

Recommissioning short breaks for disabled children 2017-2020

**Consultation and
Engagement 2016**



Introduction

To help inform plans for the recommissioning of Herefordshire's 2017/2020 short breaks offer for disabled children, the council has conducted a series of collaborative consultation and engagements activities in 2016. The feedback that has been gathered builds on earlier work, dating back to 2010, that involved families and stakeholders in the continuous improvement of short breaks provision in Herefordshire.

A summary of the main messages collected this year is provided overleaf and is being used to help inform final commissioning intentions, service designs and a procurement exercise in the autumn of 2016.

Further information about activities and short breaks for disabled children is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shortbreaks, and any questions can be emailed to shortbreaks@herefordshire.gov.uk.

Main messages

Message 1: Families want short breaks to offer more than a 'baby-sitting' service. Commissioned services, in particular, should be needs led and outcomes focussed.

When the short breaks offer was last recommissioned in 2013, families were involved in designing an outcomes framework for their children and themselves. Children and their families have told us that this framework should now be developed to include:

Outcomes for disabled children

- Have fun
- Spend time with friends and make new ones
- Take part in interesting activities and new experiences
- Develop positive life and social skills
- Be more independent or confident
- Prepare for life as an adult
- Be safe

Outcomes for parents and carers

- Feel less pressured
- Be able to get on with normal routines
- Have some 'me time'
- Spend time with other children or together as a family
- Be confident that their child is safe and having fun with skilled carers who understand their needs

What happens next?

- The updated outcomes framework will inform service specification and procurement activity.
- It will also be used to measure the effectiveness of services, including ongoing feedback from children and families

Message 2: Day time activities are the most preferred type of short break, with school holidays being the most preferred time. Sessions need to be longer, 5-6 hours is most preferred

What happens next?

- Invest in market development overall, particularly around universal and community services.
- Inform service specifications for targeted daytime activities

Message 3: The most preferred ways to develop the short breaks market are to improve understanding of disability issues among the universal and community sectors and to improve accessible information about short break opportunities

What happens next?

- Inform service specification for innovative market support and development service/s that can:
 - Identify and address essential provider training requirements
 - Facilitate provider sign-up to WISH
 - Support providers to offer more targeted activities
 - Promote short breaks opportunities and WISH content to families of disabled children

Message 4: Inclusive nursery settings, with specialist skills, are the most preferred short break settings for disabled children aged 0-5

What happens next?

- Share feedback to further inform Herefordshire's childcare sufficiency strategy

Message 5: There is clear support for an allowance-based system, to promote equity of access, for targeted daytime activities that are not subject to a social care assessment

What happens next?

- Build service specifications for targeted daytime activities around plans to implement allowance system linked to SEN bandings as soon as practicable
- Define and promote eligibility criteria and access process
- Intention to move towards pre-paid cards during the next three years, increasing choice and flexibility while minimising administration processes

Message 6: Flexible purchasing for individual children, or direct payments rather than block contracts are the most preferred methods of paying for short breaks, but direct payments are seen as difficult to access, arrange and make good use of

What happens next?

- Procurement to be based on framework agreements or dynamic purchasing systems
- Ensure direct payment guidance is clear, straightforward and accessible

Message 7: There is no particular preference for services to be delivered either by the council or independently

What happens next?

- Continue to develop mixed market of internally and externally provided services

Message 8: There were mixed views about the importance of having local activities, particularly in the market towns, versus centralising services in a "one-stop-shop" somewhere in Hereford

What happens next?

- Continue to develop a range of affordable services that can support a variety of needs as close to home as is practical

Message 9: There is clear support for families to be able to choose when to take overnight breaks to meet assessed needs

What happens next?

- Service specifications for overnight respite to require providers operate a hotel-type booking system and agree dates with families one to three months in advance, subject to availability and matching with other children

Message 10: Many families would like to stay informed about services and opportunities for disabled children, but not exclusively about short breaks

What happens next?

- Continue implementation of Herefordshire's voluntary disabled children's register to help enable direct communication with families on broad issues
- Continue to develop and improve information about the local offer for disabled children, including reviewing Herefordshire's short breaks statement

More detail about what people have told us is also available in four appendices:

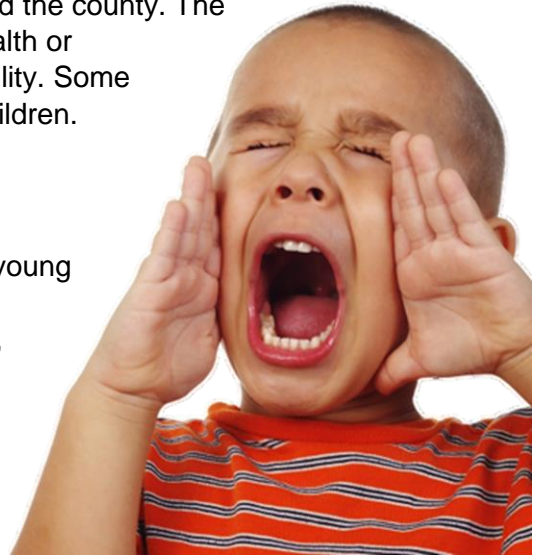
Appendix	Topics
1	Children and young people voices about themselves and their short break activities gathered through participation work
2	Consultation - Summer 2016 Responses and feedback to formal consultation survey and from parent carer engagement sessions
3	Consultation – background information Including information about statutory duties, types of short break activity, levels of demand and options for 2017-2020
4	Family Survey – May 2016 Responses from families that had used short breaks services about their experiences, outcomes, and the preferences for the future

Appendix 1: Voice of children and young people

Over the summer of 2016, and as part of work to consult with local people about the future provision of shortbreaks, the Council sought to engage with children that use such services. The Council's participation officer attended a series of events organised by the National Autistic Society and Marches Family Network around the county. The children involved have a wide range of physical, health or behavioural needs, and levels of communication ability. Some events were also open to the siblings of disabled children.

Method:

All comments below ascertained from children and young people whilst engaging in play. General discussions were about: likes, dislikes, what makes them happy, what do they do at home, why do they attend group sessions. No drawings etc. are being provided as part of this consultation as children and young people keep their work for their journals.



Challenges:

It was clear that many children and young people struggled to manage with a new person at sessions. Moreover, when engaging with children and young people it was clear that many talked within the context of the session/ activity. At Holmer and Westfield the groups were split into older and younger so numbers were reduced.

In summary, the things that were important to the children we met included:

happy places
interesting activities
things for older children to do
new experiences
good workers
being with friends

This is what children told us about themselves and their short break activities:

- I love it here
- It is my first session today
- Being here with my siblings who have autism is nice
- They need stuff for older ones to do; like computers
- I like playing cbeebies computer games
- I really love it here
- I like watching sponge-bob and playing computer games
- 50/50 – fun/ getting away from parents
- I spend a lot of time in my room at home
- I like steam engines
- Young person supported by worker/ buddy to sign to me that she was happy at the moment
- I'm really happy
- Do you like it here? Yes. What is the best thing about today? L was silent but pointed at her worker/ buddy
- I like painting
- I like going to the beach
- I like going on the swing
- What do you do at home? Nothing
- I go to Leominster with my buddy. It is my choice
- I like T, S and R – they are my friends
- I like building boats
- Two children used stickers to describe how they felt about attending group sessions
- At the start of the afternoon session – worker/ buddy encouraged children and young people to say/sign whether they had had a good morning. All children and young people communicated that they had enjoyed the morning/ that they were happy
- I like making new friends here...it is fun
- I like cooking
- Did you have fun at the circus? I did, I did, I had fun
- I like star wars...I watch films at home
- I like it here but I am not coming next time because it is my birthday and I will be six
- I like playing Lego in my room
- I got this teddy at the beach, I went with my family. My sister (sat next to us) got a new hairbrush I had a really nice time there with them
- I really like TY teddies because their eyes are sparkly
- I have never done this before (referring to the circus)
- It would be great if they had computers/ tablets (older young person)
- I do not like being chased – that is bad today
- Young person supported by worker/ buddy to choose activities for the day. Young person chose free time/ outdoor play and water play
- Young person supported by worker/ buddy to sign to me that she was happy



Some parents of children attending the sessions also took the opportunity to speak to the council's participation worker about:

- how brilliant youth session is
- their children enjoy the sessions and are able to be relaxed and themselves
- not moving to Hereford if this place didn't exist
- the sessions aren't long enough
- the staff are really good

Appendix 2: Consultation and engagement – July-August 2016

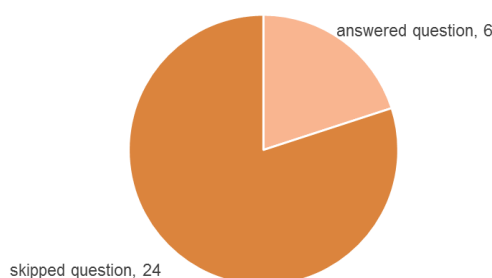
Between 18 July and 31 August 2016, the council undertook a formal consultation to further inform different options for the future of Herefordshire’s short breaks offer for disabled children. The options and consultation built on previous feedback, which included a family telephone survey conducted in May 2016 (see appendix 4). People could have their say in the consultation in several ways:

- talking to commissioners and professionals at a parent/carer drop-in session around the county
- completing an online survey
- requesting a paper copy of the survey
- emailing ideas, questions or suggestions to shortbreaks@herefordshire.gov.uk
- children can talk to our participation officer at a scheduled event

To promote the information available about short breaks and the consultation opportunity, the council wrote to 800 families of children with disabilities or special educational needs in Herefordshire. Information was published at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shortbreaks and promoted through local schools and special schools, short breaks service providers and parent carer forums. Commissioners and members of the council’s children with disabilities team attended 13 engagement events over the summer and had conversations with 43 parent carers. Survey respondents were encouraged to read the consultation background document (Appendix 3), which explained the recommissioning options in more detail. Thirty people submitted survey responses, 23 of which were the families of a disabled child. The results of the survey are provided below. Additional feedback from conversations has also been included where given:

Question 1. Families have previously told us that short breaks should work towards the outcomes for children listed below. Is there anything that we have missed?

