

Consultation on proposed changes to Lambeth's Short Breaks Service

Consultation Report
08 January 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The council is clear about its responsibilities to protect and support the most vulnerable. One of its statutory duties is to provide short breaks as set out in the Short Breaks Regulations 2011, which sets out how local authorities should provide breaks from caring for carers of disabled children.

Short breaks offer children and young people with disabilities opportunities to engage in positive experiences and activities that help their personal and social development, through afterschool clubs, weekend, or holiday activities. Importantly, this service also provides parents and families with an essential and valuable break from what can be demanding caring responsibilities.

The council currently administers a short breaks framework contract for children with disabilities consisting of seven providers, which began on 01 April 2017 and will end 31 March 2019, with an option to extend twice by one year. Children and young people that access these services must be between 5-19 years, live in Lambeth, and have a diagnosis of at least 2 moderate or 1 profound disability; they are also broadly categorised as either:

- Specialist/core clients – children with disabilities that meet the social care disability threshold (i.e. have had an assessment and have a social worker)
- Targeted clients – disabled children and young people that do not meet the social care with disabilities threshold and may be able to access universal or targeted services with support.

The impending contract expiration offered the council an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the service, building on the success of the current programme and exploring new ways of delivering short breaks to Lambeth children. To that end, a broad ten week public consultation has recently concluded which sought to ascertain what children and families are seeking from a short breaks offer and how best to meet those ambitions.

1.2 Our proposals

The following four options for a future short breaks service model were developed in partnership with a group of parents of disabled children and young people:

1. Option 1: Status Quo

This option would see continuation of the same or a similar short breaks service to that currently delivered by our seven providers and continue with existing referral arrangements based on current eligibility criteria. All activities would continue to be free of charge for eligible children and young people.

This would be the simplest and fastest option to implement with no anticipated budget implications, although may not meet wide range of local needs or suit different disabilities. For families currently accessing short break services, this option is familiar and well understood and may ensure strong relationships made with existing providers and staff are maintained.

2. Option 2: Increase Range Short Break Activities with Greater Access

This option seeks to increase the range of short break activities for disabled children and young people with a view to supporting greater access to services and meeting a greater range of need. This will be achieved by tendering for a variety of specialist and targeted activities with a focus on inviting proposals from organisations that cater for different ages and disabilities, including activities that help disabled young people develop independence.

This will deliver more for families of disabled children and young people, however there may be an associated financial impact, given the proposal to not only extend the range of services on offer, but potentially enable more disabled children and young people to access services. This option therefore also tested views on the proposal for some families to make a financial contribution to the cost of short break activities, assuming

families in need could still access services free of charge. For families with disabled children and young people that are currently ineligible for short breaks, this facility could prove valuable as universal or inclusive services have been found to limit access to disabled children. It would however require exploration of a suitable booking and payment system and would require consideration of threshold for payment.

3. Option 3: Create a more Flexible Direct Payments Offer

Direct payments are a way of giving eligible people more control over their care needs; in these cases the council provides an agreed sum of money to arrange and pay for any necessary support services which families with disabled children and young people must use on services which meet their child's assessed needs. For children with disabilities, this assessed need is typically for the cost of carers who provide personal care such as help with bathing, eating, or getting ready for school.

This option recommends developing a more flexible direct payments offer that allows parents and disabled children and young people to access universal, targeted, and specialist short break activities when and where they wish; empowering families of disabled children and young people to be part of defining their own care needs. This may mean families can use their direct payments to pay for their child to attend a short break activity or to pay for a carer to accompany their child to an activity or on a trip away.

For families already receiving direct payments, this option would represent a change in the current system. It would also create an additional administrative burden for the family and the council corresponding to need to monitor spend and activity. Providers would also need to ensure a payment system was available to enable families to use their direct payments.

4. Option 4: Design a Combined Short Breaks Service

This option recognises that there are elements within the proposed options outlined above that would be worth developing further; specifically the need for a more diverse short breaks service offer that meets the needs of children and young people with different needs of different ages, as well as an enhanced, flexible direct payments scheme.

Building flexibility into our current direct payments offer will take time to develop as a change in current practice; 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 short breaks service retender for specialist and targeted activities take place in the short-term whilst officers concurrently develop the direct payments scheme alongside, over a longer period of time.

2. The consultation

2.1 Consultation objectives

This public consultation was an opportunity for disabled children and young people, their families, and providers to help us decide the shape of the future short breaks service offer in light of the impending contract expiration. It is important to us that the views of everyone potentially affected by these proposals are considered.

In accordance with the Short Breaks Regulation 2011, local authorities must ensure that when providing short breaks, they have regard to the needs of different types of carers. The legal duty has been extended via section 27 of the Children and Families Act 2014, requiring local authorities to know what the level of need for short breaks is in their area, and whether these needs are being met through the provision of sufficient short breaks. This public consultation exercise sought to meet these objectives by gaining a deeper understanding of needs.

Our consultation objectives were as follows:

1. Provide a reliable, responsive, and consistent short breaks service for children and young people with disabilities and their families.

