

Bath and North East Somerset

Short Breaks for Disabled Children Paper

Consultations July 2022

1. Introduction

This report details the Needs Analysis that was carried out to support the recommissioning of Short Breaks for Disabled Children. Views have been sought from parent / carers of children and young people with SEND, providers of short breaks provision and professionals working in the field of disability. Views from parent/carers have also been captured when undertaking the complex needs review. The conclusions of this report will act as recommendations to the Short Breaks re-commissions that include short term overnight residential, befriending, targeted term time only and targeted school holiday services that will take place in 2023/24 and onwards.

2. Method

The needs assessment was carried out between 6th June 2022 and 15th July 2022. Four surveys were sent out gathering both quantitative and qualitative data via the use of webinars and phone calls.

The parent carer survey sought to seek feedback on three key areas:

- What is working well with regards to the current service delivery.
- Whether there were any improvements/ changes that could be made to current services
- Whether there was a need for the introduction of a new service.

The provider survey consisted of two surveys; one for providers delivering activities in B&NES and one for those who were delivering activities elsewhere. The surveys sought to seek feedback on

- Identify any gaps within current provision
- Identifying the support required to deliver short breaks in B&NES area
- Lessons learnt from delivering sessions through COVID pandemic
- Whether there was a need for the introduction of a new service

The specialist survey sought to seek feedback on

- Where do professionals seek information about short break provision
- How professionals working directly with families share information about short break provision.
- Whether there were any improvements/ changes that could be made to current services

2.1 Surveys

Surveys were produced using a range of professionals from different service areas within the council and a representative from the B&NES parents' group. A survey webpage on the main B&NES council website was created for parent / carers, providers of short breaks provision and specialist professionals working in the field of disability to complete an online survey. On request paper questionnaires were sent out to relevant parties

2.2 Webinars & phone calls

Two webinars were scheduled and facilitated. The first was directed towards providers and the second towards families of children and young people with additional needs. They were advertised widely through the Council website Facebook and twitter accounts. Providers were asked to share the information with all families on their databases.

Throughout the consultation period in June 2022 and July 2022 commissioners made themselves available for phone call consultations so that individuals had the opportunity to talk directly to the commissioners about the short break service.

2.3 Complex Needs Review

The Complex needs review consisted of carrying out a number of in depth conversations with families who have accessed services through the complex needs pathway. This was carried out by either a telephone call or by video call. The interviews lasted on average an hour, where a discussion took place to understand the journey that families had taken and their experiences of using those specialist services. Part of the interview included asking families whether they had accessed short break provision and their experience of this.

3. Summary of Key Findings

3.1 Parent Carers surveys

There were 95 responses from parent carers. The majority of responses consisted of families with one child with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND).

- 1 child 74 (77.9%)
- 2 children 18 (18.9%)
- More than 2 children 3 (3.2%)

The age range of the children in those families were

- 0-4 years 12 (10%)
- 5-11 years 59 (49.2%)
- 12-18 years 41 (34.2%)
- 19-21 years 5 (4.1%)
- 22-25 years 3 (2.5%)

The majority of families that responded lived in the BA2 area of B&NES

- BA1 9 (9.5%)
- BA2 44 (46.3%)
- BA3 19 (20%)

- BS31 13 (13.7%)
- Other postcodes 10 (10.5%)

41% (39) of the respondents said that they have accessed short break provision. When parent / carers were asked what was working well in regard to the short breaks service. The following was stated:

- Child enjoys going / has fun
- There is a structured activity/ routine
- Child given the opportunity to socialise with /make new friends
- Confidence in staff

When asked what they would like to improve/ changes about the current provision they requested for

- More activities to take place outside central Bath
- Improved access
- More sessions during the school holidays
- More accessible information/ publicity about short break provision on offer
- Broaden the range of activities – not just sports

Most of the short break provision takes place in central Bath. If families do not have access to transport, it is difficult to access provision. There needs to be a better geographical spread of provision.

Over 65% (62) of respondents use the Rainbow resource to access information about short break provision. Respondents report information about short break provision is hard to find. They simply don't know what is on offer or they don't know how they can access the provision. Families report 'stumbling over' information rather than it being sourced from one place. Families would like to be informed about short break activities via an email sent directly to them. Parent/carers also report the booking system for the holiday provision seems over complicated to families which hinders access to sessions.

There is a need for a range of activities to be on offer – not just sport. Arts and Crafts, forest schools and life skill sessions were suggested. There were also requests for either group (leisure) sessions of swimming or specific swimming lessons for SEND children.

Other emerging themes included a few respondents stating that they were 'put off' sending their children to provision because the provision is too noisy, busy or/ and uncontrollable. They feel considerations could be made to deliver activities in specific groups that are aimed at autistic, have learning difficulties or complex health needs

"I find most children with SEN are lumped together....attending {a short break} which had a higher number of children who were Autistic.....He has learning difficulties, cerebral palsy and complex health needs so is completely different. I feel as a parent I have no choice but to accept the very limited choice of current short breaks."