- Achieve personal goals and learn new skills
- Be more independent or feel more confident
- Spend time with friends and make new ones
- Take part in activities that interest them
- Develop positive social skills
- Strengthen skills learnt elsewhere
- Be safe



Survey feedback

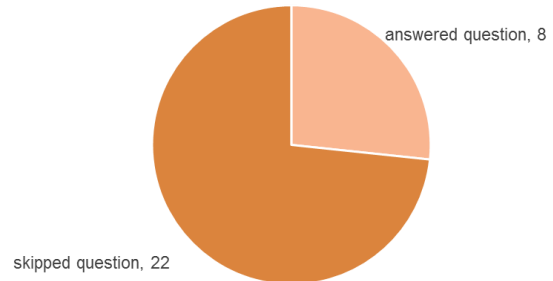
- Able to access facilities to have new experiences
- Help them with their emotions and others emotions
- Be fun
- Learn what his personal strengths are
- Access activities and opportunities for which they would require additional support which is not otherwise available unless provided by the parents
- Develop a positive attitude concerning their disabilities

Additional feedback

- Help to prepare for life as an adult

Question 2. Families have previously told us that short breaks should work towards the outcomes for parents and carers listed below. Is there anything that we have missed?

- Feel less pressured and have some time for themselves when they can be 'off duty' and relax
- Spend time with their other children or together as a family
- Be confident that their child is having fun with skilled carers who understand their needs



Survey feedback

- Parents need to feel confident that their child is happy and in a safe environment.
- Parent carers need time off their caring duties to keep healthy and sane. If unable to look after themselves they probably will become ill. If a parent carer is no longer able to carry on with their caring duties it will cost the local authority a lot more than looking after families.
- Short breaks need to be closer to home (Ledbury) to make the most of the time available
- I'd like to be able to do things myself sometimes, like go to the cinema, so my family would look after my children
- Groups with other children so they don't feel any different
- Be in a safe environment and be able to push personal boundaries in a safe way
- Provide the opportunity to just get normal daily routines such as shopping/cleaning done!
- Allow parents to have structured time with their children, whilst knowing that support is available

Question 3. If you are a family or carer of a disabled child, what type of short break do you think would meet your combined needs?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ Targeted activities designed for disabled children, without a social care assessment	2.33	1	Highest
▪ Universally available activities delivered in the community	2.79	2	
▪ Specialist daytime activities tailored to your child following a social care assessment	2.89	3	
▪ Direct payment for you to make your own arrangements following a social care assessment	3.11	4	
▪ Specialist overnight short breaks tailored to your child following a social care assessment	4.47	5	
▪ Support from extended family or friends	5.06	6	
▪ Childcare (e.g. nurseries or childminding)	5.35	7	Lowest

answered question 25
 skipped question 5

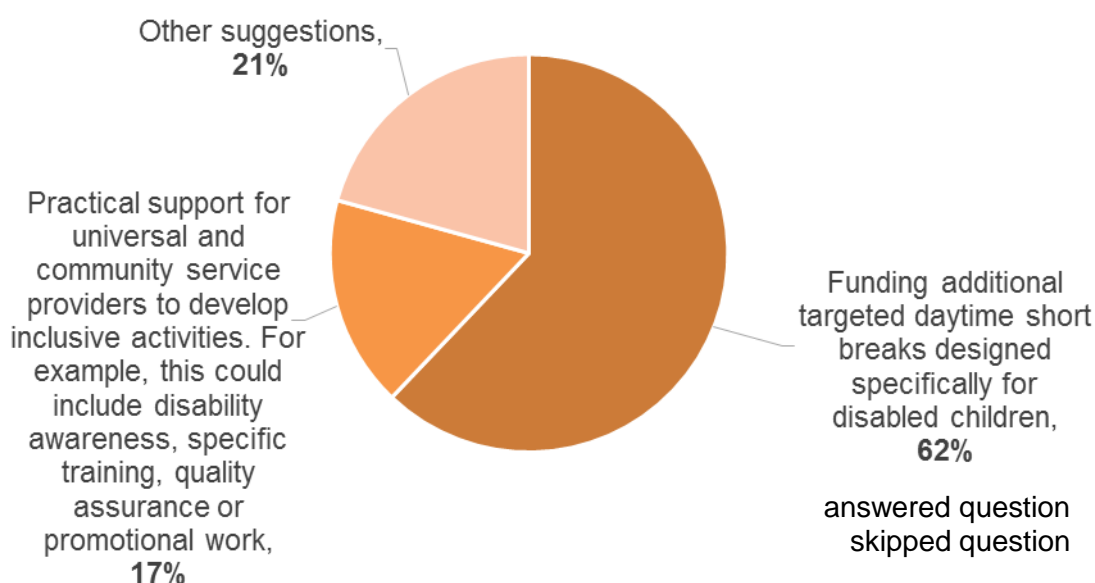
<p>Survey feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is too much "red tape" to get help with short breaks ▪ Having specialist equipment available at universal services, e.g. hoists ▪ Activities run by staff for daytime would be fantastic ▪ Children with autism should be able to go to groups with other kids and not feel different ▪ We want an inclusive environment where everyone is equal
<p>Additional feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources for short breaks could be spent in such a way that they are, wherever possible, also an investment in the local infrastructure. For example, children should be enabled to take part in general swimming clubs, rather than being isolated by more costly 1:1 tuition, and the skills and experience would remain in that community so more than one child would benefit from that investment

Question 4. When do you think the best times are for a short break?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ School holidays	1.33	1	Highest
▪ Weekends	2	2	
▪ After school	2.59	3	Lowest
	answered question	28	
	skipped question	2	

<p>Survey feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Families with children/young people/adults should be offered help with short breaks, not have to battle for it! ▪ We like to spend time together at weekends and school holidays ▪ Sometimes children will need support in school or may only be part time in school so help may be needed for this ▪ A combination of all of these options would be the most effective ▪ Longer days would be helpful i.e. 10 or 10.30am until 4pm
<p>Additional feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some children can be excluded from after school activities as they have to forfeit their school transport in order to stay later at school. Addressing this would significantly help in many ways and could open up the opportunity for longer and or more frequent after school clubs especially in the special schools

Question 5. Families said that they would like better information about and improved access to daytime short breaks, particularly in the summer and at weekends. Which of these options do you think would be a good way to achieve this?



Other survey suggestions

- A specially designed hub in the community especially for special needs children
- Funding additional and having a dedicated centre/hub for these - One-stop shop put providers together
- Just need to be sure that services operate in a safe environment, recommendations help to know if it's a good service or not
- Possible short breaks over a weekend to provide the young person with opportunities to mix with others and have time away from the family home. To provide time for the family to spend time with other siblings
- Both options should be available so children don't feel left out or excluded due to their physical disabilities. However sometimes it is good for them to be around children like them as it makes them feel less alienated
- A combination - which are most focused on the child's needs

Question 6. What do you think would be the best way to support the universal and community sector to provide accessible and inclusive daytime short break activities for disabled children?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving awareness and understanding of disability issues among universal and community sector organisations 	2.09	1	Highest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collating information about short break opportunities making the information accessible to families 	2.18	2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with organisations to ensure minimum levels of quality, for example, this could involve ensuring relevant insurance, safeguarding or health and safety arrangements are in place 	2.55	3	

- Facilitating a 'TripAdvisor' style rating system for short breaks offered by the universal and community sector

2.77

4

Lowest

answered question

27

skipped question

3

Survey feedback

- Shadowing of specialist services to improve awareness
- A centrally located, purpose built activity and information centre
- Options 2 and three equally important
- Trip advisor would be good, but you have to try things and not always believe the reviews
- It would be nice if these were accessible by public transport. Also it would be good to have a visual guide as to what each opportunity offers, also to have information available in different formats/languages

Additional feedback

- It would be great to use universal services, but they don't all have the right training or equipment, e.g. the leisure centres don't have the right hoists
- Much more use could be made of school sites and equipment out of school hours, especially some of the special schools
- Communication with providers about individual children needs to be easier, it can be difficult when the provider isn't based in Herefordshire
- Waiting times can be too long when staff are in short supply, providers need to be hot on recruitment and retention of good workers
- Provider's need to have good back-up arrangements to deal with staff changes, especially when a child needs 2:1 support as nothing can happen if one worker isn't available

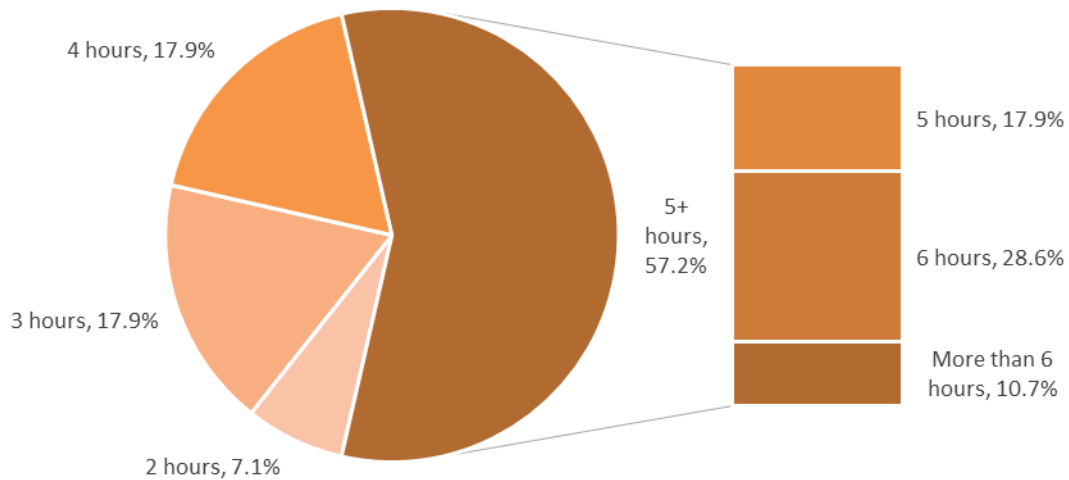
Question 7. What do you think is the best environment to offer daytime short break sessions for disabled children in their early years (aged 0 to 5)?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ An inclusive nursery setting with some specialist skills	1.62	1	Highest
▪ Targeted specialist short breaks with other disabled children aged up to 18	2.04	2	
▪ With a specialist childminder	2.22	3	Lowest
	answered question		28
	skipped question		2