2. Engage parents/carers, families, and children and young people with disabilities in the design of a new short breaks offer.
3. Establish stronger oversight and monitoring of service providers, demonstrating value for money whilst ensuring local needs are being met

An Equalities Impact Assessment considering the potential impact of the recommended short breaks service model on people with protected characteristics has been drafted and is attached to this report. **Flesh out with information pertaining to main changes and anticipated impact on equality groups.** This report demonstrates the council has met its obligations under the public sector equality duty.

2.2 Who we consulted

A Council Steering Group including representatives from the Children with Disabilities Team as well as a Parents Co-Design Working Group were established to help design, review, and consult on proposals. Members of the Parents Co-Design Group in particular were invaluable in offering their time and input into the development and consultation process.

The Council and Parents Co-Design Working Group actively sought the views of disabled children and young people, their families, as well as current and potential service providers. This specifically included:

- Lambeth Parent Forum
- Parents and families of children and young people who access short break activities
- Parents and families of disabled children and young people who do not access short breaks
- Disabled children and young people
- Special schools
- Existing service providers
- Potential service providers
- Local Parent Carer Networks (e.g. Lambeth ADHD network, Somalian Carer Network)
- Disability Advisory Service Lambeth

2.3 When we consulted

Public consultation opened on 03 September 2018 and closed on 11 November 2018. This is a standalone service which will be reviewed by the Council Steering Group and Parents Co-Design Working Group, and presented to the Lead Member for Children and Young People for a decision.

2.4 How we consulted

A range of consultation techniques were used to gather feedback from children and young people and their families. These are summarised below.

2.4.1 Digital activity

The consultation was widely promoted online; Council activity included preparing detailed information for the council's consultation page, which included links to snap surveys and information booklets for download, along with a Love Lambeth blog post highlighting the consultation. The consultation was also widely promoted online by other organisations including:

- NHS Lambeth CCG
- Lambeth primary schools (e.g. Crown Lane Primary School and Children's Centre)
- Lambeth Parent Forum
- Disability Advice Service Lambeth
- Lambeth Made newsletters aimed at providers

Social media channels were also utilised to encourage residents to have their say, including:

- Twitter – Lambeth Life
- Lambeth Facebook

- Streatham Mums Network Facebook page

Finally, links to the consultation were sent through relevant communication channels, including:

- Lambeth Parent Forum mailing list
- All Lambeth maintained schools and special schools
- Existing provider lists

2.4.2 Print activity

Hard copy questionnaires and booklets were printed and made available at each consultation event and were also distributed by the Lambeth Parent Forum and members of the Parents Co-Design Working Group. Questionnaires designed specifically for disabled children and young people were distributed by staff at special schools. Some schools also included information on the consultation in school newsletters, such as Kings Avenue School.

2.4.3 Event activity

A host of different consultation events were arranged across the borough to ensure that as many people as possible had a chance to feed in. These are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Short Breaks Consultation Drop-In Sessions

Town Centre	Date and Time	Location	Event Type
Brixton	25 th September	Brixton Hill Islamic Centre	Somalian Parent Carer Coffee Morning
	26 th September	Effra Parade Children's Centre	Lambeth ADHD Parent Carer Coffee Morning
	02 nd October; 10.00-12.30	We are 366, 366 Brixton Road	Lambeth Parent Forum SEND Coffee Morning
	13 th September; 10.30-12.00	Brixton Library	Drop-In Session
Clapham	31 st October; 10.00-11.30	Clapham Leisure Centre	Autism specific session – National Autistic Society
	02 nd October at 11.00–12.30	Clapham Library	Drop-In Session
	24 th October; 10.00-12.00	The Spinney	SEND specific session for 0-5 years
Streatham	10 th October at 10.00-11.30	Streatham Library	Drop-In Session
Norwood	16 th October at 15.00-16.30	Upper Norwood Library	Drop-In Session
Stockwell	13 th October at 11.00-13.00	Oasis Adventure Playground	Play and drop-in session

Table 2: Provider Events

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

Table 3: Targeted Special School Sessions

School	Date and Time	Consultation Lead
Elm Court	28 th September	Evelina London – Speech and Language Team; Members of Parents Co-Design Working Group
	03 rd October	
Livity School	04 th October	
	19 th October	

2.5 The cost of consultation

The only cost associated with this consultation was the commission of the Evelina London speech and language therapy team to consult with disabled children and young people at two special schools, as detailed below.

Table 4: Consultation costs

Activity	Cost
- Development of communication tool	£1,110
- 4 sessions of facilitation at 2 schools	

