



Working together to reach your goals

CYP Short Breaks Statement Consultation 2011

Consultation Findings and Recommendations Report

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1. Introduction:

By the 1st October 2011, each Local Authority is required to produce their version of the Short Breaks Statement. The statement will set out how each Local Authority intends to offer their Short Breaks provisions to families of disabled children and young people.

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) was keen to consult with disabled children and young people who currently attend, or would like to attend Short Break provisions in Bucks. Therefore in August and September 2011, the BCC Disability Participation Worker (DPW) consulted with disabled children and young people.

Children and young people from the following Schools and services were consulted with.

- Booker Park School
- Harding House School
- Stocklake Park School
- Bucks Activity Holiday Project
- Buckinghamshire County Council Youth Service – Summer Residential

Some of the children and young people who took part in the Short Breaks Consultation from the Schools and services identified above, said they also accessed Short Breaks with the following providers:

- Buckinghamshire County Council Youth Service
- Cross Roads
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Green Park All Ability Days
- Green Park Overseas Residential
- National Autistic Society
- Pebblebrook School Club
- Social Link Arts Club
- Stony Dean XL Group
- The Grove
- Young Carers

The aim of the consultation and participation exercise was to identify what makes a good service and if there were any areas for improvement through gaining the views and experiences of disabled children and young people.

The key questions the workers were asked to consult with children and young people on were:

Q1. What do you think about the Short Break activities?

Q2. How would you like to be involved in deciding future Short Break activities?

Q3. Why is it important for you to attend Short Breaks?

Q4. Had you ever complained about the Short Breaks? Did anything change for the better?

For children and young people who do not currently attend Short Breaks, the first and last questions were changed slightly to allow them to still share their views. For example:

- What activities do you think would be good for children and young people to attend for a Short Break?
- If you were unhappy about an activity, would you complain and who would you complain to?

2. Project Overview:

During August and September 2011 a total of 109 children and young people were consulted with, with 85 of these children and young people having been engaged with through the Bucks Activity Project, and the remaining 24 having been consulted with at their School and at a Youth Service summer residential. Of the 24 engaged with through their School and the Youth Service, 5 young people said they attend Short Breaks, making the total number of children and young people consulted with who access Short Breaks 90, with 19 children and young people consulted with not currently accessing Short Breaks.

The children and young people consulted with were of mixed age and gender with varying levels of need, and were made up of a total of 72 males and 37 females, with the age breakdown of the children and young people being as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • 05 – 10 years | Total: 40 |
| • 11 - 15 years | Total: 45 |
| • 16+ years | Total: 24 |

The consultation was open to children and young people with a range of disabilities and / or learning disabilities.

3. Method:

Sessions with the children and young people were as inclusive and participative as possible, taking into account the needs of the individual along with time and location constraints. For example, all children and young people were asked the same questions but different methods were used where needed to allow the children and young people to express their views such as group discussions, colouring and writing, playing games, selecting choices from pictures, or enabling the children and young people to guide the workers around the activities and show them the things they liked.

It was explained to the children and young people why the DPW had come to visit them. Children and young people were told the information they provided the DPW with, was to make sure the children and young people were happy with the short Breaks they received and would be used to try and help make the Short Breaks Service better where needed.

In all sessions children and young people's answers were recorded onto a 'perfect pizza' and children and young people were assured they could be completely open and honest. The children and young people could draw or write their answers onto different paper pizza toppings and then stick them onto the paper pizza base, with each question being represented by a different topping.

Assistance was provided to those children and young people who could not write or draw, along with a selection of pictures, and yes or no answers & games being used to help children and young people with minimal or no verbal communication. During all sessions Bucks Activity staff or School staff, were present to help with the individual needs of the children and young people as required.

As the Youth Service summer residential was an inclusive project, so as not to single out the young people from their peers who the consultation was not applicable to, the questions were asked in a discreet manner when the opportunity arose to have an informal chat with the young people on a one to one basis, as it was decided the perfect pizza exercise was not appropriate in this setting.

4. Key Findings:

Q1. What do you think about the Short Break Activities?

