, externally commissioned services and care management practice.
- Committed to ongoing co-production by working together with Carers, disabled adults, care and support providers and other stakeholders to develop, implement and review an action plan to deliver on this Strategy's vision and outcomes.

7. What we have heard

Carers told us that:

- They require and value breaks from their caring role for many reasons – practical, emotional, social and psychological. Carers find time spent away from their caring role restorative.
- Breaks can reduce loneliness and isolation, enabling the Carer (and the person they care for) to stay connected to family, friends and activities they enjoy.
- Breaks can play a vital preventive role, sustaining the caring relationship and preventing Carer stress, crisis and breakdown. Breaks also enable Carers to prevent or recover from ill health.
- It is important to think about whole family approaches and breaks as 'a break from the caring routine', not just time away from the person. Some Carers prefer a break with the person they care for, or as a whole family, but not having to do all the caring.
- Breaks may be a part of planning and preparing for a time a disabled adult may move away from the family home. Therefore, a Short Break should offer the opportunity for people to develop practical life skills and take the first steps towards greater independence.

Whilst this Strategy aims to improve HCC's Short Breaks offer for all eligible disabled adults and their carers, we know from co-production, national research and work on Hertfordshire's Carers Strategy that there are some specific challenges we want to prioritise relating to equality of access. These include:

- Making sure our improved offer reaches Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Carers and disabled adults. Currently people are less likely to be receiving practical support with caring and more likely to miss out on accessing support for

longer. This is often due to a lack of accessible information or a shortage of culturally appropriate services.

- Developing provision specifically for profound and multiple learning disabled adults.
- Developing provision for adults with positive behaviour support needs
- Developing access to local, age-appropriate Short Breaks services for younger disabled adults

Some Carers also highlighted that their recent experience has demonstrated that community provision has not recovered to pre-COVID levels. Carers were clear that their experience of HCC's Short Breaks needed to improve. Services should be:


- Much more accessible; and
- Better planned.

8. What we will do

The graphic to the right gives a summary of the progress and outcomes we want to achieve over the next five years for Short Breaks services across six key themes.


However, whilst developing this strategy, we have started immediate work on the following:

- Maximising capacity of our current overnight short breaks services
- As part of this work, introducing a cancellation policy for council-run short breaks
- Developing a new booking system for council-run short breaks
- Looking at how people are allocated Short Breaks as part of their Care Act Assessment/Review to enable equitable access




Vision

- Outcome focused
- Personalised
- Build skills, learn new things
- Prepares for Supported Living
- Learn to be away from from Carer
- Connected Lives ethos




Choice

- Individual and group services
- several hours to several days
- Variety to meet diverse needs
- Age appropriate services
- Local services
- Carer network for peer exchange




Quality

- Service that meets needs
- Trained and skilled staff
- Quality monitored
- Safe space
- Flexible staff levels responding to demand




Positive Experience Meaningful activities, in line with interests

- Stimulation and creativity
- Enjoyable
- Want to attend again
- Trustworthy



Booking and access

- Long term, short term and emergency bookings
- Notifications when space available due to cancellations
- Offers enough capacity, especially at popular times



Information

- A clear offer
- Eligibility criteria
- Clarity on options available
- Available when needed and easy to find

A. Vision

Key outcome:

Services that deliver Connected Lives principles: personalised support to develop skills and independence that offers a positive, enabling experience for disabled adults and that is trusted by Carers.

Carers said:

Services must

- Be outcome focused and personalised
- Be trustworthy and inspire confidence
- Help disabled adults to learn skills
- Help disabled adults prepare to 'move on', for example, moving into Supported Living
- Demonstrate a **Connected Lives** ethos.