3. Responses from members of the public

3.1 Summary of results

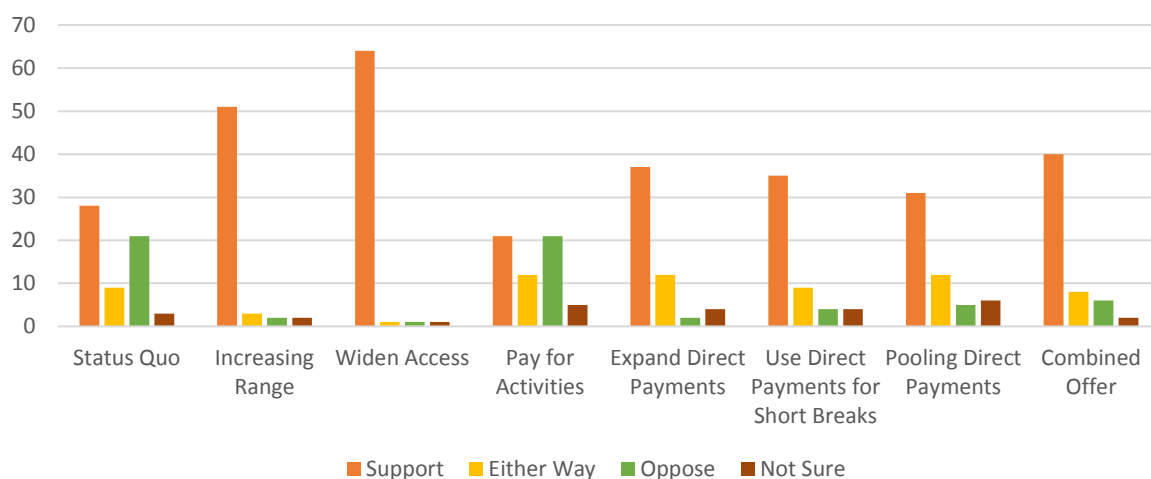
151 responses to the consultation were completed and submitted through a variety of means and meetings, as detailed below in Table 5.

Table 5: Consultation Responses

Consultation Form	Number
Full online questionnaires	30
Easy to Read online questionnaires	17
Michael Tippett School hard copy questionnaires	18
Elm Court hard copy questionnaires	40
Livity School hard copy questionnaires (missing one event)	9
Lansdowne hard copy questionnaires	10
Support group hard copy questionnaires	8
Provider hard copy questionnaires	12
Drop-In hard copy questionnaires	7
Total	151

Figure 1 presents the numbers of respondents in support or opposed to proposed service models. The results demonstrate the high level of support for increasing access to a greater range of short break activities. There is also clear support for a broader direct payments offer. Interestingly, the option for some families to pay for activities received an equal number in support and opposition.

Figure 1: Summary of Responses to Consultation



Of the total sum, 54 (36%) respondents were parents or carers who had used short breaks before. 88 children and young people completed this questionnaire across four special schools and short break providers, which represented roughly 58% of total responses received. Of these children and young people:

- 62% had or are attending some short break activity at time of completion,
- 17% had not accessed any short break before,
- 7% were unsure, and
- 14% gave no response.

Figure 2 and 3 depict what short break activities parents have accessed and what providers' children and young people recall attending, respectively. Figure 2 confirms popularity of holiday programmes as a short breaks service followed by weekend and sporting activities.

Figure 2: Short Break Activities Parents/Carers have accessed

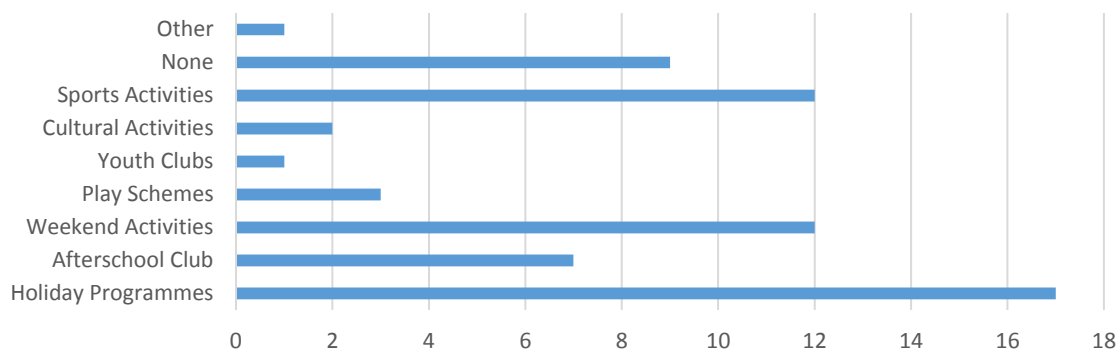


Figure 3 establishes Charlie Chaplin Adventure Playground as the provider the most children and young people have attended. Demonstrate and Oasis Adventure Playground are also popular options, however the figures regarding Demonstrate in particular must be treated with caution as it is likely several children completed the questionnaire at school as well as at a provider.

