

Types of short break and respite care services

“Short breaks and respite care cover a range of services and situations. Different ideas are emerging about the purpose of the break. Evidence of the need for breaks is also moving from a general awareness of their value to much more detailed information that people need breaks in different ways at different times and for different periods.”

National Care Standards, Respite Care and Short Break Services for Adults

The following list illustrates the range of different ways that breaks can be provided:

- **breaks in specialist respite accommodation**

This might include specialist guest houses, community flats, purpose-built or adapted accommodation. Depending on the care group catered for, facilities may be able to offer specialist care. This is different to the residential or nursing home option which focuses more on long-term care but might offer some day care and short term respite places.

- **breaks in residential care homes (with or without nursing care)**

Some homes may have a small number of places set aside specifically for respite breaks. Rather than simply offering a ‘spare bed’ the home should provide separate facilities with a carefully planned programme of activities for short-term guests to suit individual needs and interests.

- **breaks in the home of another individual or family**

These involve overnight breaks provided by volunteers in their own home. These are sometimes referred to as shared care, family based or adult placement schemes. Families or individuals offering this support are carefully recruited and registered - normally by the local authority or through voluntary sector organisations.

- **breaks provided at home through a care attendant or sitting service**

This includes individual support provided in the home of the cared for person for periods of a few hours or overnight. The purpose may be to provide cover while the carer is away, or to support the carer in other ways, e.g. by enabling the carer to have an undisturbed night's sleep.

- **supported access to clubs, interest or activity groups**

These opportunities might focus on a particular activity (e.g. lunch clubs, leisure activities) and may be based in a day centre or community building. These generally take place over a few hours, perhaps once or twice a week.

- **holiday breaks**

These include opportunities for the carer and cared for person to have a short break. These breaks can be supported in different ways - through an agency specialising in breaks for people with particular needs, in adapted accommodation or in ordinary hotels and guest houses, perhaps with additional equipment. More mainstream breaks may also be possible with the support of a paid carer or companion accompanying the group.

- **befriending schemes where volunteers provide short breaks**

Befriending normally involves a paid worker or volunteer accompanying the 'befriended' to social and leisure activities, for example going to the cinema, meeting friends, shopping, swimming and other such activities.

- **day care**

Typically based in a community building and provided by a local authority or voluntary organisation. The degree of flexibility varies; most are characterised by fixed opening hours on particular days; some offer a drop in service whereby people can attend for part of the day only. Day care is not generally provided for short break or respite purposes but services which offer more flexible arrangements, designed around the needs of both the client and carer, can achieve this purpose.

- **hospital based respite**

The main emphasis will be on those people assessed as requiring medical supervision because of complex or intense health care needs. In these situations it may be deemed beneficial to provide some short term hospital based care which, although not the main purpose, might also bring the added benefit of a respite break for the carer.