

Lambeth Short Breaks Service – You Said, We Did

From 04 September – 11 November 2018, we heard from over 150 disabled children and young people and families on their ideas for a future short breaks service in Lambeth. A wide range of opinions and experiences were shared with us, responding to our need to determine what local families were seeking from a short breaks service.

Described below is how we have responded to some of the key headline findings from this consultation.

<i>You Said</i>	<i>We Did</i>	<i>Why</i>
<p><i>A greater range with wider variety of short activities is needed, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disability-specific sessions</i> • <i>Age specific sessions</i> 	<p>Two supplier engagement events were arranged with over 15 new providers in attendance in total. Key purpose of the events was to generate interest in tender, with view to procuring wider range activities.</p> <p>The tender will also seek providers able to deliver short break activities that cater for different disabilities (e.g. nature and mindfulness activities for children with autism) and age groups (e.g. supported volunteering or practical skill development such as gardening or mechanics for young people).</p>	<p>Current short breaks service has remained unchanged in recent years. Lambeth is fortunate to benefit from host of different providers who have knowledge and may be interested in providing short break activities.</p>
<p><i>Increased access to short break activities for children and young people that are currently ineligible, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>children with Aspergers/ADHD; and</i> • <i>19-25 years</i> 	<p>Access to specialist short breaks is based on a social work assessment and meeting social care threshold. Revising eligibility criteria for targeted short breaks was considered, however cost associated with wider access was prohibitive.</p> <p>We are however, committed to working with and developing local market to provide more inclusive activities for disabled children and young people with a lower level of need. Discussions are underway with Young Lambeth Cooperative to review commissioning plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities and enable access for these children and young people and their families who are ineligible for short break services (including children with ADHD or Aspergers) and can often feel overlooked.</p> <p>Linkages are also being made with the SEND For Change Preparation for Adulthood Workstream which has been established to look at plans to meet needs of young people aged 19-25 years.</p>	<p>Without adjusting the criteria for short breaks, the council has seen more than a 35% increase in new children and young people accessing service in 2018/19. This has placed substantial pressure on existing budgets. Widening criteria to accommodate additional children would potentially result in reduction in existing packages for children assessed as having highest and most complex needs.</p>

<p><i>A broader and more flexible direct payments scheme is welcomed.</i></p>	<p>Part of the new short breaks service model includes provision for families to use their direct payments to pay for short break activities. There is also a requirement for successful providers to accept direct payment carers on site or as part of stay and play sessions. This represents a more flexible approach to use of direct payments and a change from current system where access to services is only on referral via the council.</p>	<p>Council supports personalisation and inclusion agenda – both of which would be achieved through a more flexible direct payments policy. This approach also appears to be broadly supported by results of the public consultation.</p>
<p><i>Current system is confusing and not transparent for families; process of allocation is slow and decisions are made by the council rather than families</i></p>	<p>We have sought to clarify the current referral process and define the range of short breaks provision eligible families can access; this allocation is pending social work assessment (specialist packages) or a review of provider space/availability (targeted packages).</p> <p>Following tender and successful provider appointments, we will aim to pull together a clear directory listing all short break providers, timings, locations, and costs. This will enable families to see what the options are and choose which service/activity fits best, either by requesting placements or by using direct payments.</p>	<p>Based on conversations with parents/families and providers, it is clear that the current referral system and short breaks offer is seen as confusing. We will seek to rectify this through the short breaks retender and service directory.</p>
<p><i>Moving from Children's to Adults Services can be difficult</i></p>	<p>The recent establishment of the SEND For Change Preparation for Adulthood Workstream recognises the challenges families experience in transitioning between services and aims to look at plans to meet needs of young people aged 19-25 years. This group is populated by officers from Lambeth Children's Services and Adults Services as well as community/parent representatives to ensure issues are identified and resolved.</p>	<p>Recent SEND reforms have extended age range for Children's Services to 25 years. Bringing together adults and children's services in a dedicated work stream will ensure appropriate resource planning and anticipated financial impact can be managed.</p>
<p><i>Need to make better use of existing local facilities, particularly special schools</i></p>	<p>All special school headteachers have been invited to the short breaks supplier engagement events alongside the current leisure facility operator and local adventure playgrounds, as a means of facilitating and brokering new partnerships between venues/spaces and service providers; one of the key objectives from these sessions.</p>	<p>The case to make better use of Lambeth's wealth of facilities and sites that can cater for disabled and non-disabled children alike is well established. By making partnership working a key principle for future short breaks service provision, we have confirmed our expectations and priorities in commissioning a future service offer.</p>

	<p>We have also specified in new tender, our expectation that providers work in partnership, whether that be via joint partnership bids or consortium or sub-contracting arrangements. This relationship will be assessed as part of the tender evaluation and has been emphasised at supplier engagement events.</p>	
<p><i>Often poor quality of services – particularly compared to independent organisations – raising concerns about performance management</i></p>	<p>The regular service monitoring templates will be revised to give assurance to council and families that all commissioned providers’ are meeting quality standards set out in the new tender. This will include a list of any complaints and compliments received from service users and a requirement for a clear and visible complaints policy and procedure.</p> <p>The new tender sets out a requirement for service users (i.e. families and disabled children and young people) to have a greater say in service design and delivery. Specifically, providers will be required to consult with service users a minimum of twice per year on the quality of services they receive and actively encourage users to suggest improvements or alternative ways of working.</p> <p>We will also require commissioned providers to adhere to new service standards and have a secure case management system established that ensures all staff working with children have a full and comprehensive history of children in attendance and a support and activity plan is in place.</p>	<p>The varying quality of services was raised with the council throughout public consultation, in-person as well as in questionnaire feedback. There are clearly opportunities to not only improve current services but create a more robust system whereby parents and children/young people can feed back views and suggestions for service improvement.</p>
<p><i>Need for more inclusive activities that bring together disabled and non-disabled children</i></p>	<p>The importance and value of inclusion was emphasised at short break supplier engagement events and providers will be encouraged to submit tender proposals that promote inclusive practices, including provision for stay and play sessions.</p> <p>We also plan to expand the council’s direct payments policy for disabled children and young people to enable families to use their direct payments more flexibly; to attend more/different activities and services children are interested in, outside of dedicated short breaks provision (e.g. swimming sessions, children’s yoga, adventure playgrounds).</p>	<p>This approach will ensure that short break activities that meet high and complex needs of disabled children and young people remain available to families.</p> <p>Expanding direct payments should also open the door to equal access to play, learning, and leisure in other forums; removing some barriers to access activities in mainstream settings.</p>

All future service providers need to have access to medical expertise, be trained in manual handling and hoists, and be able to administer medication as needed

A section related to 'High Needs Requirements' has been included in the new tender specification which sets out all the knowledge and experience requirements providers will need to be successful in their tender. This includes access to medical expertise, manual handling and hoists, first aid, toileting, and personal care provision.

This will be tested with providers and with the parents' co-design working group to ensure all needs of children and young people are being met.

This approach may whittle down the number of providers who apply for the tender. However, we are committed to promoting development of new partnerships and encouraging joint bids where providers who have the skills/experience can join with providers who do not.