

Short Breaks consultation 2021 summary of findings

Definition of Short Breaks

Short breaks provide disabled children and young people with fun, enjoyment and a chance to be with friends while their parents and carers get a break from caring. They come in many different forms, ranging from an overnight stay in a residential centre or a carer's home to attending a youth club, leisure centre or getting involved in a sports activity.

This consultation is for the 'Aiming Higher' or universal Short Breaks offer. It is not for the assessed needs Short Breaks, overnight care, activities or paid care.

The local picture

There are up to 8,000 children and young people in Richmond and Kingston that have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

In 2019/20, 3232 children and young people accessed 45,282 hours of Short Breaks commissioned by Achieving for Children.

There are 1157 children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) in Kingston.

There are 1320 children and young people with EHCP's in Richmond.

2021 Children and young people's voices

Focus Groups

- 66 children and young people took part in school focus groups
- Year 2 to Post 16 (and most years in between)
- Schools: Dysart, Bedelsford, St Philip's, Clarendon, Grand Avenue, Grey Court, Hampton Hill Juniors
- Staff at Malden Oaks asked 22 pupils their views and shared themes
- 4 young people at Crofters were supported by staff to give their views
- Pupils who took part have EHCPs or are in receipt of SEN Support

Online cyp survey

- 7 completed it (mixture of children / young people and parents / carers)
- Aged 7 - 17

Total: 99 children and young people took part

Key Findings

1. Physical activity is valued and wanted
 - a. Popular activities: boxing, climbing, gymnastics, basketball, swimming, Ninja Warrior, trampolining, Parkour, horse-riding, rugby: “you get to actually tackle people” and “I do Parkour - I jump over things”
 - b. Physical activity helps with mental health: “I like what I do, because they take my mind off things” and “if I’m stressed, I shoot some hoops”

2. Other activities many young people said they would like to do with others:
 - a. Gaming
 - b. Art and crafting: “I like crafting. I've got lots of crafting supplies”. I’d rather do it in a club”
 - c. Playgrounds - especially adventure playgrounds and swings

3. Staff should get to know you and understand your needs:
 - a. “He understands you as an individual and changes things depending on how you are and how you feel”
 - b. “When I first started, I was nervous. He gets to know you. He helps us out with problems. He knows a lot about mental health. He used to be a therapist”
 - c. “It’s best if all leaders know what you have”
 - d. “If it’s teachers you already know, it’d be a lot simpler”

4. Having a peer group is important
 - a. “I want my own age group”
 - b. “Be with people like me”

5. There are fewer opportunities as you get older:
 - a. “I used to do a lot in primary”
 - b. “I used to do a lot of activities”
 - c. “There’s not enough”

6. Having local clubs and activities is important:
 - a. “There’s not enough to do locally” (Chessington)
 - b. “I used to go to a (gymnastics) club, but it’s too far away”
 - c. “Nan doesn’t like me going too far because she worries for my safety”
 - d. “We don’t have a car”

7. Spending time with friends is important
 - a. Desire to do 'ordinary' things with friends - go to cinema, cafe, go to London on the train etc
 - b. "I want to hang out with my friends more"
 - c. "A friend coming to my house more often"

8. New places and new people are tricky and put many young people off going to clubs
 - a. Clubs linked to school are quite popular as they are familiar
 - b. "I'd have to have someone I know introduce me to them...I'm not the sort of person who can go in somewhere by myself"
 - c. "I didn't go in, it was nerves"

9. Choosing how many activities to do and when is important:
 - a. Many young people want more activities in the holidays
 - b. "Clubs are all after school. That's my time to do what I want"
 - c. "I don't go, because I like Saturday mornings"
 - d. "There's times when I want to do more stuff, but there's times when it's quite overwhelming"

10. Staff at clubs are really important, they should be:
 - a. "Friendly and funny"
 - b. "Give people time to calm down"
 - c. "Good listening"
 - d. Supportive ,friendly, helpful
 - e. Encouraging
 - f. "Not super bossy, not mean"

2021 Parents and carers consultation

There are approximately 8,000 children and young people across Richmond and Kingston that are eligible for a Short Break. 63 parents and carers completed a survey and 13 attended a workshop. This is not a representative sample and therefore cannot be used as a basis to make wholesale changes to the Short Breaks offer. This was despite the consultation being promoted to over 800 people in the SEND newsletter, sent to over 1000 people by email via the disability register, sent to 58 local groups with their own databases of contacts, sent to schools and SENCOS as well as being circulated on social media at different intervals. There were also site visits to the existing provision where people were encouraged to participate.

The low uptake could be attributed to parent/carer fatigue resulting from dealing with over a year of a pandemic where they have been hit hard by caring responsibility, restrictions and home schooling.

Of the relatively few responses we received, as many as 50% of the answers to some questions on the survey and also at the workshops have had to be dismissed from the findings of the consultation as they have either been left blank, had "N/A" written in them, or the respondents were not answering the question and were talking about something else (eg. an experience unique to them).

Key Findings

1. Accessibility, Awareness and Suitability are the three biggest pitfalls in the current Short Breaks offer.
 - a. *"the main barrier is not actually hearing about things that are on offer until the last minute"*
 - b. *"It would be helpful for parents and Carers to have a clear document for review to see what their child can access."*
2. Parents and carers want a more varied, activity based model that is spread throughout Kingston and Richmond with options based on high, moderate and low needs children and young people that operate after school, weekends and during holidays for a range of age groups.
 - a. *"Frequency and suitability. These short breaks are SO vital for families like ours"*
3. Higher needs children and young people and lower income families should be prioritised for places.
4. Parents and carers were not in agreement about having a parental contribution as part of the model, to circumnavigate 'no-shows'. They were in agreement that there should be something in place to reduce it. Parents and carers are prepared to make a monetary contribution to secure more provision.
5. Parents and carers would like an opportunity to mix with one another whilst their children are on a short break.
6. Respondents consistently raised that they had concerns about the training of staff, the experience, ability and expertise of staff and feeling safe about leaving their children in the staffs hands. Some respondents possibly have expectations that the staff are carers as this was mentioned - however staff for Short Breaks are not to be considered carers.
7. Respondents stated that they would welcome a consideration around the venues of Short Breaks - being stimulating and fit for purpose for their children and young

people. It would be useful for there to be information setting out the criteria for each group.

8. Respondents offered some interesting ideas like having girls only groups, groups for under 5s, and small groups for children who struggle with larger groups. There was also discussion about the possibility of AfC hiring a space like Hobbledown Adventure Park where families could go without the fear of being watched/judged by other families.

Next steps and how to remain involved

AfC are conducting some 'market intelligence' now, which will continue for some weeks. This is essentially a process of communicating to Short Break providers what families want and seeking guidance about if achieving families wishes is possible.

AfC will communicate developments with both Richmond and Kingston PCFs. Please remain in contact with your PCF for updates.

AfC will be seeking guidance from parents and carers when we are able to complete an 'options appraisal' towards the end of the summer. This is essentially an opportunity for AfC to present what is possible within the budget and hear from parents and carers which option is most suitable/desirable.

Children and young people will also be consulted in a way that is child-focussed and appropriate based on accessibility.

AfC will also be seeking guidance from parents and carers when developing 'service specifications'. This is a document that outlines what AfC are wanting to get from a service and how AfC expects a supplier to provide it.