



**Stronger
communities**

Break Time Review 2026

Context and purpose

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lancashire.gov.uk



Welcome & Purpose



Provide a clear opportunity to influence the future Break Time offer, including priorities, design principles, and what good looks like for families and providers.



Shape services so they better meet the needs of children, young people with SEND, and families across Lancashire.



Create space to share experiences, ideas, and practical insight about what is working well and what needs to improve.



Introductions

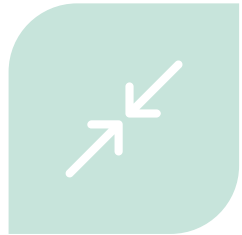
Please introduce yourself and share:

- ❖ Your name and organisation/role
- ❖ Your connection to Break Time
- ❖ One word you associate with Break Time

There is no right or wrong – we're here to learn from each other



By the end of the session, participants will:



HAVE A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF BREAK TIME INCLUDING PRESSURE ON EXISTING FRAMEWORKS AND CHANGING DEMAND



GAIN INSIGHT FROM THE LAST ENGAGEMENT EVENTS, WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO OUR PROVIDERS AND PARENTS BUILDING ON THIS



UNDERSTAND THE ROUTES TO MARKET INCLUDING TIMELINES AND FRAMEWORK STRUCTURES



HELP SHAPE THE BREAK TIME OFFER FOR THE FUTURE



HAVE A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE THE BREAK TIME OFFER



What is Break Time

- Group-based short breaks for children and young people with SEND who have **an unassessed need**.
- Delivering social, leisure and recreational activities, including after-school, evening, weekend and school-holiday provision.
- Supports children and young people to build confidence, friendships and independence in a safe, supported environment.
- Provides parents and carers with a break from caring responsibilities, helping to reduce family stress.
- Activities include a range from arts/crafts, computers skills, gaming, coding, drama, dance and music, accessible sports, day trips, animal care, and sessions that build independence skills



Lancashire has 3 categories of Short Breaks



1 Universal Short Breaks: These are everyday community activities open to all CYP. Examples include after-school clubs, sports clubs, drama or music groups, etc.

2 Targeted Short Breaks: These are for CYP who cannot access universal services without additional support. Lancashire's targeted offer is called **Break Time**. A membership is number is required.

3 Specialist Short Breaks (including Break Time Plus): These are for CYP with higher or complex needs, where families require more intensive support. Access is through a **social care assessment**.



How Break Time works

The Break Time offer from 1 April every year to 31 March the following year (example 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027).

Within this period, families are entitled to 78 hours Break Time hours, which roughly equates to two hours per week during term-time (or an average of 6 hours per week during school holidays) for one year.

Every child who is eligible for Break Time receives the same to ensure equity.



Break Time and Eligibility

Break Time provide a range of activities and groups for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities who meet the criteria to attend and who do not receive short breaks following a social care assessment of need.

To be eligible for Break Time:

- Children will live in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool council areas).
- The child or young person has special educational needs and/or disabilities meaning they are unable to access universal services and activities; and the parents and carers are in receipt of child benefit for that child or young person.
- Children and young people will be able to access Break Time from the start of the academic year (September) in which they turn age 5 to the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.

Parents or carers will be asked to complete a registration form, rather than a formalised assessment. Registration for Break Time is open on an annual basis.



Why Change is Needed Now



The Break Time offer is under increasing pressure due to rising demand and complexity. With the current framework expiring in 2027, this creates an opportunity to review and improve the model.

Access barriers remain significant
Providers report increasing complexity of need alongside funding, staffing, and other pressures



Members

The effectiveness of the current Break Time commission is evidenced by a significant increase in membership, which has grown from 1,364 to 2,961 since 2022, representing a 117% increase.

This growth reflects successful engagement strategies such as digital registration and enhanced collaboration with parents and providers.