We will:

- Review current services against Connected Lives principles and address issues identified
- Ensure Connected Lives ethos drives Short Breaks practice and development (for example, personalised support that enables skills development; staff training and awareness)
- Work across the system to ensure Short Breaks deliver against a wider set of outcomes (such as uptake of Carers' annual health checks), including better links between adults' and children's services
- Monitor delivery of this Strategy's outcomes to ensure accountability

B. Choice

Key outcome:

A broad range of support options that provides real choice and acknowledges disabled adults' different needs and Carers' different circumstances.

Carers said:

We need

- Support that's available individually and in group settings
- Services from several hours to several days
- Variety of services for diverse needs
- Services that are age appropriate
- Services that are local to us
- Help to support our peers and exchange ideas and information

We will:

- Gather robust need and demand data within the first year of this Strategy to strengthen understanding of current gaps in provision
- Review services and data to understand usage and gaps by key protected characteristic groups
- Engage existing Short Break, Residential and Supported Living providers in market development conversations to develop individual and group-based service options that can provide emergency, short term and longer-term support
- Develop provision for Profound and Multiple Learning Disabled (PMLD) adults

C. Quality

Key outcome:

Services that are accountable and assessed as delivering high quality support and committed to continuous improvement.

Carers said:

Services must:

- Meet need and be clear about how they will do that
- Operate with trained, skilled, interested staff
- Provide a safe space that Carers and disabled adults are confident to access
- Have staff levels that can flex up and down depending on demand
- Be in line with national and local policies and guidance and with legislation

We will:

- Implement a service specification based on achieving Connected Lives outcomes that Short Breaks services are required to deliver against
- Introduce clear monitoring arrangements that also include feedback from disabled adults and Carers
- Review training offer for Short Breaks services
- Review Short Break services as part of a wider support network, not in isolation

D. Positive Experience

Key outcome:

Short Breaks services that are enjoyable for the cared for person and a trusted, positive, reliable experience for the Carer.

Carers said:

Services must

- Offer meaningful activities, in line with interests
- Offer stimulation and creativity
- Be enjoyable so that people want to attend again
- Be trustworthy and consistent so Carers can rely on them

We will:

- Set up and agree ways to measure satisfaction with Short Breaks
(for example, repeat bookings, reported progress, reliability score)
- Develop better information so disabled adults and Carers are empowered and enabled to use direct payments to fund a variety of Short Breaks options – e.g. activities they enjoy, weekend breaks, holidays
- Ensure operational/social work practice is consistent and considers the range of potential options that will help disabled adults and Carers achieve positive outcomes, not just overnight breaks
- Work with providers to develop creative offers, particularly regarding loss of options following COVID.

E. Booking and access

Key outcome:

An effective booking system that will make access to services transparent and support and care easy to book so Carers can plan their lives

Carers said:

In order to be able to easily access services we need:

- A system that allows long term, short term, and emergency bookings
- To be informed when spaces become available due to cancellations
- Services that offer enough capacity especially at popular times

We will:

- Review current booking methods and access options, based on better demand and usage data
- Implement a better system for reviewing usage of allocated days
- Apply best practice from other areas/organisations that can demonstrate effective booking processes
- Explore a system where Carers could swap booked times or learn about short notice cancellations they might want to use
- Review transition arrangements between Disabled Children's and Disabled Adults' Short Breaks

F. Information

Key outcome:

Clear and consistent information, easily available and shared via all access points so we know what Short Breaks services are available, if we and the people we support are eligible and how to access them.

Carers said:

We need information that is easy to find when we need it that clearly sets out:

- The service offer and what options are available
- Eligibility criteria
- Availability and how to access
- What I can do if I can't access at the moment

We will:

- Agree and communicate clear, accessible information on the range of service options available
- Develop and agree short, simple guidance on how to access Short Breaks services
- Improve knowledge and understanding of Short Breaks services in our care management teams
- Provide positive case studies of Carers having effective breaks and the disabled adult they care for being able to do the things they want to do in a way that works for them.