Survey feedback

- Knowing the doors are secure and staff can communicate with children is important
- Targeted, but in a special school environment
- It would be good to have a list of 'approved' childminders, with a review from people who they have worked with/for. Also to be on a public transport accessible route, as I do not drive and have no access to a car
- An inclusive nursery/playgroup with significant specialist skills
- Specialised group with properly trained carers

Question 8. How many hours do you think a daytime short break session should last?



answered question 28

skipped question 2

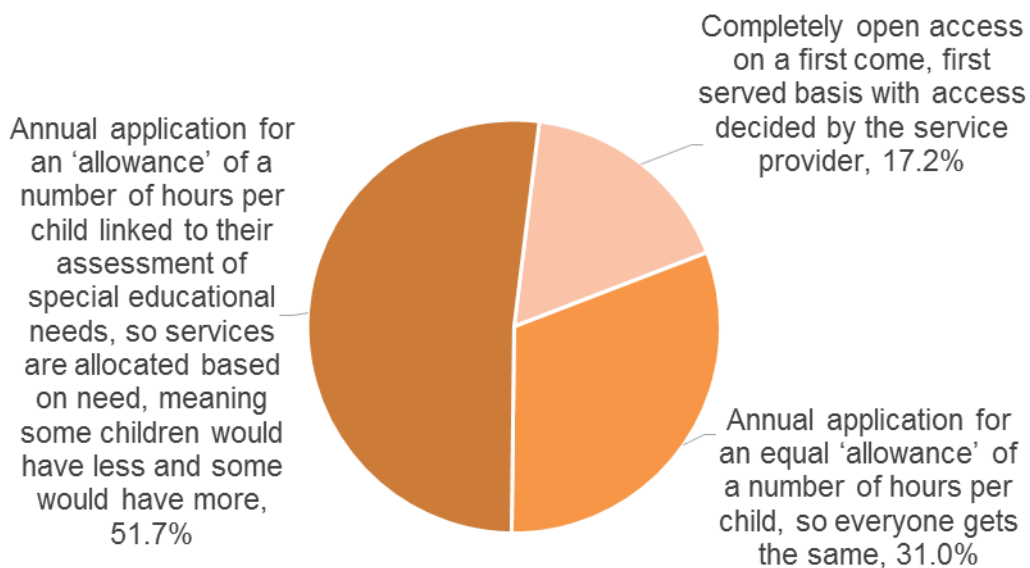
Survey feedback

- Transportation needs to be included in daytime short breaks timing as geographically long drive times add to the hassle, stress and "*is it worth it after stress of travelling*" factor. Not just travel but consider all medications, pads, specialist equip all needs to be packed up and then, child into car, then travel as well. Not really a break after all that, especially if it's a just a few hours
- Universal access centre for services so that providers are not taking out travel time, something like New Hope Worcester
- 5-6 hours gives a good break, starting no earlier than 10-10.30
- I think it should be more than 6 hours depending on individual circumstances as one hour can be enough for a child
- It varies depending on each person
- Two hours is plenty, the kids can get over excited or tired, you don't want to spoil a good thing
- It would be good for them to be offered maybe 1 day a week, where they can be themselves amongst like-minded children and not feel different
- It would depend on whether it was after school or at weekends - think this should be what is most appropriate and productive for the individual child
- 10.30am to 4pm
- Two to three hours would be long enough for those who have short term concentration for others there may be a need for longer with scheduled breaks

Additional feedback

- Safety is important during activities, but would prefer to access activities away from school buildings

Question 9. What do you think would be the fairest way to access targeted daytime short breaks, which are not subject to a social care assessment?



answered question 29
skipped question 1

Survey feedback

- First come, first served otherwise hours would be allocated to children that perhaps wouldn't take up their full allotted hours and waste the provision. Direct Payments assessment would provide number of hours for child for short breaks and carer then books as and when on first come, first served basis across a choice of provision as appropriate. However direct payments must be encouraged as a way forward for carers to pay for short breaks. Needs to be more accessible, information about payroll services to help with reporting and accounting and staffing. Message must get through and made easier to pay for targeted daytime breaks with direct payments
- Equal allocation would be good, but any spare places should be offered to families to use up
- No two children are the same, they're all unique in their own little ways, they're priceless
- As long as this was signposted appropriately

Question 10. What do you think is the best way for the council to pay for targeted and specialist short break services?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ Flexible purchasing for individual children	1.81	1	Highest
▪ Direct payments to families	1.88	2	
▪ Buying fixed 'blocks' of a service for groups of children	2.11	3	Lowest
	answered question		29
	skipped question		1

Survey feedback

- Direct payments need to account for the mileage costs of families in rural locations, both for the personal assistant travelling to the family and when the child goes out with the PA
- It would be good if all options were available as sometimes a targeted focused approach works best, other times little and often is required
- Needs based and individualised, efficient and supportive - also able to allow for family members to be paid for regular support

Additional feedback

- Direct payment systems need to be much more straightforward
- Requirements need to be clearer of personal assistants (funded by direct payments), particularly requirements around business car insurance and DBS checks
- Direct payment calculations need to account for the cost and time of personal assistants travelling to and from the family home
- Greater access and support in hiring personal assistants. We like the flexibility of direct payments but it is difficult and stressful to recruit PAs. It would be good if one of the recruitment agencies took a lead in having PAs on their books. We would then know we were getting someone suitable, could request specific staff we had a relationship with but also be able to find a replacement at short notice if required
- Parents are put off direct payments by being told by professionals and peers that they are complicated. This is not entirely true though the process in Hereford could be greatly simplified. Some resource allocated to simplifying and promoting direct payments would be useful. The more people who use them the better
- If short break and direct payments budgets are in different pots, it loses the opportunity to maximise the use of resources, requires additional administration and misses the point that needs are multi-faceted. Improving day to day life reduces the need for a break

Question 11. Who do you think should deliver targeted and specialist short breaks to disabled children?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ Specialist employed people	1.54	1	Highest
▪ Selected and trained sessional paid people	1.81	2	
▪ Selected and trained volunteers	2.58	3	Lowest
	answered question		29
	skipped question		1

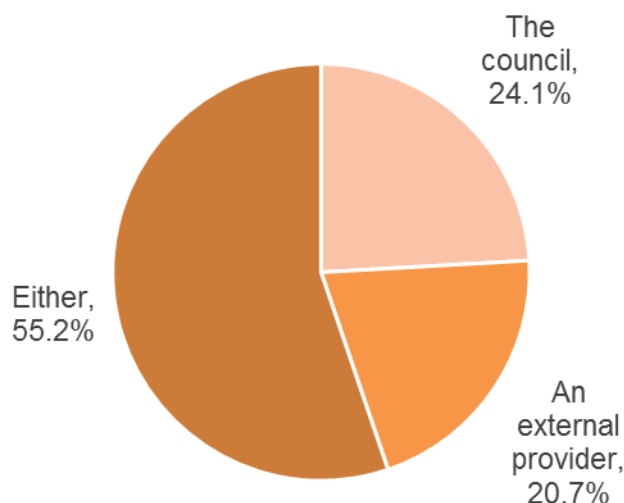
Survey feedback

- There are disadvantages and advantages of both paid and volunteers
- Volunteering gives an insight into future career options
- Someone who knew what they were doing. If kids get used to someone, and then they leave, it can be an upset
- What about family members???

Additional feedback

- Workers need to be based locally and know Herefordshire so they can help children make the most of what's available locally and keep travel costs down

Question 12. Which organisations do you think should deliver targeted and specialist daytime short breaks, such as buddying?



answered question 29
skipped question 1

Question 13. What do you think short break activities should be based around?

	Rating Average	Ranking	
▪ Small friendship groups	1.64	1	Highest
▪ 1:1 support to for a child	2	2	
▪ Larger mixed groups of children	2.34	3	Lowest

answered question 29
skipped question 1

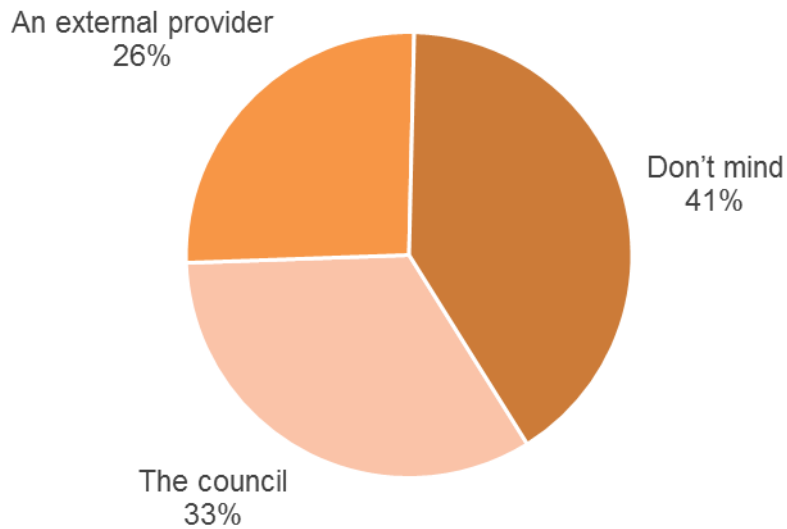
Survey feedback

- All options are equally important. A mixture creates a successful package and small friendship groups would complete it
- It would depend on the level of support a child needed, the older they become then the more social side should come into play
- It will depend on the child and what their needs are, children being supported 1:1 might feel excluded
- It all depends on the child - some need more than others
- A combination which best suits the child
- The needs of individuals may have to be considered

Additional feedback

- Providers need to be able to reach across Herefordshire, particularly to the market towns
- Children with disabilities in the market towns can have limited social networks as everything is focussed on Hereford. One possibility would be to run short breaks around groups of special interest or group activities. There could be general trips and or specific interest groups e.g. going to Hereford FC matches, or involvement in the local steam railways etc.

