

Arranging a Short Break: What You Need to Know as a Carer

Who is a Carer?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a friend, family member, neighbour, or loved one who cannot manage day-to-day life without help. This might be because of age, illness, disability, mental health needs, substance use, or other circumstances. Carers play an important role in helping people live the life they choose.

What is a Short Break?

A short break is a planned period of support that enables you, as an unpaid carer, to take time away from your caring role. It gives you the chance to rest and recharge, maintain your wellbeing and continue providing care.

Short breaks are available if the person you care for is eligible for support from the council and you need time away from your caring responsibilities. During your break, the person you care for will continue to receive care and support that meets their assessed needs and outcomes.

Can the Person You Care For Receive Short Break Support?

A short break may be arranged when a person is eligible for support from Lancashire County Council and it is recognised that their carer would benefit from time away from their caring role. The person you care for will need a social care assessment to understand their needs and identify the best support options. If short breaks are recommended, you'll be involved in a conversation about how the break will work. The agreed amount is set as an annual budget for 12 months, and you can choose how the



short break support will fit best with your lives. These details will be included in the person's Care and Support Plan so it reflects what matters most to them.

Where Can Short Break Support Happen?

Short breaks are flexible, they can include day, evening, overnight or weekend support, and can take place in their own home, the home of an approved carer, a community setting, or a residential or nursing home.

While the short break may not mirror the unique support you provide, it must meet the person's care and support needs and help achieve the outcomes that are important to them.

How Can I Arrange Short-Break Support?

There are three different ways Short Breaks can be arranged:

Direct Payments for Short Breaks

If you choose this option, the person you care for – or their representative – will receive a sum of money from the council to spend in line with their Care and Support Plan. This means you can take a break from your caring role while making sure the person's needs are met safely and legally.

Direct payments give you flexibility and control over when and how the short break support is provided. For example, the money can be used to:

- Arrange a short stay in a residential care home.
- Pay for a care agency to provide support at home.
- Employ a personal assistant to help with care.

While this option offers choice, it does come with some responsibilities, such as:



- Acting as an employer if you hire a personal assistant.
- Paying wages and keeping records.
- Organising the care needed for the short break.

For people who find it difficult to manage the financial side of direct payments, there are services that can help. Your social care worker will guide you through the process and explain what's involved. Lancashire Independent Living Service can provide practical help with setting up and managing the direct payment, including the option of a supported banking service. This means a third-party organisation looks after the funds for you and makes payments to care providers based on your instructions. There is a charge for this service, and Lancashire Independent Living Service can talk through the options with you.

Rolling Short Breaks

Rolling short breaks give you and the person you care for flexibility and choice about when and how support is arranged.

At the time of the social care assessment:

- You or the person you care for may already have a preferred care provider.
- If not, Lancashire County Council can help you find one that meets your needs and preferences.

Rolling short breaks can include:

- Care home stays
- Home care
- Day Time Support (day care)
- Or a mix of these, depending on what works best for you and the person you care for.



Once a provider is agreed, their details will be included in the Care and Support Plan. You or the person you care for can then contact the provider directly to arrange short break support times that work best for you throughout the year.

If your chosen provider cannot accommodate the dates you request, Lancashire County Council can help you or the person you care for find an alternative provider so your break still goes ahead.

*If selecting Lancashire County Council's [Day Time Support](#) (Day Care), [Shared Lives Scheme](#) or [Adult Disability Services](#) (Learning Disability and Autism), then rolling short breaks must be used.

Planned Short Breaks

Planned short breaks are pre-arranged periods of care on specific dates, either in a residential care home or at home - whichever suits you and the person you care for. Once you know the dates, Lancashire County Council can help you book with your chosen provider or find one for you. This option is useful if you're not ready to confirm dates or choose a provider at the time of the social care assessment, but you can decide the details later. This flexibility means you can plan when it suits you while ensuring care will be available when you need it.

Managing Your Agreed Short Break Support

The agreed amount of short break care will be confirmed with you and the person you care for during the social care assessment. This will be recorded in their Care and Support Plan by the social care worker.

It's important to keep a record of the agreed amount for the year and note when it is used. This helps ensure the short break care does not exceed what was agreed.