Despite this we know that every year approximately half of members do not attend



Summer holiday Break Time survey 2025



90%

Used Break
Time hours



97%

Said their child
enjoyed the
activity



70%

Found booking
easy



94%

Felt SEND
needs were met



75%

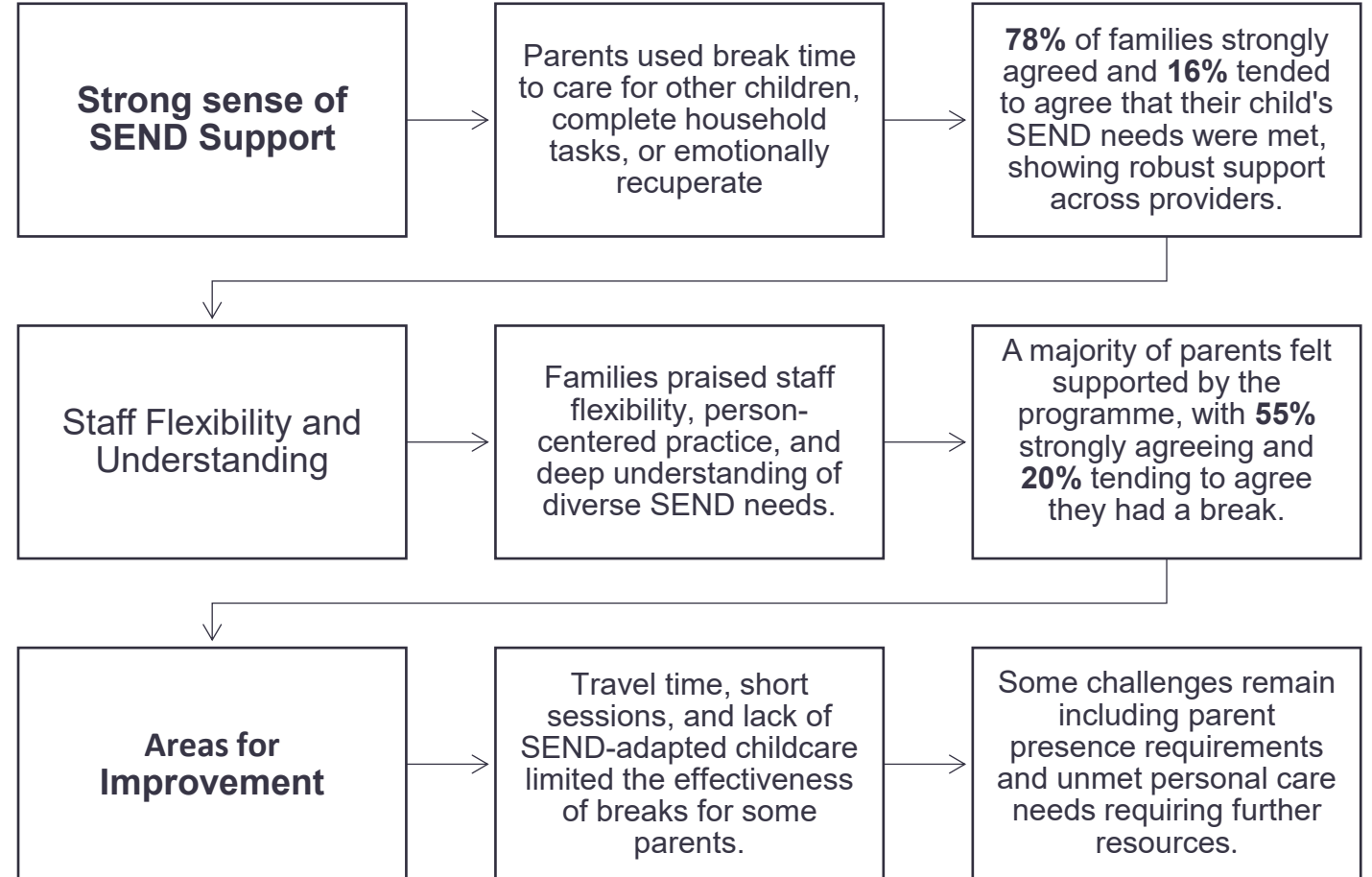
Had a break
themselves



82%

Activity
benefitted the
whole family

Key Benefits for Break Time



What They Tell Us

Family Voice – Impact of Break Time

“Enables us to have some uninterrupted time with our other child and a few hours of work.”