Question 14. Which organisations do you think should deliver specialist overnight residential-based short breaks?

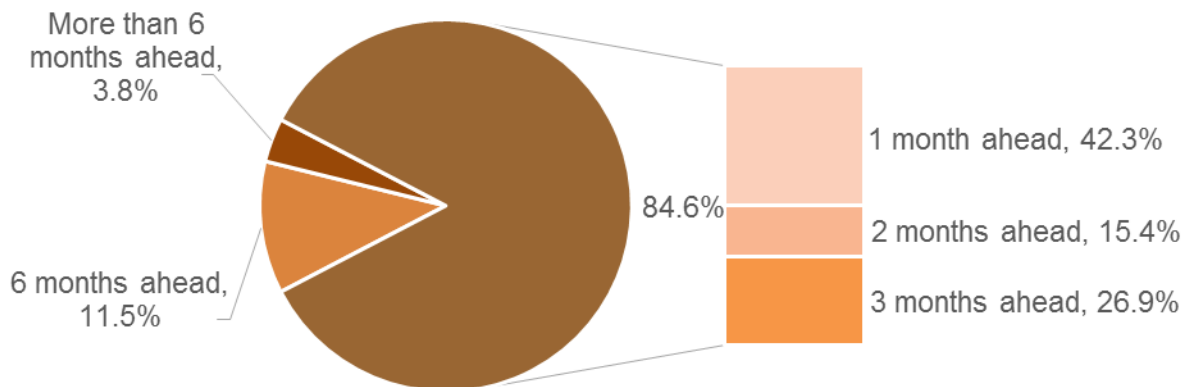


answered question 28
skipped question 2

Survey feedback

- Could groups like Scouts etc. be contracted for this?
- Needs to be consistent and specialist provision

Question 15. How far in advance should specialist overnight short breaks normally be arranged?

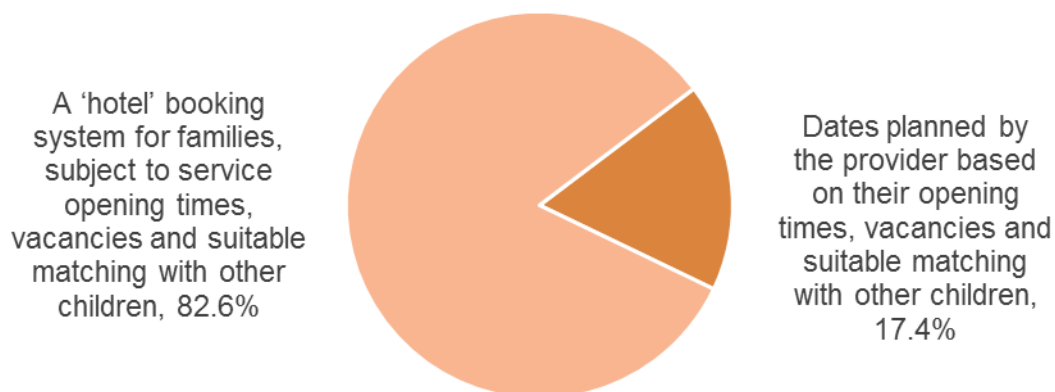


answered question 26
skipped question 4

Survey feedback

- It is also important to have an emergency care option
- There needs to be some flexibility in case things change, and people need to be able choose the best times for them
- Varies because you don't know what's going to happen over those few weeks and they might change their mind
- To allow for planning and preparation

Question 16. How would you prefer dates for specialist overnight short breaks to be arranged?



answered question 23
skipped question 7

Survey feedback

- A booking systems seems like an organizational nightmare; maybe the provider needs more influence over this to make it work but taking parent wishes into consideration
- Dates would be best planned between the child's parents and the service provider, overseen by the short breaks team
- Definitely a booking system to suit. Why not?
- Emergency care would be good - sometimes things happen and there is no support out there for this. It should be well advertised and accessible to all
- Combination

Question 17. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Survey feedback

- I have asked for additional support hours funded by Social Care due to my child's challenging behaviour and personal health issues. We depend on the consistency of buddying and play day services to continue with our caring role and would not need to ask for more hours from Social Services if buddying could include home support, as we do require both and if play days could offer one week of support for the South Herefordshire group during every week of the holidays, not just the summer holidays, then we could cope with the existing hours being funded by Social Services. We depend on the continuation of both of those services for consistency, which is fundamental to my child's needs and for the short breaks service to maintain successful
- The cancellation of overnight respite should not be undertaken lightly due to staff shortages, sickness etc. There must be a strategy in place so this is avoided. Overnight breaks cancellation is disastrously disappointing for carers and their families. Really important as it can be the only light on a dark horizon
- Services are most useful provided locally. It is very frustrating living on the fringes of the county having to always travel to access support
- There is so little help and respite to help families. One Ledbury road closing is a massive mistake, I have written in paper format in more detail why this is the case. A purpose built building to be able to professionally care for children to give day respite as well as overnight run by a capable manager would be the most sensible cost effective solution. Foster carers are going to in the long run cost and waste a lot of money. Adapting homes all over the county, training etc. Also children and families need consistent respite, what happens when a foster carer is on holiday, ill etc?
- 1) Daytime short breaks in Herefordshire have been manipulated to ensure children in south Herefordshire have to travel to central Hereford / north Herefordshire to receive

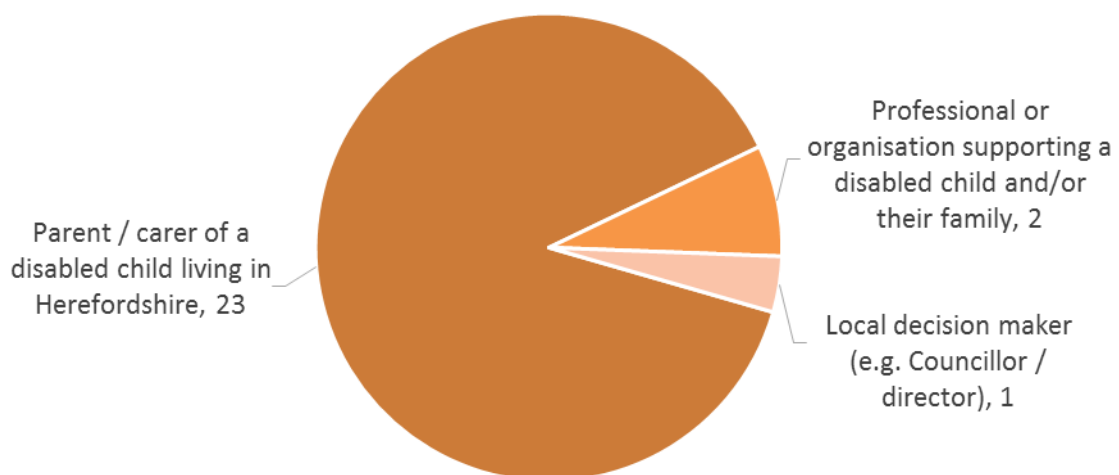
short breaks. 2) Ensure the provider is based in central Herefordshire and ensure that all children in the authority are treated equally

- Services are centralized too much in Hereford, be good to have more available in the market towns (Ledbury)
- Can inclusive truly mean inclusive for the most disabled child?
- I think a lot of the questions asked are all based on the disability of the child
- Doctors are too quick to say 'no', there's nothing wrong with your child, they should refer to specialists more often
- It would be good to know what is available, and also to feel like we are not 'bothering' people to get the support or just to feel like you are not alone
- More facilities are needed for high functioning autistic children or Asperger's who find it hard to socialise. All their so called school friends disappear in the school holidays putting pressure on family to "entertain". These children are intelligent so for example my son asked me why I had introduced him to play days a few years ago (although I thought it was brilliant) as it "wasn't for him". There doesn't seem to be a place for these children?
- Although suggestions can be given on a wide variety of situations, there will always be times when someone needs that extra special bit of help!