Children and young people who access Short Breaks with the providers named in the Introduction of this report (page 3) said they liked the following activities:

- Bowling
- Horses Helping People / Horse Riding
- Thomley Activity Centre
- Cinema
- Fun Days
- Bikes
- Circus skills / Drumming / & Bubbles workshops
- Exploring / Going Outdoors
- Swings / Parks / Walks
- Thames Valley Adventure Playground
- Music Room (at Thomely)
- Singing
- Reading
- Swimming
- Family Days
- Climbing
- Motorbikes
- Longridge
- Soft Play / Ball Pit
- Computers for games & internet
- Sensory Room
- Ball sports – football, basketball, tennis, table tennis, basketball
- Go Karts
- Arts & Crafts
- Water based activities – Kayaking, bell boating etc
- Green Park All ability Days
- Finland residential
- Camping with the Duke of Edinburgh

The most popular activities were; Horses Helping People / Horse Riding; Thomley Activity Centre, Thames Valley Activity Centre, Climbing, Sensory Room, and the Swings / Park / Walks.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, children and young people who were engaged with via their school or at the Youth Service summer residential felt good activities for children and young people to do would be:

- Skateboarding
- Going to the gym
- Dancing and Disco's
- Going out for meals
- Shopping trips

- Trampolineing
- Theatre trips
- Paint ball
- Wrestling
- Jet skiing
- Watching TV & DVD's

Children and young people who attended Short Breaks also said the following about the Short Breaks on offer from the providers mentioned in the Introduction (page 3):

- "Days like this are long enough" (*For example, a holiday project day from 10am – 4pm*)
- "It's good"
- "All the staff are good" (*Young person is referring to the Short Breaks staff*)
- "Brilliant"
- "I like doing some things on my own and with parents"
- "It's good to meet new & old friends"
- "It's great fun having days out"
- "I like mixing with other young people (both disabled and non disabled) I would like to do this more often. (*Young person is referring to a camping trip as part of an award scheme*)"
- "Good mixture of people, the hours are fine and the mixes of ages is ok"
- "Good exercise and very local to us"
- "Days are ok, but the other young people were older than me. It would be better if they were my age" (*Young person is referring to a social group outing day*)

Children and young people who attend Short Breaks felt improvements to the service could be made in the following ways:

- "Farm trips"
- "More activities for older ones – films to be more suitable for older young people"
- "I'd like to go ice skating"
- "I would like to go shopping with (*Short Break Provider*) – I go shopping with my mum"
- "Trips out on the Jubilee line & other trips"
- "I want time without my sister. She copies me and earwigs" (*Sister is also a disabled child & often attends the same projects*)
- "I would like time away from my sibling who is also disabled, & would like an overnight stay"
- "I would like to choose which activities I do & choose film at the cinema – never get to choose"
- "Longer than a day – I would like an overnight stay" (Out of 109, only 2 felt this)
- "Go skiing to a dry slope"
- "Free Running"

Q2. How would you like to be involved in deciding future Short Break activities?

Children and young people who were consulted with, said they would like to be involved in deciding future activities in the following ways:

- Flyers with more information
- To be given choices
- Postal Questionnaire / Tick List
- Internet based Questionnaire / Tick List
- Talk to me / Ask me not my parents
- Someone to visit me at school and ask me
- Space to write my own ideas
- Video
- Drawings
- Library
- Text me
- Call me

The most popular answers were that children and young people wanted to be given postal questionnaires or tick lists, with space for their own ideas to be added. In addition to this children and young people felt strongly that they should be asked, not their parents, what they wanted to do and that they should be given choices. Some direct quotes from the children and young people can be found below:

- “Just ask me”
- “To know about all, ask us”
- “Staff to ask me not my mum”
- “I would like to be involved in making decisions”
- “Tick boxes and space to write my ideas”
- “Young people to know more about the clubs”
- “Not parents responsibility to say what young people do”
- “Teach kids how to use sign language”
(This young person was deaf & thought all young people should be taught sign language so all children and young people could communicate with each other better)
- “Have a choice and choose which activities you wish to do. At Longridge I really like the climbing wall but we don't do it”
- “Choice on internet, list of activities to choose from on internet and space for my opinion. Able to print off form and choose on the day”

Q3. Why do you think it is important for you to attend Short Breaks?

Children and young people said it was important for disabled children and young people to attend short breaks for the following reasons:

- Meeting new people / making new friends
- Having time away from my family
- Mummy / family to have time to themselves
- Having Fun / To Play
- Learning new skills / Having new opportunities
- Building Confidence
- Broadening interests / Trying new things
- Being Active
- Keeps me out of trouble / So I don't get bored
- Helping others
- So parents see how good you are
- Family trips

Children and young people also felt it was important that the staff who worked on Short Breaks were friendly and that Short Breaks were fair, in that they provided disabled children and young people opportunities to do things non disabled children and young people could do.