“It gives us a break and allows me to spend quality time with my daughter, who often misses out due to my son’s needs.”

“The support is very important and eases our family pressure during the holidays.”

“It means I can actually spend quality time with my husband, as we rarely do anything without the children.”



What They Tell Us

Parent and Young People

“My child has become much more confident, made new friends, and truly feels included. The staff go above and beyond.”

“Eddie feels happy and confident attending and is now staying for longer sessions. He enjoys learning new skills and comes home excited.”

“Bunny has built wonderful relationships, had the opportunity to improve social skills, build confidence, and develop a sense of belonging and friendship, which she struggles to have anywhere else.

Young Person Voice – Break Time

“The staff helped me feel safe, try new things, and feel like I belong.”



How to Register

Break Time registrations

*From Wednesday 1st April 2026,
Break Time registration will remain open*

Following your feedback, registration will remain open from 1st April 2026 throughout this year for those who have not yet registered or are new to the area.

Visit www.lancashire.gov.uk/SEND for more information.



<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/things-to-do/break-time/?page=1>

Lancashire
County
Council

The number of hours awarded to successful applicants will depend on when a family applies for and receives their membership number.

Break Time members who apply and receive their membership number between 1st April 2026 and 1st October 2026 will be awarded 78 hours.

Break Time members who apply and receive their membership number between 1st October 2026 and 31st March 2027 will be awarded 39 hours



Key System Challenges

Simple, Joined-Up Access
Booking and registration feel inconsistent and difficult, with a strong call for one clear, central digital system and better information for families.

Is the 78-Hour Offer Enough?
Many families feel the annual allocation does not go far enough, particularly across holidays or where children have higher or more complex needs.

Demand, Flexibility & Fairness
Pressure peaks during school holidays, no flexibility to respond to families who need more support.

Access
Transport, rurality and gaps in suitable provision (especially for teenagers) remain barriers,

Clarity & Communication
Families report uncertainty about what is available, how it works, eligibility, and how Break Time links with other short breaks and support offers.

Sustainability: Growing complexity of need putting pressures for providers

Systems and Processes:
Fragmented digital system architecture, making it hard to forecast demand, manage capacity

Sensory & Personal Care Needs: Limited provision for CYP with sensory processing difficulties or personal care needs.