Additional feedback

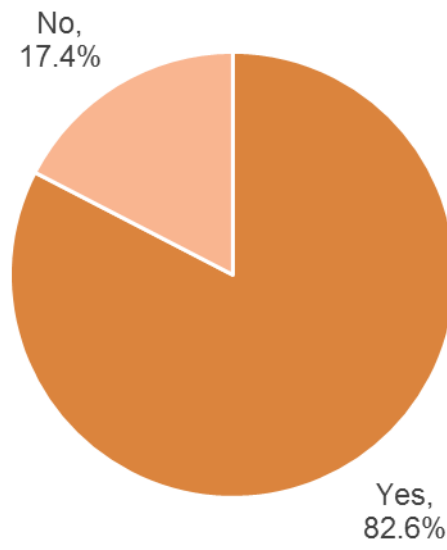
- Contacting the children with disabilities team is difficult
- Historically, some families had been used to having services available free of charge. Whereas those families that had starting using services after family fees had been introduced were more accepting of them
- Some services have increased their family fees to either bring them into line with other activities or because the provider faced a funding shortfall
- Families living outside the main urban areas, particularly outside Hereford city said they experienced higher transport costs for the children to access appropriate activities, or for their child's worker or personal assistant to travel to them
- Herefordshire is much better than Birmingham

Question 18. Are you a:



answered question 26
skipped question 4

Question 19. If you are a family of a disabled child, would you like to be kept informed about future developments?



answered question 23
skipped question 7

Appendix 3: Consultation background

Activities and short breaks for disabled children in Herefordshire 2017-2020 consultation

Herefordshire council has a duty to ensure there is a sufficient range of short break services available to meet the assessed needs of disabled children and their carers in the county. We do this through the '*short breaks offer*'.

The current funding for our short breaks offer comes to an end in March 2017 and the council is leading a re-commissioning project for short breaks activities for the period 2017 to 2020. As in other areas of the country, Herefordshire's short breaks offer has evolved over recent years, with most families being supported by appropriate community based activities.

We continue to listen to families of disabled children, service providers and other professionals about how the local short breaks offer should further evolve.

There are three levels of service that can offer a short break:

Universal: These are everyday community services that are accessible without an assessment such as youth clubs, after school activities, uniformed groups (i.e. Cubs, Brownies), leisure centres, nurseries, childminders and activity-based groups. These are not paid for by the council but form part of valuable experiences for children and young people

Targeted: Specific daytime activities for disabled children that families can self-refer to. Some of these services will be paid for by the council

Specialist: Short break daytime or overnight services designed to meet a specific need following a social care assessment of an individual child and their carers

Re-commissioning short breaks will need to balance the views of families and other stakeholders with local needs, statutory duties and available resources. The key principle is to provide valuable support for families and there are several options for improving the local short breaks offer, each of which has potential advantages or disadvantages.

As part of this consultation, we welcome your views as they will further inform different options for 2017-2020. The consultation will be available until **Wednesday 31 August 2016** and the council will also be attending a series of events over the summer, so please come along for a chat to discuss short breaks in more detail. The event information is published on our website at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shortbreaks.

The following pages provide useful information about what is needed in Herefordshire, and the options that could be considered to meet local need. Having looked at the information, you can have your say by taking part in a consultation survey by following the link at the end of this document.

Informing the 2017-2020 short breaks offer

What have families already told us?

- Short breaks are achieving good outcomes for most children and families
- Children take part in interesting activities and become more independent or confident
- Getting to know other families can help, but it isn't the main aim of a short break
- Most families feel that their child have fun with carers who understood their needs
- Families want more and cheaper breaks, offering socialisation, consistency and choice
- Organising and spending direct payments needs to be made easier
- Most children prefer to do things with their friends or in organised groups
- Many families would prefer to choose from a selection of approved providers
- Most families want to be kept informed about short breaks in Herefordshire
- Better communication is needed about the range of available short breaks
- Value for money is an important factor
- Stability and long term planning are important

What is the local need and options for meeting it?

Universal and community daytime activities: There are a wide range of universal and community activities available in the county. Word of mouth and local promotion is how many of these activities are accessed. There will be information on these short break opportunities on the [WISH website](#), which was launched in January 2016, with additional information being added as it develops.

Families and professionals have suggested that more could be done to increase the availability and information about universal and community activities for disabled children. The possible options could be to provide practical support to activity providers to:

- Develop their ability to offer inclusive opportunities for disabled children
- Assure their quality
- Promote their availability

Targeted open access daytime activities: These services include activities designed specifically for disabled children, such as holiday clubs. As these services are available without a professional assessment, there is limited data available to forecast future need. However, the current play sessions contract, delivered by Marches Family Network, has been fully utilised each year by around 70 children.

There have been some significant variations in individual take up, ranging from less than 10 to over 100 hours per child per year. In recent childcare sufficiency and short breaks surveys, families have said that more opportunities and longer sessions are needed, particularly during the school holidays and weekend. The possible options include:

- Investing in additional services at this level to provide more opportunities and greater choice

- Developing a system that improves the targeting services to meet need. For example, other areas have eligibility criteria for some daytime short breaks based on special educational needs assessments

Specialist short break services: These can be provided to meet a specific need following a social care assessment of a child's and carer's needs. As a rural county with a relatively small population, Herefordshire has low numbers of disabled children with a wide range of needs, which makes it more challenging to offer a flexible range of sustainable services. Depending on the outcome of a child's assessment, needs could be met through a range of services, including:

- Direct payments that families can use to employ a personal assistant
- Specialist daytime activities, such as 1:1 buddying
- Specialist family-based overnight short breaks
- Specialist residential-based overnight short breaks

Direct payments: Increasing numbers of families are choosing the direct payment option instead of a commissioned service to meet their assessed needs. However, the traditional use of block contracts for commissioned services, which tie funding to provider organisations for a fixed period, means that resources may not follow the choices of a child or their family.

One option could be to move towards more flexible contracting arrangements for 2017-2020. This could increase the number of providers in the short breaks offer, offering better choice between commissioned services and direct payments. However, it could reduce a provider's financial security if they have previously been reliant on contract funding.

Specialist daytime activities: We expect to need between 6,000 and 7,000 hours each year for 35 to 45 children, with the options to consider including:

- Most families have valued the current specialist 1:1 buddying service model, delivered by Core Assets and Crossroads Care, but would like more socialisation opportunities for their children with friends and peers
- In its review of the short breaks offer in December 2015, the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee task and finish group, recommended that the council should consider direct delivery of specialist buddying services instead of delivery by an external provider

Specialist family-based overnight short breaks: The council is establishing the specialist family-based overnight short breaks service in 2016, delivered by its in-house fostering service. Carer recruitment is progressing well and the first short breaks placements have begun. By 2019/20, around 900 nights are expected to be needed for 15 to 20 children each year. As this is a new approach in Herefordshire, it is not proposed that the service is included in the procurement exercise for 2017-2020.

Specialist residential-based overnight short breaks: We expect to need between 600 and 700 nights for between 10 and 15 children each year. For 2017/18, this total includes around 250 nights for children who have already been provided for through individualised arrangements. Children can have a combination of health, physical and behavioural needs.

The options include:

- Purchase all nights from a single provider, which would give provider organisations some financial security, but could restrict opportunities for matching a child's assessed need to an appropriate service
- Purchase nights from a range of providers, which could offer better matches for children and more choice for families, but would mean providers need a range of income sources

to remain sustainable

Next steps

Subject to formal decisions to be taken by the council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about funding for short breaks after March 2017, the re-commissioning timetable will be:

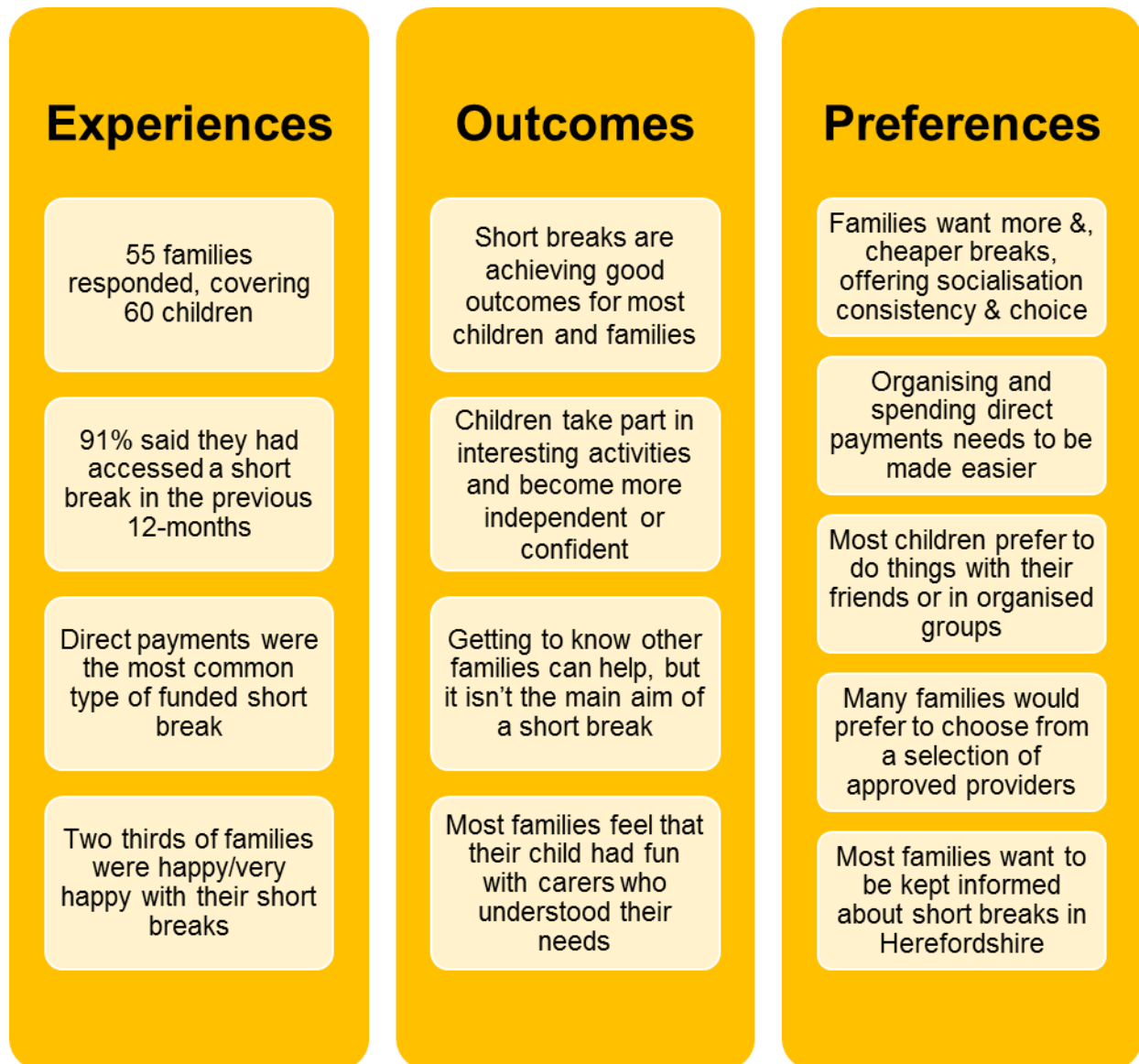
- Mid-September: Publish six week procurement exercise for organisations to submit bids to become providers in the 2017-2020 short breaks offer
- November: Evaluation of service provider bids
- December: Confirm intention to award contracts and standstill period
- January - March 2017: Contract mobilisation: Providers will prepare for delivery, as well as working with the council and families that may be affected by service changes. The council will also identify any remaining service gaps during this period and, if necessary, develop options for meeting assessed need in other ways with individual or groups of families as appropriate

Have your say

To have your say, please complete the [activities and short breaks for disabled children in Herefordshire 2017-2020 consultation](#).