Below are some direct quotes from children and young people:

- "This is a really good place to come. It's really good for children and young people to come here and have fun" (*Young person is referring to Thames Valley Adventure Playground*)
- "It's important it's just children and no adults"
- "Nice to have time without parents and brother"
- "It keeps you out of trouble and keeps you active. It has made a difference to my life, not quite sure how but I'm happy when I go home. I used to get called trouble"
- "Mummy has time for herself"
- "At home I fight with brothers and sisters and mum gets annoyed"
- "Like to meet friends without mum"
- "Give parents a break during the day"
- "Nice to have time for myself"
- "It's good for social skills, but I'm not independent here, even though I don't have a carer. Independence is like the bus pass we get and work we do at school about going out"
- "Learn other things that I wouldn't of been able to learn if I hadn't of come here"
- "Learn confidence. It's good for shy disabled children; helps bring them out of their shell. If you have speaking difficulties you learn about communication and how to speak if you have language difficulties"
- "It helps disabled children to do things they never would have been able to do, because they didn't have the money or couldn't do it. Gives new opportunities to disabled children"

Q4. Have you ever complained about the Short Breaks? Did anything change for the better?

The majority of children and young people who attend Short Breaks said they had never complained because they were happy with the Short Breaks. One young person made the following comment:

“No I’ve never complained. Like it all, it’s good they have spent more money for disabled children. Spent it on things disabled children can not afford”

There were however, a few young people who said they had wanted to complain in the past but did not complain. Their reasons for not complaining were because they did not like complaining, because they felt nothing would change / there would be no point, or because they were scared to.

Of the 89 children and young people who access Short Breaks, 32 said they had complained. Below are quotes taken from these children and young people:

- “I did say to staff I wanted to have a choice of films, but I still had to go see films I didn’t like”
- I complained once, it was a bit boring – not enough activities”
- “I’m happy to talk to staff on the day but I want more privacy from staff when they are talking to my mum at the end of the day about my complaint about time away from my sister. (My sister attends the project too and copies me)”
- “It makes me feel better after I have said my complaint”
- “I told dad what happened, I don’t know what happened after that”
- “I complained to project staff about having to wait and not having my turn. He told her off”
- “I used to go to another project, I didn’t like it, it was boring so I told my mum. I didn’t have to go again”
- “I tell my sister who will tell a worker & I would like someone younger to talk to”
- “Yes I sort it out”
- “I tell mum, mum tells the staff, the staff to ring”
- “Yes I will tell mum, mum to tell leader to make changes”
- “Yes they listened. I said I don’t like climbing, they let me sit and watch the swimmers instead”
- “The Short Break is boring. I want to make new friends not old friends. One screams, one is too serious, one doesn’t talk. I don’t want old friends, I want new friends,...it’s better for me.” *(This is an older young person who previously took part in the Residential Short Breaks Consultation 2011, in which they complained of being with the same people and who previously commented on the activities not being age appropriate. **Residential Short Breaks Consultation 2011; pages 6 & 9)***

Of the 20 children and young people who were consulted with either at School or the Youth Service summer residential who did not access Short Breaks, 8 said they would complain if they were not happy, and knew who to complain to. Only 2 said they would not complain, because they did not like to, with the remaining 10 not sure whether they would complain.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations:

In conclusion having listened to the children and young people and having looked through all of the evidence, it is clear that children and young people on the whole enjoy the Short Breaks services they receive. It was also clear from the evidence that the most important thing to the children and young people about the Short Breaks is the opportunity to attend a wide range of activities which keep them engaged and entertained, providing new opportunities to make friends and learn new skills away from the presence of their family.

Although the Short Breaks services are often viewed as an opportunity for the families of disabled children and young people to receive respite, it is clear that the children and young people also value this time away from their families as *their* opportunity to receive respite and spend time with their peers.

The recommendations of this report therefore are as follows:

- For all Short Breaks Providers to involve children and young people in the decision making and planning process of the activities equally if not more so, to that of the parents.
- For all Short Breaks Providers to carry out regular feedback / review opportunities with the children and young people who access their services.
- For all Short Breaks Providers to provide more information to the children and young people regarding the itinerary of the day so that they may make more informed choices.
- For all Short Breaks Providers to identify and provide opportunities to challenge and progress the development of the children and young people to learn new skills, such as social skills, communication skills and independence as well as providing a fun activity.
- For Buckinghamshire County Council to provide feedback and an accessible version of the Short Breaks Statement for the children and young people involved in the consultation.

'Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account'

- Article 12, *The United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child.*

6. For further information

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7. Definition of Terms:

Consultation

'The process of seeking the views of a range of children in order to inform and improve decision making.' (*Children as Partners in Planning – Save the Children.*)

Participation

'Participation is a term increasingly used by those working with children and young people to mean children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; it means involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live.'

(*Introduction to Policy on Children's Participation – Save the Children*)

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a person with a disability as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments and also hidden impairments. In the DDA 'substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. 'Long-term' means has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.