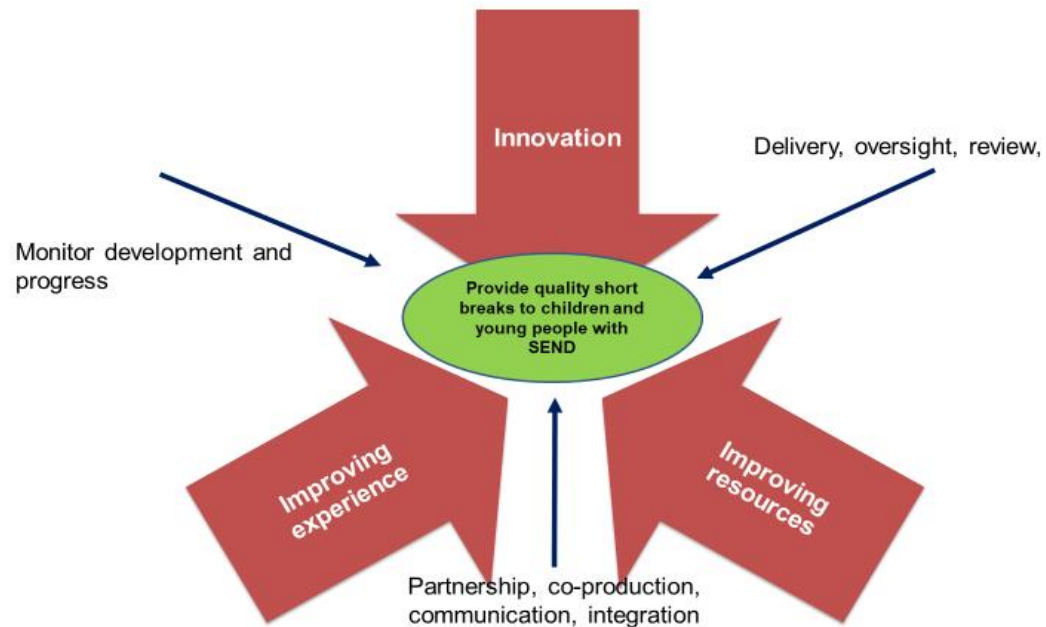


Current Commissioning Model Key Limitations

- A mixed model of framework and off-list spot purchasing has supported delivery but now presents growing challenges.
- Inconsistent offer for CYP, particularly for personal care, neuro diversity needs and higher support needs creating inequity.
- Local variation in availability and access, leading to unequal experiences for families.
- A system that is administratively heavy and slow to adapt, limiting opportunities for innovation and continuous improvement.



Working in partnership across the system to enable and ensure service user involvement in the design, delivery and decision making of short breaks service and broader leisure and culture opportunities



Genuine community and provider engagement.

Undertake genuine meaningful ongoing engagement with children, young people, their families, providers and the workforce in the continued development and delivery of **Break Time** services



Provider Perspectives: Pressures in the Current Break Time Model

Providers are broadly supportive of Break Time and recognise its value for children and families.

However, feedback consistently highlights that the current model is under increasing pressure and does not fully reflect:

- rising complexity of need
- changing patterns of demand
- the true cost of sustainable delivery

Common themes raised by providers include:

- booking and access challenges
- the limitations of the 78-hour allocation
- families running out of hours part-way through the year
- uneven usage, with some families not accessing hours while others need more support



Provider Insight: What Needs to Change

Based on provider feedback, the following areas are seen as priorities for redesign:

- Improved admin systems and digital booking
- Clearer communication with families
- Stronger support for complexity and specialist provision
- Workforce capacity, training and retention
- Improved accessibility, including transport and local availability
- Rethinking the 78-hour cap

These priorities will help shape the redesign discussions today.



Table-Top Exercises – Why We’re Doing This

Your insights will help shape the future Break Time offer

- We want to understand what works well, what gets in the way, and what would make the offer more equitable and sustainable
- These exercises are about **practical solutions** and **what good looks like**
- You don't need to agree! We want to capture the range of perspectives 😊
- We will use your feedback alongside survey data to inform the review and next steps





Coffee Break



Your Views and Feedback

From your perspective, what works well about the current Break Time offer?

What aspects of the Break Time offer are most misunderstood or unclear

Question 1 and 2 what works well



Hours, Access & Equity

How well does the 78-hour annual allocation work in practice?

Hours, Access & Equity



Delivery & Sustainability of Break Time

What would make Break Time more viable for providers to deliver?

Think about funding, flexibility, systems, or support

Delivery & Sustainability of Break Time



Break Time Redesign Priorities

Looking ahead, what should Lancashire prioritise in redesigning Break Time?

Break Time Redesign Priorities



What would “success” look like for Break Time in 2 or 3 years’ time?

Families would say:

“It’s easy to understand and access.”

“It genuinely meets my child’s needs.”

“It gives our family a genuine, meaningful and reliable break.”

All Children & Young People would say:

“I feel safe, included, and confident.”

“I enjoy coming and want to stay longer.”

“I’ve made friends and try new things.”