Appendix 4: Family Survey – May 2016

In May 2016, Herefordshire Council surveyed families that had used short breaks services for disabled children about their experiences and outcomes, and the preferences for the future. The survey was conducted by telephone, which achieved a much higher response rate than traditional written surveys. The information gathered will be used to inform further consultation work and plans for short break services from 2017.



Further information about the recommissioning of short breaks is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shortbreaks. Families that have any questions, can also email shortbreaks@herefordshire.gov.uk.

Responses

About the families and their children:

Number of families responded		55	
Number of children covered		60	
Age Band 1	Age 0-4	3	5%
Age Band 2	Age 5-10	11	18%
Age Band 3	Age 11-15	35	58%
Age Band 4	Age 16-17	11	18%
Female		24	40%
Male		36	60%

- The responses provide a representative sample of the ages and genders of disabled children that need to access a short break

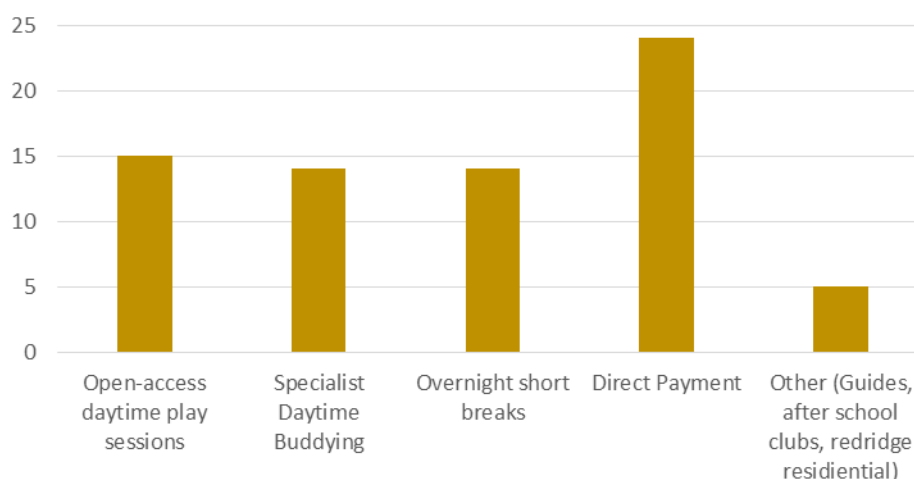
Experiences

1. Has your family used a short break or a direct payment in the last 12-months?

Yes	No
50	5
91%	9%

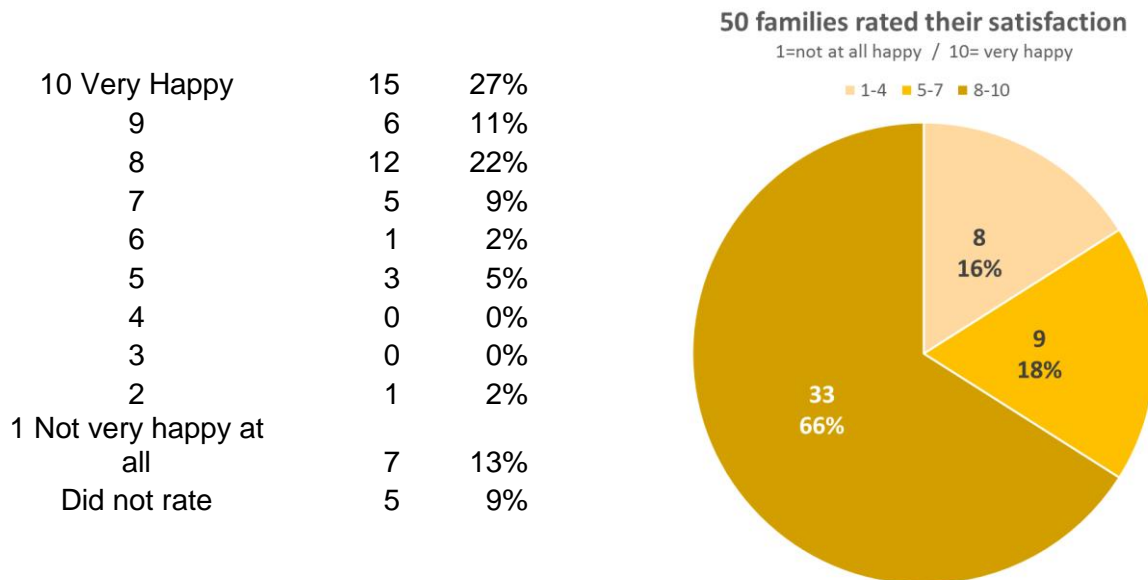
- Six families initially said they had not accessed a short break as they were unaware that the services they had used were provided as part of Herefordshire's short break offer. Once clarified, these six responses have been included in the 'Yes' responses to this question
- Reasons given for not accessing a short break in the last 12 months included:
 - Currently waiting to be matched with a buddy
 - Child does not want to go to another play day
 - Didn't want to pay for mileage but would like to have a buddy

Types of break being used



- 19 families were accessing a package of multiple types of short break
- Very few appear to be accessing short breaks opportunities that are not funded by the Council

2. Overall, how happy are you with your short break or direct payment?



- Two thirds of families gave a good satisfaction rating of eight or more
- The remaining third of responses covered a fairly even spread of service types. There was no main service type relating to those families that gave their short breaks a low rating of 1-4. The main reasons for dissatisfaction appear to be poor communication and changes to provision.
- **Open access play days:** There were lots of positive comments and support for the service. There were several requests for longer and more frequent sessions with more choice of activities
- **Specialist Buddying:** There were a small, evenly mixed number of comments about the buddies either being a good match to a child, or too many changes of buddy for a child
- **Overnight short breaks:** Of the 13 families that said they were accessing overnight shortbreaks in a range of settings, six rated their service at 8-10. Of the lower-ranked responses, poor communication and rota management issues at 1 Ledbury Road were repeated.
- **Direct Payments:** there were a small number of mixed comments ranging from being very happy to finding the system inflexible or difficult to spend the payments

3. What would make short breaks or direct payments better for your family?

The most common response across all service types was that families wanted to be able to access increased amount of short breaks, and that they should be longer, more accessible, regular and flexible.

There were a range of views about what would make breaks better for the child:

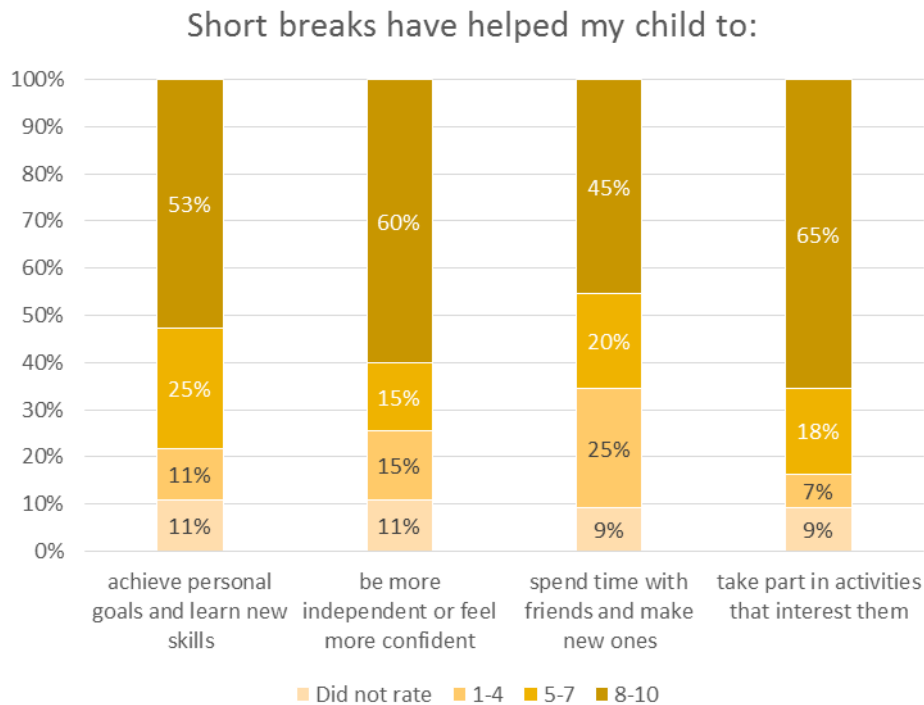
- More choice of age appropriate activities, there should be less café visits, more challenging/interesting activities, not the sort of stuff that families would normally do at home. Children should be involved in planning activities well in advance
- Inclusive opportunities for children to socialise
- Indoor facilities such as soft play accessible to disabled people
- Consistency of support workers/care staff to build relationships with children

There were also a number of factors that parent carers felt would make their short break better:

- Cheaper to access
- More available outside Hereford
- Occasional overnights on-top of the daytime short breaks some children have been assessed as needing
- More listening to families, better communication by individuals and organisations, with quicker responses from social workers and service providers. Social workers should be the main contact for short breaks, but they don't know what is going on
- Needs to be a system which works out what entitlement is to save time and stress
- Finding and maintaining PAs who do the hours the family need is very hard
- Options for spending direct payments are too narrow, they need to be clearer and more flexible, they should be able to cover reasonable expenses of a PA, such as travel and accommodation on family holidays

Outcomes

4. From your child's point of view, can you rate the following statements about the short break or direct payment, 1 being not at all and 10 being very much?