Figure 3: Short Break Providers Children and Young report attending

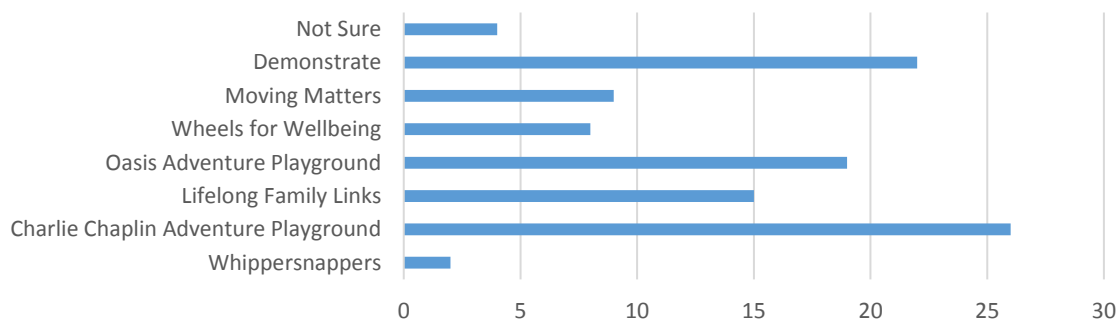


Figure 4 and 5 depict what respondents consider important and would like to see in a future short breaks offer. From these Figures, it is evident that the range of activities on offer is of greatest value to respondents, followed by session logistics such as day, time, and level of support on offer. Inclusion and bringing together disabled and non-disabled children and young people also featured strongly.

Figure 4: Feedback on what is Important in a Short Breaks Service

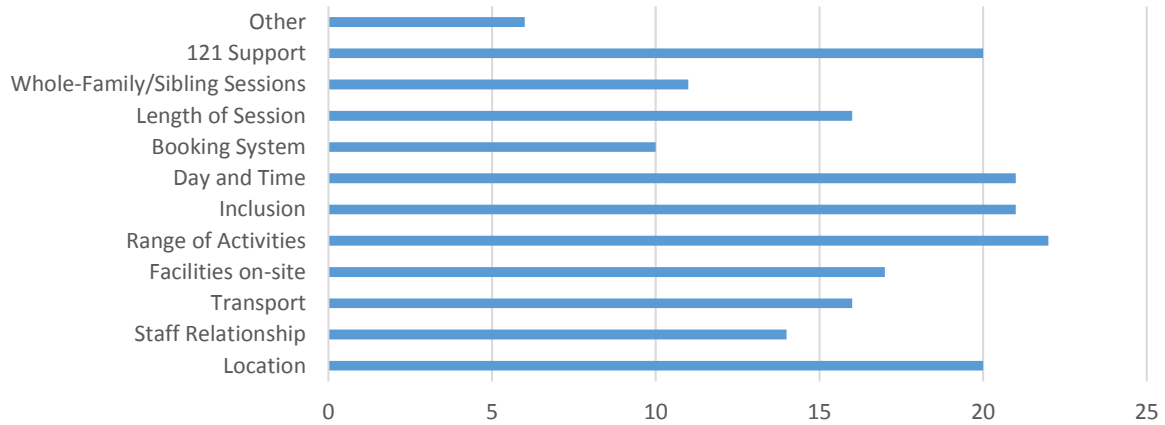
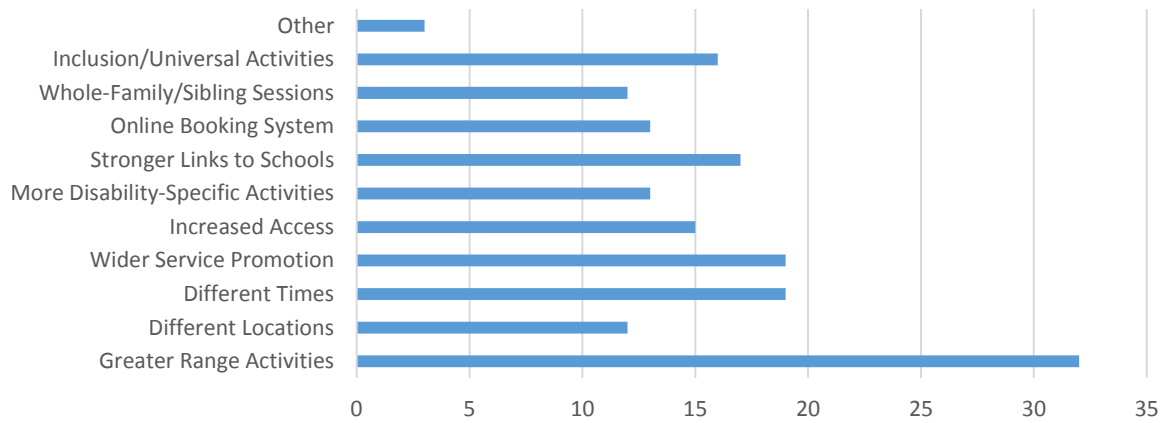
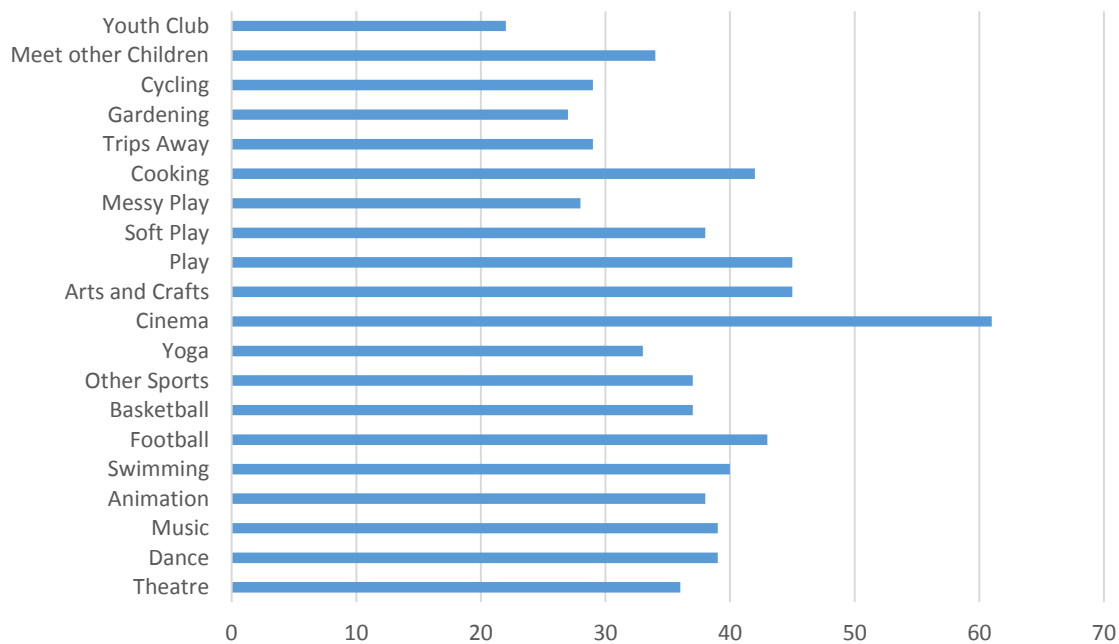


