

Children's
Services

Short Breaks & Gateway Card Guidance

August 2026

What are Short Breaks?

Short Breaks provide opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs to take part in activities, build confidence, make friends and develop independence.

They help children and young people to:

- Have fun and try new activities
- Make friends and build confidence
- Learn new skills
- Become more independent
- Take part in their local community activities

Short Breaks can also help families access activities, services and support that meet their child's needs.

Short Breaks are designed to be enjoyable, safe and inclusive for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs.



Gateway Card or Gateway Card+: What's the Difference?

A Gateway Card can be issued to children and young people, 0-17 years old, who meet the Hampshire Short Breaks eligibility criteria.

To access Hampshire Short Breaks and participating activities, the eligible child will need a Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ depending on the activities, support and benefits required:

Gateway Card (Blue)

The Gateway Card can help families access:

- Free or reduced-price entry for carers at some venues
- Discounts and concessions at participating venues

Examples include:

- Zoos
- Farms
- Visitor attractions

Gateway Card+ (Orange)

The Gateway Card+ includes all the benefits of a Gateway Card and provides access to Hampshire-funded:

- Holiday activities
- Youth clubs
- Weekend clubs
- Buddy Scheme



Remember

- Gateway Card = Discounts and concessions at participating venues
- Gateway Card+ = Discounts, concessions and access to:
 - Holiday activities
 - Youth clubs
 - Weekend clubs
 - Buddy Scheme

Apply online via our [‘Short Breaks and Gateway Cards’](#) webpage.

Who Can Apply for a Gateway Card or Gateway Card+?

Who Can Apply?

Children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs may be eligible to apply for either a Gateway Card or Gateway Card+, depending on the support, activities and benefits they wish to access.

Eligibility

- Live within the Hampshire County Council area (excluding Southampton and Portsmouth)
- Are aged 0-17 years
- Have a disability and/or additional needs

Important

- Supporting evidence must clearly show the child or young person's name and current address where applicable.
- Bank statements cannot be accepted in place of a DLA or PIP award letter.
- Draft EHCPs and annual review paperwork cannot be accepted as evidence.
- Hampshire County Council may request additional information or proof of address to support an application.

Evidence Required

Applications must be supported by evidence of the child or young person's disability and/or additional needs.

Examples of accepted evidence include:

- Current DLA or PIP award letter
- A letter from a GP, Consultant or Diagnostic Assessment Service
- A final EHCP dated within the last 18 months

If you do not have any of the evidence listed above, a professional who knows your child can complete a [Professional Evidence Form](#).

Finding Activities and Days Out

Gateway Card and Gateway Card+ holders can access a range of participating activity providers.

Finding an activity provider

- Visit the list of participating activity providers. [Activity providers for Gateway Card and Gateway Card+ holders | Hampshire CTSH](#)
- Find an attraction or activity you are interested in.
- Contact the provider directly before your visit.
- Ask what discounts, concessions or carer benefits they offer.
- Take your Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ with you when you attend.

Important

- Offers vary between providers.
- Some offers may not be available all year round.
- Carer discounts or free entry may not always be available online.
- Always contact the provider directly before booking or visiting.



Accessing Short Breaks Funded Providers

Gateway Card+ holders can access Hampshire-funded Short Breaks activities, including holiday activities, youth clubs, weekend clubs and the Buddy Scheme.

Finding a Short Breaks Provider

- Visit the list of [Short Breaks providers](#).
- Find a provider that matches your child's age, interests and support needs.
- Contact the provider directly to discuss your child's needs.
- Check whether places are available.
- Ask about the parental contribution and how much the activity costs.
- Book directly with the provider.

Important

- Places may be limited and are subject to availability.
- Holding a Gateway Card+ does not guarantee a place.
- Providers offer different activities and levels of support.
- Age ranges and eligibility may vary between providers.
- Not all providers will be suitable for every child.
- We recommend contacting providers directly to discuss your child's needs before booking.
- Any parental contribution is set by the provider.
- Short Breaks activities are provided without parents or carers attending.

Short Breaks providers offer specialist activities and support for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs.



Why Do I Need a Gateway Card+?



Gateway Card+ gives access to Hampshire-funded Short Breaks activities.

This funding contributes towards the additional staffing, training, resources and support that may be required, helping providers deliver inclusive activities while keeping parental contributions affordable.

This funding helps to:

- Create more opportunities for children and young people to take part in activities.
- Support providers to meet a range of additional needs.
- Increase the number of places available.
- Keep parental contributions affordable.

What does this mean for families?

Without Short Breaks funding, some activities may cost more or may not be available to children who require additional support. The funding helps providers deliver activities that children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs can access and enjoy.

Remember

Gateway Card+ is required to access Hampshire-funded Short Breaks activities.

Why should I use a Gateway Card+?



Using your Gateway Card+ gives the providers access to Hampshire-funding to support disabled children at their Short Breaks activity.

This funding contributes towards the additional staffing, training, resources and support that may be required, helping providers deliver inclusive activities while keeping parental contributions affordable.

This funding helps to:

- Create more opportunities for children and young people to take part in activities.
- Support providers to meet a range of additional needs.
- Increase the number of places available.
- Keep parental contributions affordable.

What does this mean for families?

Without Short Breaks funding, some activities may cost more or may not be available to children who require additional support. The funding helps providers deliver activities that children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs can access and enjoy.

Remember

Gateway Card+ is required to access Hampshire-funded Short Breaks activities.

How Do I Renew My Card?