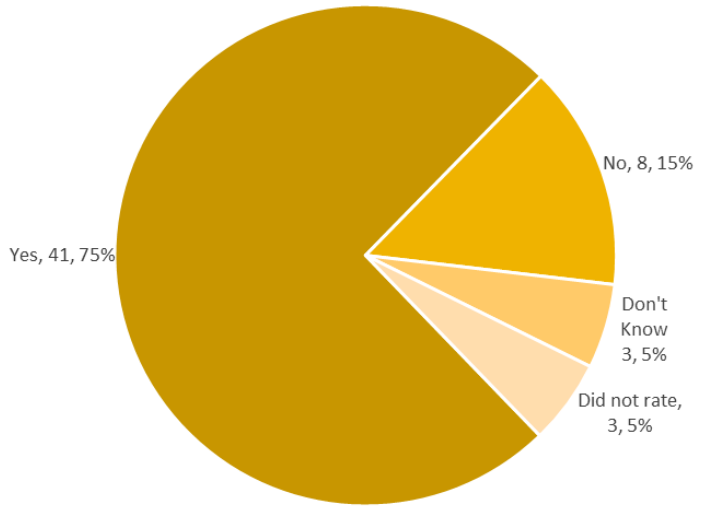


- The majority of families gave a good rating of 8 or more that the short break had helped their child to take part in activities that interest them or be more independent or confident
- Just over half of families thought that the short break helped their child to achieve personal goals or learn new skills

- Less than half of families thought that the short break enabled the child to spend time with friends and make new ones

5. Are these the right outcomes to work towards for your child/ren?

- Three quarters of families agreed that these were the right outcomes to work towards for children
- Of the families that thought these were not the right outcomes to aim for, the following alternatives were suggested:

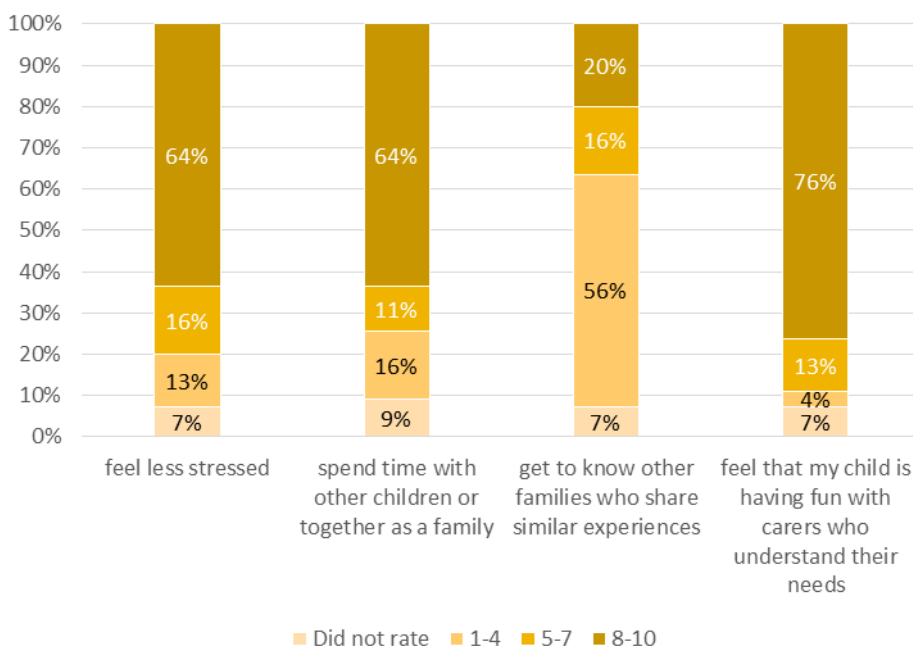


- quality of life for limited-life children
- being safe and being medically provided for
- being happy with support carers
- re-enforced taught life skills (e.g. road safety)
- improved social skills - learning how to behave in groups of children

- Other comments included:
 - not easily applicable to complex health needs
 - difficult to achieve these outcomes with a once a month service
 - more emphasis on choice and independence
 - safety within the environment is crucial
 - to be able to do what other young people do, for example just to go into town because "that's what I want to do"

6. How much has the short break or direct payment helped you and your family to:

Short breaks have helped me/us to:

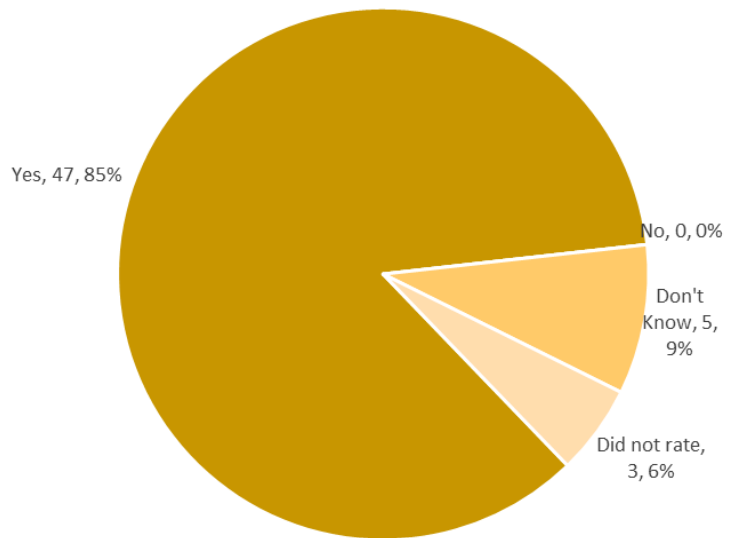


- Over three-quarters of families said that short breaks or direct payments had helped them feel that their child was having fun with carers that understood their needs
- Two-thirds of families felt less stressed or were able to spend time as a family because of their short break
- Less than a quarter of families felt that their short break had helped them to get to know other families. Other types of social networking were mentioned as being more likely to achieve this outcome

7. Are these the right outcomes to work towards for parents and carers?

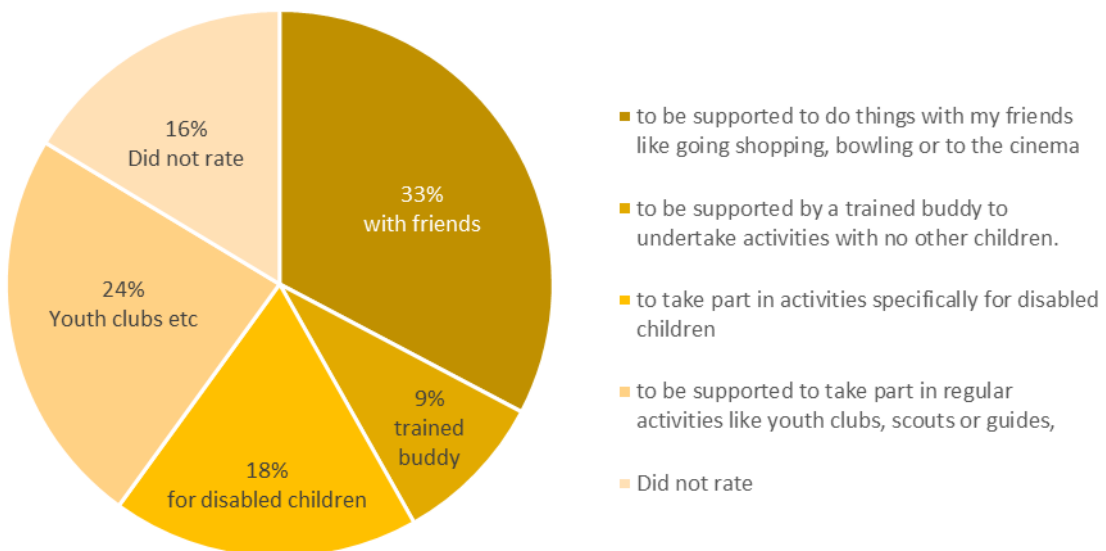
- No families said that these were not the right outcomes to aim for. Other comments included:

- needs to be more frequent to achieve outcomes
- knowing the kids are happy, well looked after and safe ensures the parents can really relax
- processes can stressful
- 'Stressed' is the wrong word, but it does take the pressure off and gives peace of mind
- short breaks don't really help us to meet other families
- Some families prefer to mix with friends who don't have disabled children



