

Short Breaks in the south-west

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a brown top and large hoop earrings, hugging a young girl from behind. The girl is wearing glasses, a blue and white striped shirt, and holding a brown teddy bear. They are both smiling and looking down at the bear. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window.

Helping children thrive

Overnight stays for
children with disabilities



Hello

Every child and young person should have the opportunity to thrive.

At Action for Children's Short Breaks in the south-west, we focus on what children with disabilities can do, not what they can't.

“ I love how the children feel part of the family while on their break with us. ”

Carer

Our brilliant Short Breaks' carers – people like you – make this happen. They offer warm, safe environments where children can have fun away from home. They provide meaningful, life-changing experiences. Parents benefit by knowing their child is safe and cared for during a short break.

Our Short Breaks' carers transform lives.

We're looking for people to support children with disabilities or neurodiversity across the south-west.

The children will stay with you overnight, usually for at least a day. The breaks can take place at any time but usually they run at weekends or in the school holidays. It depends on what the child and family want, and when you're available.

The emphasis is definitely on fun. But there's also a focus on learning important life skills, working towards goals, having new experiences, forming relationships, and helping children to fulfil their potential.

By becoming a Short Breaks' carer you can help give children with a disability or neurodiversity a fun and meaningful experience within your home.

“ I like my sleep overs at J and S's. ”

Young person

How the service works

Short Breaks in the south-west arrange short stays for children who have a disability or who are neurodiverse.

The breaks are at least 24 hours long and take place in our carers' homes. Short Breaks can take place at any time. Usually they run at weekends or in school holidays.

“ I have nothing but praise for Action for Children. Prompt responses and very professional but approachable. Five stars. ”

Social worker



The children you'll meet



The children and young people who come on our Short Breaks are referred to us by local authorities across the south-west. The children have a range of disabilities and complex needs. These include neurodiversity, physical disabilities, sensory needs, and other medical conditions.

Once we've received a referral, we work hard to find the right match between a child and carer. We'll organise a short introductory meet-up and then gradually increase the length of visits until everyone's ready for an overnight stay.

***“ When can I
come back? ”***

Young person

Why care through Action for Children?

From the moment you get in touch with us, our friendly team will support you through your Short Breaks journey.

We'll give you:

- Comprehensive training so you can meet the needs of the children you look after.
- A fee of £110 per night.
- A mileage allowance.
- Peace of mind, knowing you're insured and safeguarding is in place.
- 24/7 advice and support.

Working with disabled children and their families is a core part of Action for Children's work. This experience has gone into the training, guidance and expertise we offer. And we're a great sounding board, too.

Our team is made up of:

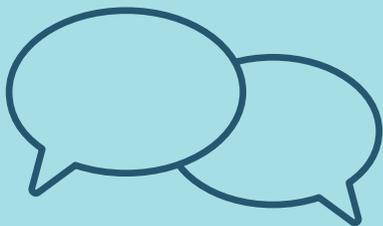
- One team manager.
- Social workers.
- A child and family practitioner.
- A paediatric nurse.
- A business support officer.
- A Transition Worker.
- A psychologist.

You'll find a step-by-step guide to what happens after you get in contact with us on page 13.



As a Short Breaks carer you will...

Support children to improve their communication skills.



Support children to learn skills to manage and explain their feelings.

Help children make choices about their lives and try new activities.



Help children feel happier and more confident.

Can I offer Short Breaks?

It's beneficial to have personal or professional experience of caring for children with a disability. But we also we have excellent training available. So we want to hear from you if you're caring, energetic, passionate about supporting disabled children, and open to learning new skills to support medical and learning needs. Every child needs their own space, so you must have a separate bedroom.



Ideally we're looking for carers who can provide a break for a child every month.

Most breaks happen at weekends and school holidays.

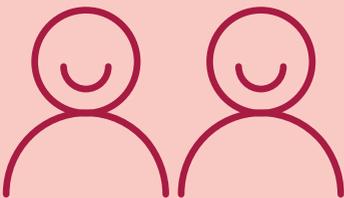
You'll also need to be over 21 (there isn't an upper age limit).