Figure 5: Feedback on what Respondents would like to see in a Future Short Breaks Service Offer



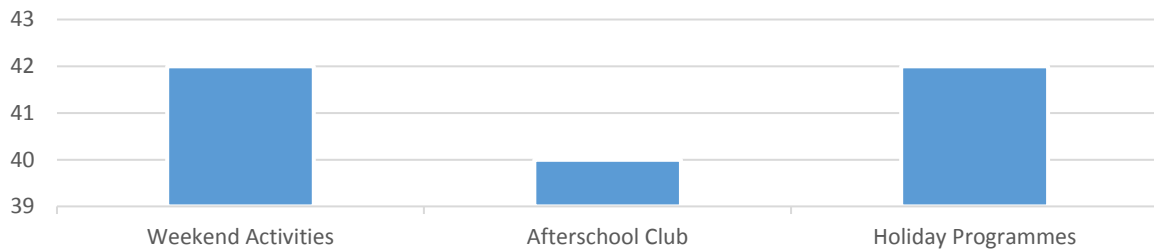
The type of short break activity disabled children and young people would like to participate in is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6: What Children and Young People Reported they wanted in a Future Short Breaks Service



As seen in Figure 6, going to the cinema is the preferred activity for children and young people, which was consistently reported irrespective of school. Play, arts and crafts, and cooking were also highly popular activities amongst children. Interestingly, there were some school specific trends in preferences – for example, pupils at Elm Court displayed a preference for sporting activities such as football and basketball, and music whereas pupils from Michael Tippett School indicated preferences for swimming and cooking and Lansdowne pupils preferred play and football. Pupils who attending Michael Tippett School were also more likely to attend (or have previously attended) Charlie Chaplin Adventure Playground and students from Elm Court School, Oasis Adventure Playground. Figure 7 demonstrates when children and young people prefer to attend short break sessions, which is essentially equal across session types.

Figure 7: Preferred Short Break Timing of Children and Young People



3.2 Summary of post code analysis and demographics

The demographic makeup of the respondents are presented below.