Gateway Cards and Gateway Card+ cards are valid for one year.

Renewing your card helps us to:

- Keep your contact details up to date.
- Confirm your child's continued eligibility for Gateway Card services.
- Check that you still live within the Hampshire County Council area.
- Ensure the information we hold about your child is current.

What Happens If My Card Expires?

- Gateway Cards and Gateway Card+ cards cannot be used once they have expired.
- If a card is not renewed within the renewal window, access to Hampshire-funded Short Breaks activities may be affected.

Before Your Card Expires

You will need to create a [Hampshire County Council customer account](#) and linking your Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ as soon as you receive it.

Using your customer account, you can:

- View your card
- Update your contact details
- Manage your card
- Renew your card

When Can I Renew?

You will receive an email notification when your card is due for renewal and will have:

- Up to one month before your card expires.
- Until one month after your card expires.

Missed the Renewal Window?

If your card expired more than 1 month ago, you will need to contact the Short Breaks Team for assistance: shortbreaks@hants.gov.uk

I Cannot Log In to My Hampshire County Council Customer Account

Try resetting your password

If you cannot log in, select 'Forgotten your password?' on the Hampshire County Council Customer account.

Not Receiving the Password Reset Email?

- Check your junk or spam folder.
- Check that you are using the email address linked to your Gateway Card.
- Allow a few minutes for the email to arrive.

Need Further Help?

If you are having trouble creating an account or linking your Gateway Card, please contact the Short Breaks Team:

shortbreaks@hants.gov.uk

Please include: The child or young person's name and the email address linked to the Gateway Card account.

This will help us locate your record and assist you more quickly.

Still Not Receiving the Email?

Your previous account may have been deactivated due to inactivity.

In this case:

- Create a new [Hampshire County Council Customer Account](#).
- Link your existing Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ to the new account.
- Once linked, you will be able to:
 - View your card
 - Manage your card
 - Update your details
 - Renew your card

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is my child eligible for a Gateway Card+?**

Children and young people who live within the Hampshire County Council area (excluding Southampton and Portsmouth) and have a disability and/or additional needs may be eligible for a Gateway Card+. Evidence will be required as part of the application.

If you live in Southampton or Portsmouth, please contact your local authority's Short Breaks service for information about the support available in your area:

Southampton: [Short Breaks and respite care for children with disabilities or additional needs](#)

Portsmouth: [Short breaks for disabled children and young people - Portsmouth City Council](#)

- **Does my child need an EHCP or formal diagnosis?**

No. Your child does not need an EHCP or a formal diagnosis to apply.

You will need to provide evidence that your child has a disability and/or additional needs. Children and young people who are awaiting assessment or diagnosis may still be eligible.

- **Do I need to be receiving benefits?**

No. Eligibility for a Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ is not based on whether you receive benefits.

- **Does my Gateway Card have money loaded onto it?**

No. Gateway Cards and Gateway Card+ cards do not have a cash value.

Hampshire County Council provides funding directly to approved Short Breaks providers. Families may still be asked to pay a parental contribution set by the provider.

- **Can I use my Gateway Card+ with any holiday club, youth club or weekend club in Hampshire?**

No. Gateway Card+ holders can only access Hampshire-funded Short Breaks providers that are part of the Short Breaks programme.

- **There are no spaces available for my child. What can I do?**

Unfortunately, places may be limited and are offered subject to availability. We are aware that demand for Short Breaks activities is high and encourage families to contact providers early to discuss current availability and future opportunities.

- **Can I use my card for swimming lessons, dance classes or other activities?**

Gateway Cards may be used with participating activity providers that offer discounts or concessions. Gateway Card+ funding is generally available through approved Short Breaks providers offering holiday activities, youth clubs, weekend clubs and the Buddy Scheme.

- **I receive benefits and cannot afford the cost of an activity. What support is available?**

Some providers may offer concessionary rates or reduced parental contributions. This is determined by the provider, so we recommend contacting them directly to discuss what support may be available.

- **Where can I find more information and support?**

Visit [Connect to Support Hampshire](#) to find information about services, activities and support available to families across Hampshire.

You may also wish to contact [SENDIASS Hampshire](#), who can provide independent information, advice and support for families of children and young people with SEND.

- **My usual holiday club is not part of the Short Breaks programme. Can they apply?**

Yes. If the provider is interested in supporting children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs, they can complete an Expression of Interest form via the Hampshire Short Breaks webpages.

Completing an [Expression of Interest](#) does not guarantee funding, but it allows the provider to be contacted when future funding opportunities become available.

Please note: Funding is awarded to activity providers, not to individual children or families. Providers must apply to join the programme and meet the relevant requirements.

- **Are Short Breaks Free?**

No. All Short Breaks activities require a parental contribution, which is set by the provider.

The amount you pay will vary depending on the activity and provider.

Hampshire County Council provides funding to approved Short Breaks providers to help make activities more accessible and affordable for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs.

- **How Can I Contact the Short Breaks Team?**

The Short Breaks Team does not have a direct telephone number. The best way to contact us is by email:

shortbreaks@hants.gov.uk

Contacting Us About an Application

If you are contacting us about a new Gateway Card or Gateway Card+ application, please allow 8–10 working days for your application to be processed before contacting the team for an update.

Before You Contact Us

You may be able to find the information you need by:

- Checking the [Short Breaks and Gateway Cards webpages](#)
- Logging into your Hampshire County Council customer account
- Contacting the activity provider or Short Breaks provider directly regarding bookings, availability, costs or support arrangements