9. Action Plan: how the outcomes will be achieved

To deliver this strategy, we will co-produce with partners and stakeholders a set of prioritised, specific actions, which will be reviewed regularly through a delivery/reference group that will include Carer representation. This will be a live document that is updated every time the delivery group meets as part of overseeing and reporting on progress. The group will be accountable to the established Carers Strategy Board as well as the appropriate Physical Disabilities, Learning Disabilities and Autism Coproduction Boards, and the Adult Care Services Management Board. This will provide accountability and ensure that the views and way in which disabled adults and their Carers want to be supported continue to drive service development and improvement.

The outline Action Plan is set out below:

	Action area	Short Term (year 1)	Medium Term (year 2)	Longer Term (years 3-5)
VISION	Connected Lives principles and outcomes embedded and demonstrated.	Agree outcome reporting for Short Breaks services.	Review outcomes achieved and identify actions needed.	
	Improve transition between Children's and Adults' Short Breaks.	Review transition data and identify capacity challenges.	Align strategic aims and plans.	
	Monitor delivery of this Strategy's outcomes.	Agree metrics and report progress in Quarters 3 and 4.	Review Year one progress and refresh/ refine action plans.	Work across the system to ensure wider outcomes delivered.
CHOICE	Better understand gaps in provision.	Gather robust need and demand data; set baselines.	Detailed review; Identify specific actions to address differential impacts.	Review 'distance travelled' from baseline in year one.
	Market development to increase choice and range of services.	Dedicated project group to maximise current capacity in the short term; Business development plan for in-house services.	Market and service development plans for externally commissioned services.	Create business cases and implementation plans for specific service developments.
	Develop services for specific under-addressed need areas including PMLD adults.	Establish clear needs profile and service options.	Develop and take forward business case(s).	
QUALITY	Implement a service specification that sets out clear and consistent expectations/requirements	Draft, agree and pilot.	Implement across the market.	Review and improve.
	Monitor services	Initial service monitoring visits.	Review first year reports and outcomes.	Monitor against new service specification.
	Review training offer for Short Breaks services.	Training needs analysis, in partnership with Herts Care Providers Association.		

	Action area	Short Term (year 1)	Medium Term (year 2)	Longer Term (years 3-5)
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE	Measure satisfaction with Short Breaks services	Agree metrics and how we will measure; send out first surveys.	Review results and identify actions; integrate with service monitoring.	
	Improve options for use of Direct Payments so they can be used to fund a greater variety of enjoyable, meaningful activities.	Review current Direct Payment spend and services purchased and compare with other councils.	Work with the Direct Payment support service (Purple) and Individual Service Fund providers on a focused project for Short Breaks.	
	Ensure operational/social work practice in relation to accessing and agreeing short breaks is consistent.	Agree process for better sharing of capacity and service options information.	Involve in service and booking/access development plans.	
BOOKING & ACCESS	Review/ current booking and access options.	Collate booking pathways and access points and review to identify specific improvements.	Learn from other areas and implement best practice; changes will be co-produced with Carers and disabled adults.	Take forward business case for real-time booking system for Short Breaks services.
	Better monitoring of how allocated days are used for overnight Short Breaks.	Review options.	Implement improved system.	Review impact.
	Peer-to-peer support and arrangements.		Explore options for Carers and disabled adults to swap booked times/learn about short term cancellations.	Recommend approach and implement.
INFORMATION	Collate and publish clear, accessible information on Short Break services available to disabled adults.	Collate, co-produce, review and publish on website and in alternative formats. Share internally and with external networks. Attend team meetings and stakeholder forums/ events to share and promote.	Review, update and develop.	Consider integrating into new booking system.
	Review, agree and publish guidance on how to access Short Breaks, including eligibility details.			
	Review process for confirming, communicating and reviewing allocation for overnight short breaks.	Review process and identify improvements required	Share, review, agree then implement recommendations.	
	Provide positive case studies of effective and creative Breaks to raise awareness and demonstrate what's possible.		Collate from monitoring and share widely.	