Lambeth Council is seeking the views of disabled children and young people, their families, as well as stakeholders on proposals for our short breaks programme.

The consultation will open at 12.00 on 04 September 2018 and close at 23.59 on 11 November 2018, running for ten weeks. Please note that any responses received after this date will not be included in the findings report.

**Why are we consulting on short breaks?**

Our short breaks contract expires 31 March 2019. We are trying to decide what we do next; what our short breaks service should look like in future.

**What are short breaks?**

Short breaks offer disabled children and young people aged 5-19 years in Lambeth, opportunities to have fun, socialise, and learn new skills at afterschool clubs, weekend activities, or holiday programmes. It also provides parents and families with a break from what can be demanding caring responsibilities, providing families with an opportunity to take part in leisure activities, run errands, or meet the needs of other children in the family.

In 2017/18, 167 children and young people accessed Lambeth’s short breaks services. These activities are provided by seven organisations who deliver a range of different short break services. These are broadly split into:

**Who is eligible for short breaks services?**

Our targeted short break services are available to children or young people that:

* live in Lambeth
* are between ages of 5 and 19 years
* have a diagnosis of at least 2 moderate or 1 profound disability (supporting evidence may be required).

Our specialist short breaks services are accessed through social work assessment.

**What are we aiming to achieve?**

We have an opportunity to create a more exciting short breaks offer. We could develop a service that more disabled children and young people can access. We could work with more local providers so they are better able to support disabled children and young people. We could provide activities that young people over 14 years could enjoy.

The challenge is working out how we do so without putting pressure on already squeezed council budgets. We also don’t know if we have enough organisations who can provide the services we want or what children, young people, and their families want from a short breaks service.

**How much does it cost?**

The budget for targeted short breaks services is approximately £597,000 per annum which is drawn from the Children with Disabilities budget; a service budget which is also used to help families whose children or young people need care at home or support with daily living. We are keen to make sure we make the best use of available resources and explore new ways of delivering services.

Despite the financial challenges, we have been ambitious for our short breaks offer. We have sought to develop proposals that increase choice for disabled children and young people, potentially transforming the way these services have been delivered in the past.

**What have we heard so far?**

We have been fortunate to speak to a range of parents of disabled children and young people about our current short breaks service. Some of the consistent themes include:

* Many disabled children and young people are not eligible for targeted or specialist short break services but would still benefit from additional support
* There are few short break activities for young people 14 years and over – social support groups for teenagers was suggested.
* There are a limited range of services and providers on offer – for example, disabled children and young people and families have expressed an interest in swimming, music, media, and sensory sessions
* Activities that develop independence and support transition to adulthood are a gap in short break services
* Our universal services may not be as inclusive as they could be. Concerns about whether universal or mainstreams services are safe or able to cater for the needs of disabled children and young people were also raised.

**How can I have my say?**

Accompanying this booklet is a questionnaire. Please complete the form to tell us what you think of our proposals. Because we are keen to receive as many responses as possible, you can either:

* Complete the form online at: <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/consultations/have-your-say-on-lambeth-short-breaks-consultation>.
* Download and print paper copies of the form at: <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/consultations/have-your-say-on-lambeth-short-breaks-consultation>
* Email the response directly to Lambeth Council using the following email address: engagement@lambeth.gov.uk

Alternatively, you may attend a consultation drop-in event where you can find out more about proposals, talk to council staff and parents that have helped us put these proposals together, or pick up paper copies of the information. These events will be posted on the council’s consultation webpage and updated as needed.

We are also keen to hear from our provider market – both current short break providers and any new and potentially interested providers. We have therefore arranged two events for providers to hear more about our proposals. Booking is required to attend these events.

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| **Town Centre** | **Date and Time** | **Location** |
| Brixton | Weds 31st October at 14.00 | Lambeth Civic Centre |
| TBC | Tues 06th November at 10.30 | TBC |

To ensure children and young people are able to participate in this consultation, we will be working with local schools and the Evelina London Speech and Language Therapy Service who will help us engage with children and young people and obtain views in an appropriate manner, according to age and ability.

**What are our options?**

The council could change the way its short breaks services are delivered, building on the success of the current programme and its ability to provide a good quality break for parents and carers of disabled children and young people.

A group of parents of disabled children and young people have helped us review our current short breaks offer and design these proposals for a future short breaks service. Lambeth Council is grateful for their time and input into this essential development process.