Paying for Short Breaks

The person you care for will have a financial assessment, in accordance with the [Financial Implications for Non-Residential Care Services](#), to see if they need to contribute towards the cost of their short breaks. This is based on their individual circumstances. If they have more than £23,250 in savings, or choose not to complete a financial assessment, they will need to pay the full cost of their short break care. Following the financial assessment, the person you care for will be advised of their assessed contribution towards their short break.

There are different ways short breaks can be paid for. Here's how each option works:

Direct Payment for Short Breaks

Lancashire County Council will add the agreed annual short breaks amount to the person's Direct Payment Card Account. The person receiving care will need to pay their assessed contribution into the same Direct Payment Card Account.

Rolling Short Breaks

After each short break, the person you care for will receive an invoice from Lancashire County Council. They must pay their assessed contribution using one of the payment methods listed on the back of the invoice. Invoices are issued every four weeks and may cover more than one week of short breaks. Each charge will be clearly shown so you can see exactly what it relates to.

Planned Short Breaks

The person you care for will receive an invoice from Lancashire County Council at the time the service is arranged. Invoices are produced every four weeks and may include contributions for more than one week of short breaks. This will be clearly shown on the invoice so you can see exactly what each charge relates to.

For example, if the total short break budget is £1,000 and the assessed contribution is £80, the person you care for pays £80 into the Direct Payment Card Account, and the Council adds £920. This makes up the full £1,000 budget for short breaks.



Top-Up Payments for Short Breaks

Some residential and nursing homes charge a top-up fee. This is the difference between the amount the Council pays and the fee the care home requests. In most cases, the person you care for cannot pay this top-up themselves. A family member, friend, or another third party must agree to pay this extra amount for the period of the short break where it applies.

Exception: If the person you care for is receiving Section 117 aftercare under the Mental Health Act 1983, they can pay their own top-up fee as a first-party payer. Lancashire County Council can help you find a short break care provider and will let you know if a top-up payment applies.

Rolling Short Breaks- The third-party top-up payment is paid directly to the care home by the person who has agreed to pay the top-up.

Planned Short Breaks- Lancashire County Council will process a third-party top-up agreement, which must be signed by the person paying the top-up. The Council will then invoice them for the agreed amount covering the period of the short break used.

Direct Payment for Short Breaks- The third-party top-up payment is paid directly to the care home by the person who has agreed to pay the top-up.

When Short Breaks Cannot Be Used

- **In emergencies or urgent situations.** If you are unexpectedly unable to provide support, a contingency plan should be in place to make sure the person you care for continues to receive consistent care that meets their needs and preferences.
- **Where regular support is already in place.** Short breaks should not replace existing services. They are intended to complement ongoing support and work alongside what is already in place to help the person you care for live the life they want.



- **To fund holidays.** Short breaks cannot be used to pay for holidays for you or the person you care for. They should focus on meeting the person's assessed needs and outcomes that promote wellbeing, not leisure or recreation costs.
- **When the person is receiving full NHS Continuing Health Care funding.** Lancashire County Council is responsible for providing carer's assessments and support for carers. However, if the person you care for is receiving NHS Continuing Healthcare funding and needs a short break, this must be arranged and funded by NHS Continuing Healthcare.

Renewal of the Short Break Budget

The short break budget is set for 12 months. Any unused amount does not carry over, and surplus funds may be reclaimed. Near the end of the 12-month period, you or the person you care for (or their representative) should contact the Customer Access Service on **0300 123 6720** to request a renewal. If the person's needs have changed or you want to switch to a different type of short break (such as Rolling Short Breaks), Customer Access will connect you to the right team to review and update the support.

Additional Support for Carers

Carers are entitled to a Carers Assessment. The Lancashire Carers Service provides vital support to carers on Lancashire County Council's behalf to help you with your crucial role.

It provides:

- Access to a 24-hour-a-day carers advice chatline.
- Help for carers to create emergency plans to prepare for situations where they are unable to provide their role.
- A Volunteer Befriending and Sitting in Service to help you find company and take a break.
- A huge range of digital information resources and much more.

Find Out More About Lancashire Carers Service

To learn about the support available:



East Lancashire

✉ **Email:** info@carerslinklancashire.co.uk

☎ **Call:** 0345 688 7113

Central & North Lancashire

💻 **Online:** Complete the [Get in Touch Online](#) form on their website

☎ **Call:** 03450 138 208

💡 You can also get free support from [Carers Count Lancashire](#)