Another theme that emerged is the need for more inclusive childcare arrangements. Although short breaks in not considered to be childcare, many families are using it as such,

especially during the holidays. Families have reported not being able to find suitable childcare to cover working hours. Where there has been an after school club, they have found that provision would require extra funding to support the needs of the disabled child.

"I just wish {short breaks} were more like a workday so that I could have summer childcare like my friends."

When asked about Commissioning the term time provision differently most parent/carers agreed with the new model.

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| • Strongly agree | 28 (29.5%) |
| • Agree | 31 (32.6%) |
| • Neither agree or disagree | 32 (33.7%) |
| • Disagree | 3 (3.1%) |
| • Strongly disagree | 1 (1.1%) |

Overall parent/carers feel that the new model will offer a wider range of activities, more flexibility and access to activities more suited child's needs/age.

"Offering more choice and focussing on the activities that are working well seems sensible"

"More variety would be great"

The respondents that disagreed with the new model reported that there may be issues with staffing levels and maintaining constancy for the children was crucial.

"Yes, it sounds great sounds great to have more choice and availability, but consistency is crucial for kids and families"

The majority of respondents (62%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the new model of commissioning the term time only short breaks contract. In contrast, only 4 respondents (4.2%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed, this result has provided the Council with a mandate to implement the new model of commissioning to the term time only contract from April 2023

3.2 Provider Surveys

There were 6 surveys returned from providers that deliver provision in B&NES. Of these 6 organisations 1 provider delivers to 0-21 years. Five organisations deliver to 5-18 years.

All 6 organisations delivered provision through the COVID pandemic. Organisations had to adapt their service delivery. Activities were delivered using smaller groups consisting of school bubbles or by using a digital platform such as ZOOM. This provided an opportunity for organisations to reflect on how they will deliver their services in the future. Organisations found that by delivering the service differently they experienced

- Better integration of parents/carers and their voice into the service
- An understanding of new and innovative ways to support Children and Young People
- Enabled more 1-1 time with children which accelerated a lot of outcomes
- The service had a positive effect on families and their well-being through this time

“These changes taught me about the importance of our service, and how much parents, as well as young people who use our service, value this opportunity”

When asked about what is working well in short break provision, organisations reported that delivering short breaks provision has achieved positive outcomes for children and young people. It has provided children and young people with opportunities to develop new skills. Providers highlight services are designed to be child-centred with a flexible approach and as a result children and young people have developed really positive relationships with staff.

To improve provision providers suggested providing additional resources to be able to deliver specialist support for those with greater complex needs. One suggestion was to create a short breaks forum where providers can communicate around specific challenges relating to short breaks delivery and provide an element of peer support.

Five out of the six organisations believed there were gaps within the current service. The biggest gap identified was a need for a greater number of specialist support staff to meet the increased complex needs of individuals accessing the service. To compound this, staff shortages and recruitment has also been very challenging during and after the COVID pandemic as the pool of available workers has decreased. Providers have also found it challenging to deliver a quality service against the increased cost of delivering the service on an already limited budget. Increased costs include the rise in NI contributions, utility bills, running costs.

In regard to commissioning services differently in the future (the new model) providers comments included

Benefits

- A simpler application process that would suit smaller organisations.
- Being able to schedule a programme of activity around the capacity and resources of the organisation.

Disadvantages

- Organisations may prioritise other funding pots which provide longer term funding,
- Staffing provision may be an issue.
- a less consistent approach does not allow for the continued development of children and young people that regularly access the service.

3.3 Providers who do not deliver provision in B&NES

There were nil returns from providers delivering provision outside of B&NES.

3.4 Professionals in the field of Disability

There was one survey returned by a SENCo. Unfortunately, there were not enough returns to draw any comparisons or conclusions to the survey.

3.5 Complex needs review

It was positive that families had accessed short break provision in the past. The issues that arose with provision was

- Befriending did not carry out personal care or manual lifting and therefore was not suitable for this group of children with complex needs.
- The holiday provisions were too noisy/ busy for child to enjoy the activities
- Provision was too far away – over one hours drive.
- Families mistook short break provision for a child to stay away from home overnight.

This group identified that bespoke packages of support were more suitable to meet the needs of their children with complex needs whilst nurturing the wellbeing in the child.

3 Conclusion

This has been the largest response to any short break survey to date and has been successful in its approach to offering participants different ways to consult.

Parent/ carers report they want a better geographical spread of provision with more variety of activities to choose from. They also requested more sessions during the holidays. There is also a need for short break provision to be more widely advertised using different wording/ messaging, so it is better understood.

Providers report the increasing challenges of delivering short breaks provision such as staff shortages, sourcing experienced staff to support children and young people with increasing complex needs against the increased cost of delivering the service on already limited budget.

With regards to commissioning services differently this consultation has given the Council the mandate to implement the new model which will take effect in April 2023.

4 Further Consultation with Children and Young People

Children and young people will be consulted between Sept 2022 and April 2023 using a resource pack distributed when individual annual reviews of EHCP's take place in schools and other settings. Additional consultation will be undertaken with participants currently accessing short breaks provision. A commissioner will also run focus groups with selected schools. Questions will focus on the types of activities they would like to participate in, during their free time, and how they would like these activities delivered.

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July 2022