Figure 7: Ethnic Representation of Respondents

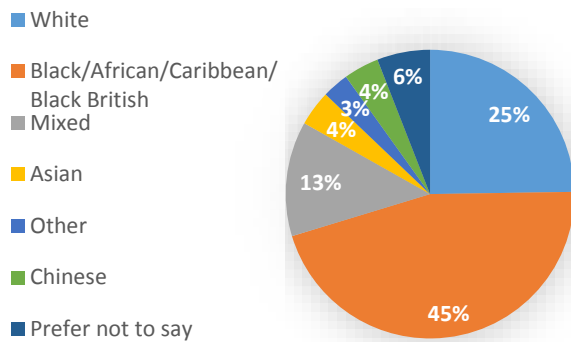


Figure 8: Gender Composition of Respondents

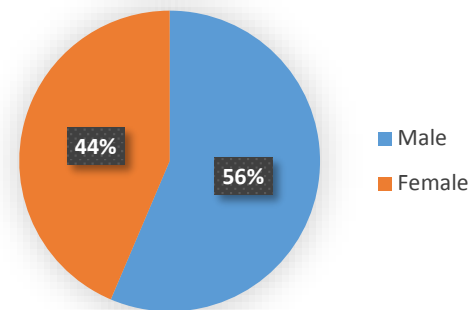


Figure 9: Age of Respondents across Types of Consultation

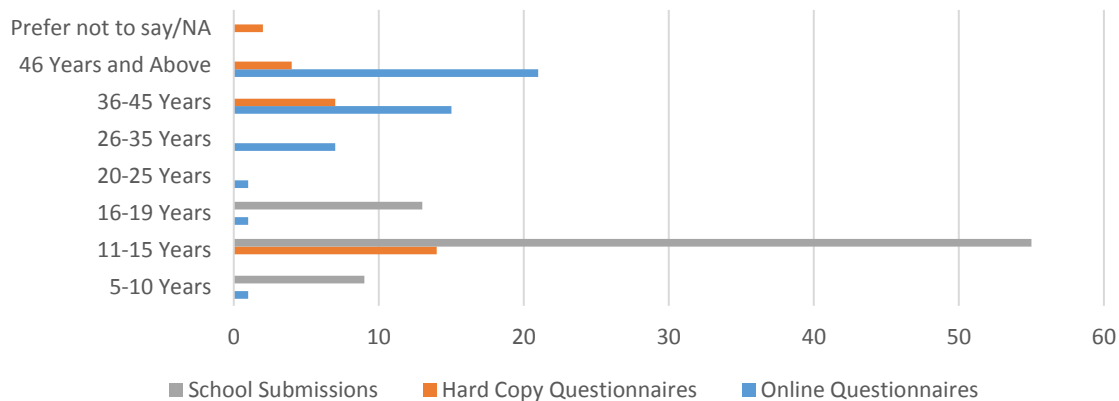


Figure 10: Percentage with/without Disabilities

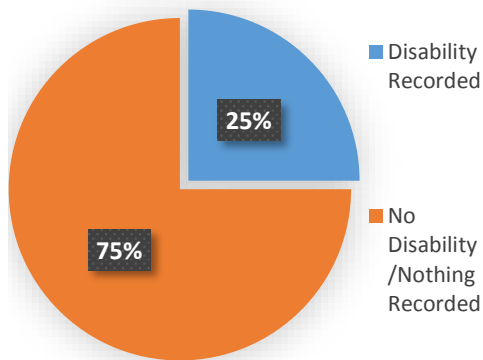
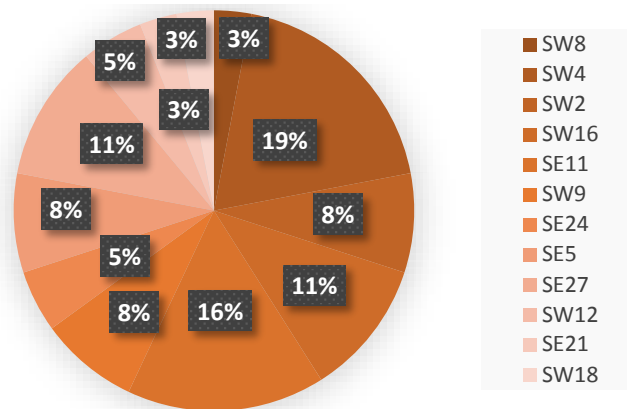
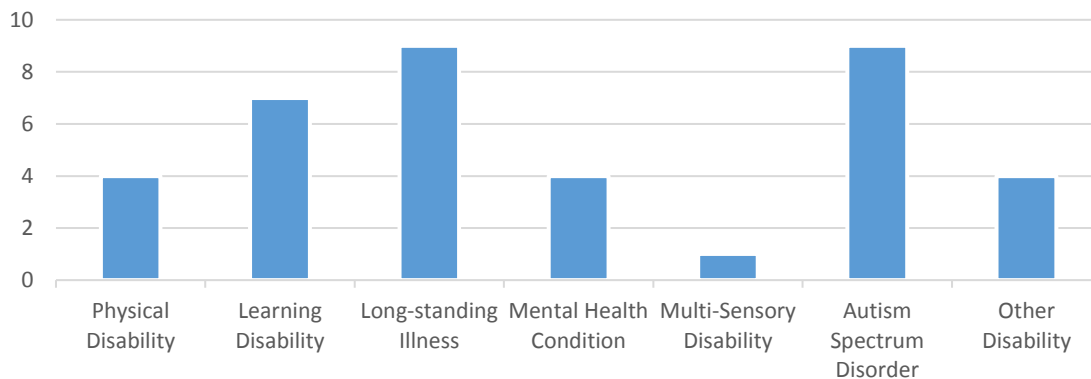


Figure 11: Post Code Analysis



It is worth highlighting that Figure 10 is not a true reflection of number of disabled people completing the questionnaire as some respondents listed multiple disabilities. In addition, disability type was not included in the questionnaire for children and young people, however it is reasonable to assume the majority of children and young people have disabilities as the forms were collated and submitted by special schools or short break providers. Figure 11 depicts the post codes of respondents (where provided), demonstrating a good spread of responses from across the borough with the highest response rate from those in SW4 (Clapham) and SE11 (Kennington). Figure 12 presents the disability type reported by respondents.

Figure 12: Disability Type Reported by Respondents



Respondents were also asked whether they were responding as parents/carers of children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities, as service providers, or members of the public, as presented in Figure 13. For those that responded as parents or carers, the age of the children/young people cared for is depicted in Figure 14.