**Option 1: We could stick with what we’ve got**

Currently, eligible families can access seven providers free of charge under the short breaks contract. These providers offer a range of activities including:

* youth clubs
* holiday programmes
* play schemes
* dance-led arts participation programmes
* mentoring service
* afterschool club
* specialist sensory-impairment specific project
* sports clubs and sessions
* weekend activities

Under this option, we could continue to provide a similar range of free holiday programmes, after school clubs, and weekend activities to eligible disabled children and young people who currently use the services. It would ensure we continue to meet the needs of children and young people with the highest needs and is not anticipated to lead to any further budget pressures. For families currently accessing short breaks, this proposal would be familiar and well understood and may ensure strong relationships made with existing providers and their clients are maintained, if successful at tender stage.

**Option 2: We could provide extra short break activities that more disabled children and young people can access**

In order to deliver a short breaks service that meets local needs, this option seeks to invite proposals from a greater number of providers to deliver services for disabled children and young people with the highest and most complex needs to those with a lower level of need. This may range from providers who can offer supported swimming lessons to organisations who provide targeted arts and crafts sessions, inclusive yoga, or help disabled young people develop skills for independent living. This option also proposes to open the door to a new audience, enabling more disabled children and young people to access short break activities.

This proposal would allow the council to commission short break activities that are important to families; delivering more activities for more disabled children and young people. It would aim to be flexible, offering local families more choice in the short break service their child attends, subject to capacity. However, this option would also have a financial impact, in line with the proposed increased number and range of short break activities.

To make sure we do not put undue pressure on the Children with Disabilities budget, this option proposes some families make a financial contribution to the cost of short breaks activities. This charge would not apply to families currently accessing specialist and targeted short breaks services as these children and young people have been identified as having the highest or complex needs.

For parents and carers with children currently ineligible for short breaks, this option would mean families pay in advance of the child attending the session or activity. The benefit to families is that there would be a guaranteed space. It is expected that providers of short break activities would administer a booking and payment system, including a waiting list to enable families to be given notice of spaces when cancellations are known. This proposal would benefit providers as the financial commitment should decrease the number of ‘no shows’, enabling the provider to better plan staffing, ratios, and activities in advance.

**Option 3: We could create a more flexible direct payments offer**

Direct payments are a way of giving eligible people more control over their care needs. For disabled children and young people, an agreed sum of money provided by the council is used by their family to arrange and pay for any necessary support services. Currently, families can only use this direct payment for services which meet their child’s assessed needs, as set out in their child’s care and support plan. For children and young people, these needs typically refer to the cost of carers/direct payment workers who tend to provide personal care such as help bathing, dressing, or eating, rather than on short break activities.

At present, there is no facility for families to pay for short break activities. In addition, not all short break providers accept children and young people with their carers’. This option seeks to develop a more flexible direct payments offer that allows families of disabled children and young people to use their funds on carers who can provide personal care in the home, provide a babysitting service, or support access to different short break activities, as and when they wish. Alternatively, families may decide to save up direct payments and use them on a different type of respite activity, such as a carer accompanying the family on a trip away.

For families already receiving direct payments, this proposal would represent a change in current system. There would also be an expectation families keep a detailed record of spend and submit invoices as needed which may increase a family’s administrative burden. For providers of short break services, this proposal would mean establishing a systems to enable payments. There would also be an expectation that disabled children and young people attending with their carers or direct payment workers would be accepted in the activity.

**Option 4: We could do both, design a new combined short breaks service**

The short breaks programme is designed to enable parents and carers to have a break from caring and support them to do other things such as go to the gym, attend to other members of the family, or run errands. It is provided on the understanding that a short break can enable a carer to provide more effective parenting and care and that this can be achieved in a range of different ways.

This option recognises that there are elements proposed in option 2 and 3 that would be worth developing further. Under this proposal, the council will seek to commission a more diverse range of short break activities that meet the needs of children and young people with different needs and of different ages. Running alongside, will be work to develop an enhanced, flexible direct payments scheme, although this will be over a longer period of time to ensure it’s properly thought through.

We know that building flexibility into our current direct payments offer will take time; however it will support our longer-term inclusion agenda to open the door for disabled children and young people to access universal services. This option therefore recommends that the service retender for specialist, targeted, and independence services whilst officers concurrently develop the direct payments scheme alongside.

**What happens now?**

This consultation is an opportunity for you to help us decide what the future of the short break programme looks like. It is important to us that the views of everyone who is potentially affected by these proposals are considered.

We will publish and present the findings from this consultation to the Lead Member for Children and Young People, who will consider this feedback when making a decision on proposed changes.