Providers would say:

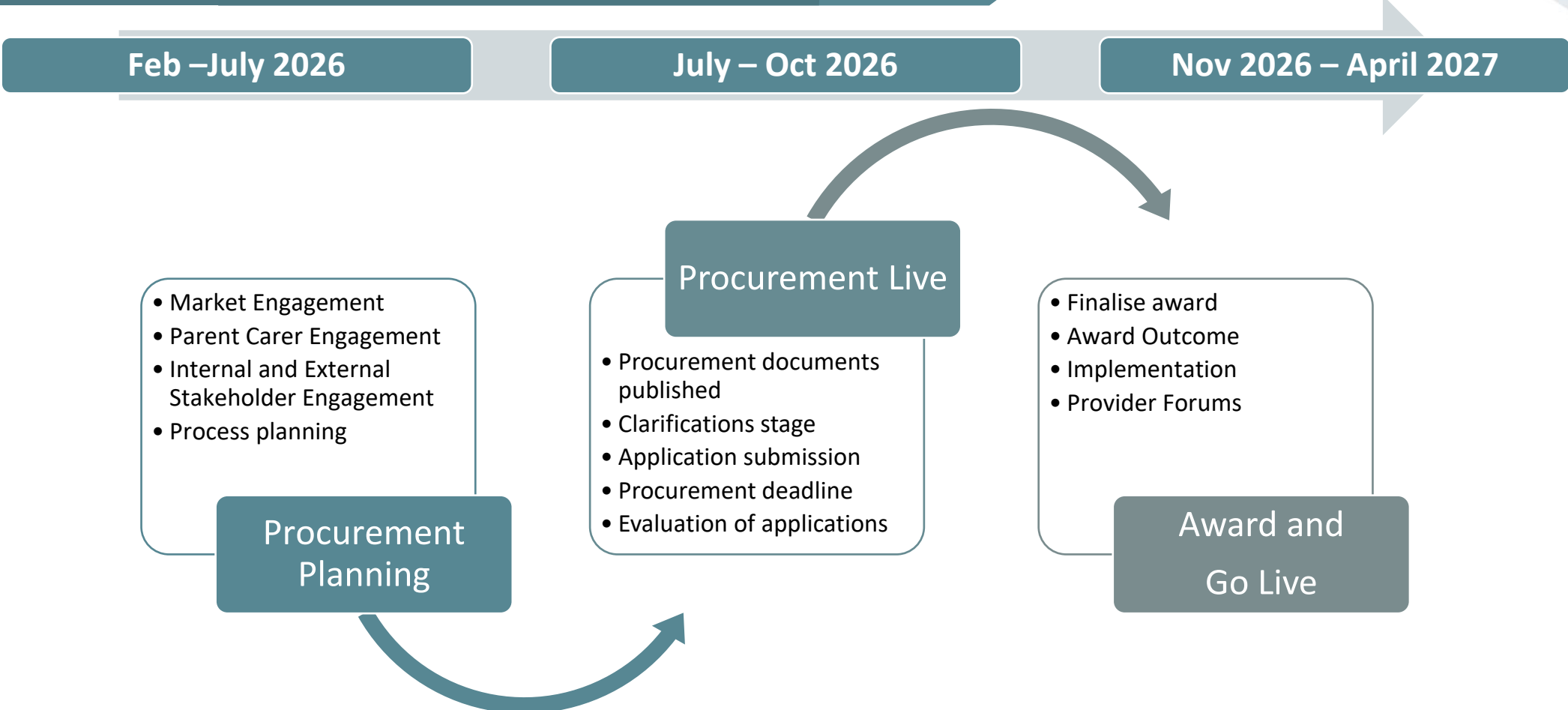
“The model is sustainable and fair.”

“Systems are simple and flexible.”

“We’re supported to meet more complex needs.”



Potential Procurement Timeline



This timeline is a guide - Procurement timelines are subject to change, please see published procurement documents for timelines and deadlines

Final Reflections

Break Time goes beyond a service model- it creates meaningful and sometimes life changing opportunities for children, young people, and their families.

Children and young people with SEND can live gloriously ordinary lives, with the same opportunities for fun, friendship, belonging and everyday experiences as their peers.

This is a powerful reminder of the difference high-quality, inclusive short breaks support can make for children and their families.

Thank You