It doesn't matter whether you own or rent your home. If you're renting, you'll need your landlord's permission. We'll also need to do some home safety checks, which your landlord would need to know about too.



Children using Short Breaks need a stable home to stay in. That means if you're in a relationship, we ask that you've been together for at least two years.

You'll also need to be financially secure.



Lots of our Short Breaks' carers have children at home.

During the assessment, we'll talk about how you'll meet the needs of your children and a child coming for a break. If your own children are very young, we might ask you to wait a while before we start the assessment.

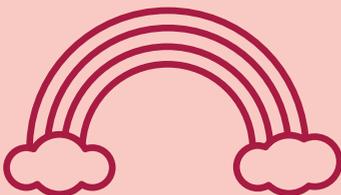


“ Our carer is one of the few people I can trust. I am extremely happy with the care they provide. ”

Parent

Your support network is really important, so we'll chat to you about family, friends and neighbours.

We offer lots of help, too. This includes a dedicated supervising social worker, 24/7 phone support, groups and a buddy system.



Some people choose to be a Short Breaks carer full-time. Others fit it around their job.

Here for you



You're doing an incredible thing and we want to make sure you're properly looked after.

Your wellbeing

All our Short Breaks' carers have a dedicated supervising social worker. They'll give you one-to-one help and advice whenever you need it. You can also get in touch with us at any time of the day or night.

We run regular support groups, too. These give you the chance to get together and meet people doing the same amazing thing. Our carers tell us that these meet-ups make them feel part of a bigger family.

Sometimes we'll team you up with a buddy. This is when new people are paired up with an experienced, approved carer.

All our Short Breaks' carers are registered with the Fostering Network. This gives you access to a range of support and offers. You'll also be able to use our Health Assured wellbeing package and get discounts on great brands.



“ My child loves being with their carer and feels like these times are very special. ”