Figure 13: Perspective of Respondents

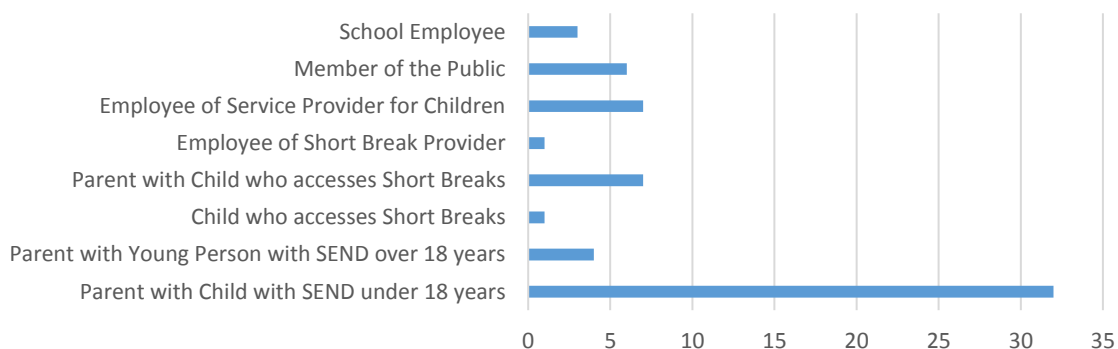
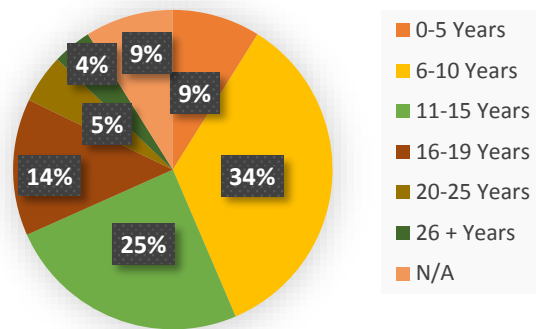


Figure 14: Age of Children/Young People with SEND Parents Care For



3.3 Additional comments

In reviewing the comments, there were some key trends and similar themes that emerged. These have been broadly arranged into themes and presented below for ease.

Overall Feedback on Proposals

Based on the number of comments and the level of detail provided, it is evident that a refresh of our short breaks package is welcomed. A sample of comments can be seen below.

'It very much sounds like Lambeth has listened to the struggles of local families and is looking to relieve some of this pressure. These proposals would be a welcome change and would assist families rather than what can sometimes feel like trying to push them away and into independent sources.'

'The proposals would have a benefit for our current families and any new families wishing to access our services. The creation of more options for families across the borough would be great as it should allow more families to access valuable services that would benefit their child. For us as an organisation it would need to be carefully managed so that we can still provide a quality service to families and don't just add new users for the purpose of receiving more money to then only provide a limited service to the families. Overall it will be positive to add options for everyone.'

Proposed Improvements for Future Short Breaks Offer

Respondents were asked about the current short breaks offer and whether it was fit for purpose and met the needs of families and children with disabilities. The need for an increased range of activities that meets needs of different disability types and age groups was repeatedly raised along with issues related to eligibility for, and access to, short breaks, which is consistent with trends seen in Figure 1. For example:

'Add in some specific places who are trained in supporting those with autism so that social skills and support with anxiety could be included within the days. Calmer settings without loads of trips and busyness but with options for forest school type activities, mindfulness and craft';

'The short break offers ideally should be vast and various for children and young adults of differing levels of SEN/disabilities. More promotion of the offer/s should be made available as they occur and not after the fact. Most people have a smartphone so why not create an App. where registered people can be made aware of services and consultations. More importantly the short break offer should be AVAILABLE TO ALL and not just those on middle and higher incomes.'

'After school clubs to mimic what we see in mainstream schools. Drama, music, workshops, tailored to need and capability of the individual. More youth clubs with a fun approach to potential apprenticeships so said person acquires a skill that could lead to potential employment, e.g. gardening, clay pottery, mechanics etc.'

'More tailored support for us as a family, if staff were trained in working with autistic young people it would mean they would understand anxiety levels around change and use strategies such as visual timetables, visual timers and calming strategies, I would then be able to send my child on to short break service knowing she would be more understood. She hates school and finds it hard enough so when her anxiety is low in the holidays, the last thing I want to do is send her somewhere to make that higher - holidays are when she is able to sleep through the night. She needs that for her health - so do the rest of the family....'

Also, better and most consistent utilisation of existing resources within the borough was emphasised by many respondents, particularly special school facilities, as seen below.

'There are many great activities and clubs/groups within the borough that could/should be available as options for families to access. More thought into more creative options that aren't simply adventure play or sports club related that provide a variety of options for young people instead of simply respite for a few hours as and when required. Our young people need to be challenged and empowered by the services that they access....'

'...The quality of service is not to the standard we can find in independent charity associations or private groups suggesting the crucial need to better monitor current providers for a better service. Also it is a shame that the great facilities from Lambeth provision schools cannot be put more at the service of disabled children for the weekend or holidays (eg Adapted swimming pools, sensory rooms...)'