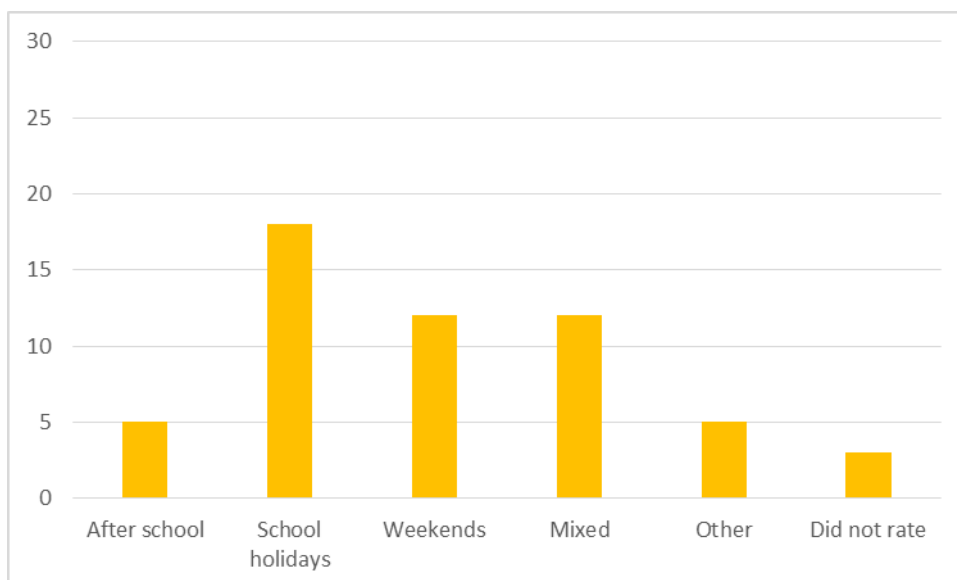
Preferences

8. Which of the following 4 choices would your child choose first?

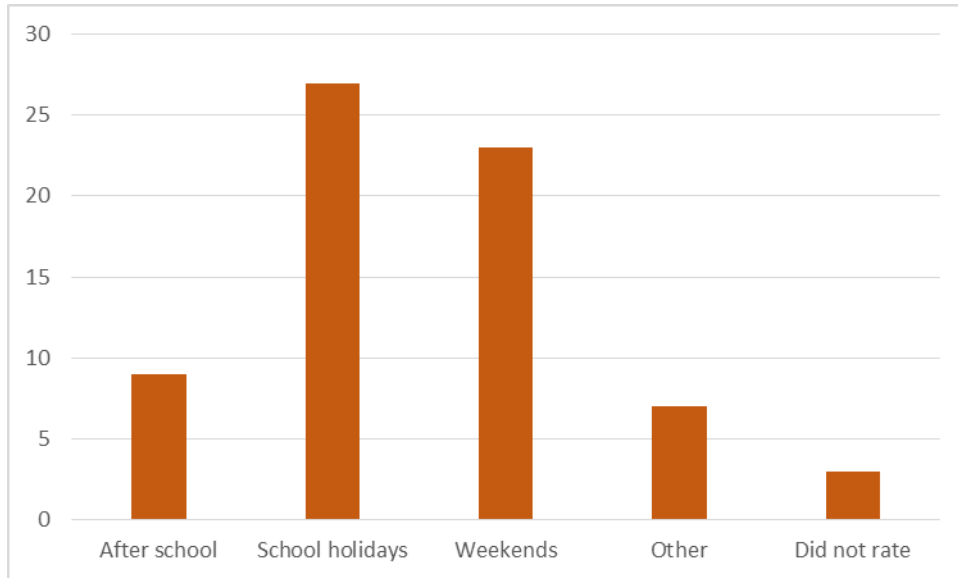


- Many families felt a combination of these choices was important for their child, but most could say which option their child would choose first
- There was a strong preference for activities to be in a group setting, either socially with existing friends or group activities that were inclusive, structured and age appropriate
- Other comments included:
 - the youth club and a guides group at Barrs Court is helping some children to socialise and learn life skills, while providing a short break for parents too
 - our direct payment enables all of those things
 - buddy travels to reach us so longer time would give more chance to go more places

9. Which one of the following is the main time your family needs a short break?

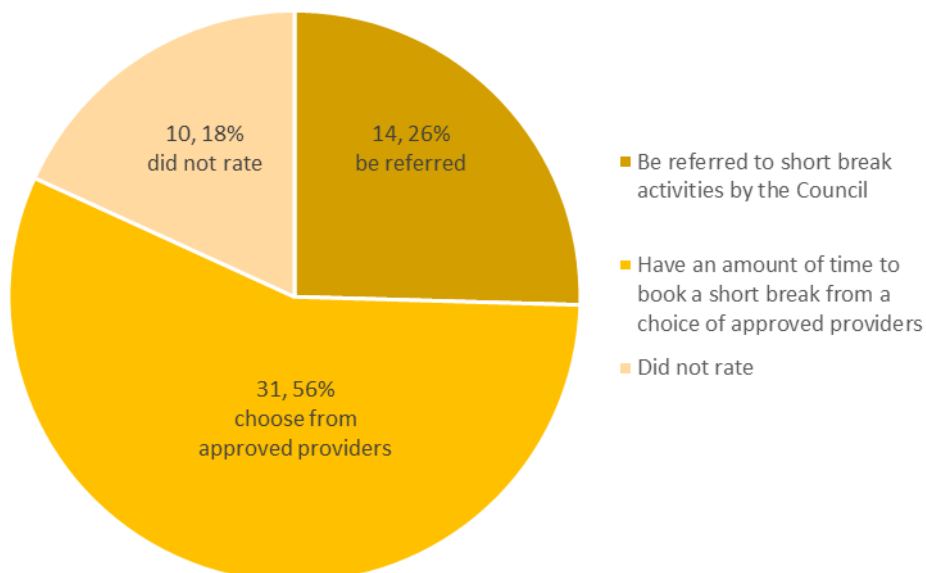


- 'Mixed' was not a survey option, but 12 out of 55 families described a mixed package of times when they wanted their sort breaks. Weekends *and* school holidays was a common example of a mixed package
- Separating the component parts of each mixed packages results in the following overall profile:



- School holidays were clearly an important time for short breaks, but it is difficult to draw specific conclusions as not all families would have considered a 'mixed' option
- Of those families that chose 'other' time, responses included:
 - one night a week
 - DPs should be flexible so that this question becomes irrelevant
 - has plenty of holidays with the family
 - lunch times

10. Would your family prefer to:



Comments included:

- Our package was initially complicated to set up, felt intimidating with many officials involved, but now works very successfully
- Commissioned services required because there isn't the availability for families to choose

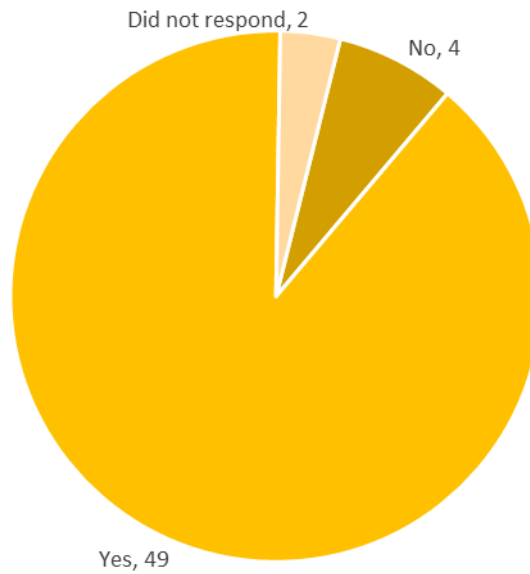
- Either option would work
- Flexibility is key
- Nice to have a choice but referral by council probably best because they know his needs
- In many ways it's easier to have somebody else organise short breaks
- Support by the local authority is helpful when they recommend services for assessed needs

11. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about short breaks or direct payments?

- The recommissioning process is all about taking away 1 Ledbury Road, there is a lot more paperwork, rules and regulations. The rotas are still being messed around - this is the biggest issue - and the social workers view of the child's best interest is not the same as what the family thinks
- Still waiting for a buddy
- Activities need to be suitable
- <http://hopskipandjump.org.uk/> have centres across the country and would be interested in setting up in Herefordshire
- Overnight respite service is desperately needed but not happening, not flexible and is getting worse
- As it is at the moment it works a treat in terms of referrals to new services. They don't want to be taking on self-referrals etc.
- Very sad about the way 1LR is going - they want it back to its best with better management, more financially viable and more children in there
- Don't know what direct payments are
- Most youth clubs are from age 11, my child is 8 so spends a lot of time at home alone
- Don't receive direct payments but would like to, but it's a bit of a nightmare as our social worker has gone
- Currently working fine so hope it doesn't change next year
- We receive several hours a day which is great, but the actual need is having someone on call 24/7
- Difficult when illness strikes as no family close by so would be good to have a flexible service to come in and support as and when needed
- Short breaks services have limitations as he needs 2:1 care so when one carer isn't available the service is often cancelled as provider will not allow them to double up with parent
- Although our child goes to monthly play days, it doesn't really provide a break for me as I have to drive in to Hereford for it
- What we don't need is two hours with a buddy on a Saturday afternoon. What we need is overnight provision where parents get a complete break.
- It's not individual people that have been the problem but the system around Direct Payments
- Three-night weekends are key to enabling the family to properly recuperate (but two nights will do at a push)
- Very happy with the service from Crossroads so far
- Recruiting Personal Assistants is very difficult and this should therefore be reflected in the direct payment offered. There is a lot of responsibility in looking after my child and the pay doesn't reflect that
- Difficult and slow to get direct payments set up, please speed the process up

- We've been lucky with PAs we have had so far, but going forward as he gets older it can get more difficult to identify a suitable PA.
- Our first few buddies hit and miss but now good match and going well
- Our service has been cut without a reason given
- Direct payments are easy to deal with, they're brilliant!

12. Would you like to be kept informed about what's happening with short breaks in Herefordshire?



- Most families that wish to be kept informed have supplied an email address
- Further information about the recommissioning of short breaks is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/shortbreaks.
- Families that have any questions, can also email shortbreaks@herefordshire.gov.uk