Parent

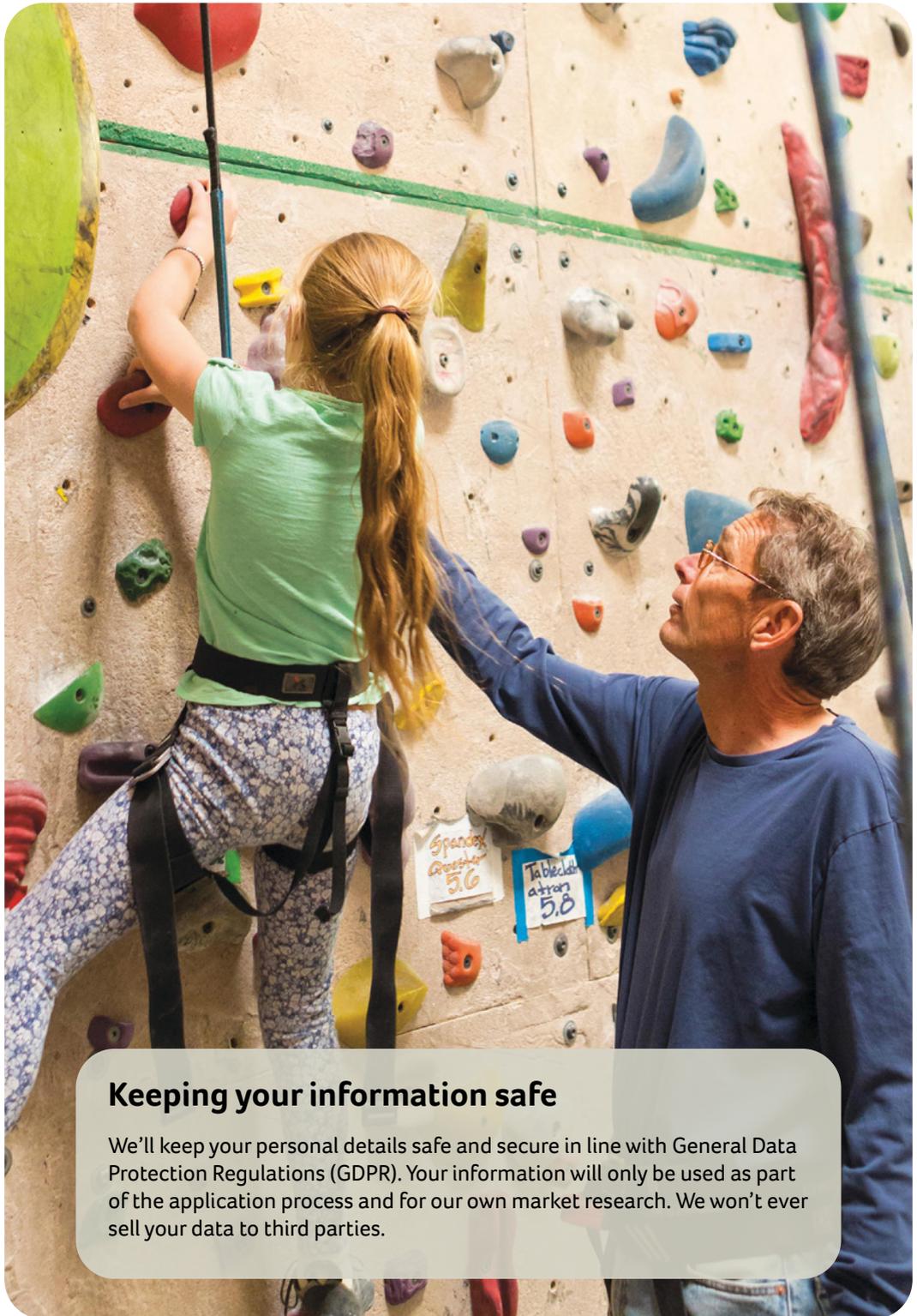
Your training

Everyone who provides Short Breaks with us follows our annual training calendar. Sessions cover the essentials, like child safety, safeguarding, child development and child first aid, as well as other important policies and procedures. We also run training in things like Makaton, caring for children with diabetes, and gastrostomy care. You'll be given resources and specialist tools to help you, too.

Your money

We want you to know that you can afford to care for a child. You'll get a fee of £110 per night to support yourself and the children staying with you.





Keeping your information safe

We'll keep your personal details safe and secure in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Your information will only be used as part of the application process and for our own market research. We won't ever sell your data to third parties.

What happens next?

Thanks for reading this far! Your Short Breaks journey starts here...

1

A quick chat on the phone

The first step is a short phone call. We'll ask you about your circumstances and how Short Breaks might work for you. It's the perfect time to ask us any questions. This is an informal chat that'll hopefully give you a better idea about whether Short Breaks caring is for you.

2

Visiting you at home

Next, we'll come and visit you (and your partner, if you're in a relationship) at home. We'll have a chat about the practicalities of Short Breaks caring. This is a great opportunity to get to know you and your situation. After the visit we'll get in touch and let you know about the next steps.

3

Application form

The next step is to fill in an application form.

4

Skills to Foster training course

All our potential Short Break's carers are invited to a three-day Skills to Foster course. The training covers the essentials, prepares you for Short Breaks caring, and raises questions that we'll talk about during the assessment.

5

The assessment

We'll try to complete your assessment in four to six months. We'll look at your skills and knowledge, and any areas where you might need more support. You'll get regular visits from a social worker who'll assess your skills to be a Short Breaks carer. There are standard checks to go through, too, including a police check (DBS) and medical. We'll also need references from people who have known you for three years, and a current or past employer.

6

Final approval

Your assessment will be presented to a panel who'll make a recommendation about your suitability to offer Short Breaks care. Once this is done, we'll ask for approval from our agency decision-maker. We'll look into matching you with a child as soon as your application's approved.

About Action for Children

We believe that every child and young person in the UK should have a safe and happy childhood.

To make this happen we rely on people like you. With you by our side we can make sure children get the best start in life. We can step in to keep them safe, find stable homes, and provide the foundations they need to thrive.

Action for Children supported more than 765,905 children, young people and families last year.

By becoming a Short Breaks' carer, you can help give children with disabilities or neurodiversity fun and meaningful experiences in your home.

Find out more by getting in touch with us:

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Short Breaks in the south-west

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Safe and happy childhood



Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.