Access for Children with Aspergers and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Many respondents highlighted through the questionnaires and the consultation events, the need for provision for children and young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Aspergers and the gap in services that exist for this cohort. This is a particular need for many families who are struggling to cope with comments provided indicating the depth of feeling, as seen below:

'There is no Asperger groups. There is certain groups active and only certain groups or cultures where everybody should be involved of the right level for the young people NOT just seriously disabled getting access....The stress and isolation is crippling me. The development of the family is chronically slow and has nearly put me in my grave several times....'

'More specific Aspergers groups dealing with mental health alleviation. Activities to give confidence building and time away in a nurturing and supportive group /youth club social skills and fun being with similar age peers'

'Asperger's groups and clubs ensuring these people are not sidelined into isolation.'

'If you provided services for Asperger teens and young adults it would change my life I wouldn't be a prisoner in my own home My children would have friends'

Parents and carers also raised concerns about the services on offer once their young person reaches 19 years, alongside the limited range of activities for young people 15 years and above. More activities that promote socialising with young people with similar interests and disabilities was proposed by parents. For example:

'More activities and greater range. We struggle to get enough things to do for our son Bruno and now that he's about to enter teen age we think will get worse. He doesn't like to go out with mum and dad anymore but is unable to make friends due to his autism. We want him to have friends and do things with others like other kids of his age do. Play dates, sleep-overs, week-end camps, things that all other kids enjoy all that he can't have.'

'I agree that the provision of activities to Young people aged 16+ needs further developing. I do not agree that families should pay for services. Also, increasing the services can lower the quality of those same services.'

'Inclusive play opportunities for children and young people aged 5-18 and supported volunteering opportunities for young adults with disabilities aged 16-25.'

Inclusion

The need for inclusive activities that bring together disabled and non-disabled children and young people is an increasing priority for local families, which emerged in this consultation.

'...The other thing I would like to see more is inclusive activities. I would love to see a future with complete inclusion where activities would not be for disabled and non-disabled but for everyone mixed. Kids learn so much from other kids! And the learning would go both ways. Neurotypical kids should know more about kids that are different, the whole society should know more about disabled people and completely include them. We are all together in this.'

'The idea of an inclusive brownie or scout group with children who have no disabilities alongside those with disabilities is attractive but needs a lot of people who will be available to support disabled children to interact more with their peers.'

Eligibility and Access Issues

The difficulty families have experienced in accessing short break activities was emphasised in many questionnaires, particularly in reference to the eligibility criteria. For example:

'...Even more frustratingly the process of short break allocation is extremely slow and made arbitrarily by people from the council rather than the parents/family choice of what would be best adapted to the disabled children...'

'The current booking system and activity allocation is currently so rigid that it discourages families to apply. More support would be needed at busy times - especially Christmas time.'

'...Some families do not have children with severe disabilities but are just about managing and living with challenging behaviours which is still as stressful. Every child WITH a EHCP should access to short breaks. Weather it's for 1mths or 1year. Just to give families a piece of mind.'

'We struggle to find activities in the holidays. The summer was a long time with no support. I'd like to be able to use my DP (direct payments) to pay for services and also for the services to be clearly advertised and simple to access...I currently have no idea what is available, what is classes as a short break, whether we are eligible etc...it's very difficult to find information and everyone gives slightly different info'

'At present my 16 year old son cannot access any relevant local activities during the holidays which is not good for him or for us and means he is isolated'

Mixed Views on Paying for Short Break Activities

As evidenced in Figure 1, there were mixed opinions about charging for short break activities as well as concerns about how it would be applied in practice, as the comments below demonstrate:

'If a family is in the financial position to contribute in some small way to the funding of the short break activity, I feel this would be a good option, and will enable more children with SEND to access services that would be of benefit to not only the child, but in many cases the whole family.'

'The idea of families contributing makes perfect sense for better support to be provided to more children. I love the idea of transparent online booking system. Being a parent of disabled child is a daily battle so any extra help to make it easier for us is greatly welcome!'

'I think a payment system could be divisive and I am not clear how it would operate.'

'Sceptical. In time, I can only see that middle and upper income families will benefit from services because they have the financial means to pay for services.'

'It is important that fees are not pitched too high that only middle and upper income families can afford activities for their child/ren/young adult/s. This is already noticeable with other activities aimed at children/young adults who do not have any disabilities.'

General Support for Direct Payments

An enhanced direct payments offer also provoked many comments and views from respondents, which ranged from concern about monitoring spend to enthusiastic support for greater control:

'Who is going to monitor/police the way the money is spent. Extra staff?'

'As long as the family can account for what the money has been used for and there are LA safeguards in check so that payments are not misused, I cannot see any reason why families should not be able to use direct payments in a more flexible way. However, if this option means that only children with complex needs are only able to access this provision, then I would not support it.'

'This is definitely a great option - to implement on top of option 2! We know best what works best for our child and family and having complete control would make our life sooo much easier'

'I think short breaks should be offered as a separate offering to direct payments as I believe it's separate offerings'

4. Next steps

The report will be discussed and reviewed by the Parents Co-Design Working Group and Council Steering Group before being submitted to the Lead Member for Children and Young People together with a final Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and covering report making final recommendations on the preferred approach.