

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People
Date:	11 November 2020
Title:	Proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme and consultation outcomes
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to share the outcome of the public consultation held between March and July 2020 on the proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme. Furthermore, this report seeks approval to progress proposals for changes to the Short Break Activities Programme and how it could operate from April 2021.

Recommendations

2. To ensure that a Short Break Activities Programme for Children with Disabilities can be provided from April 2021 within a reduced budget, and taking into account relevant information and the outcomes of the public consultation, it is recommended that approval is given to take forward the proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme as follows:
 - a) Proposal One: To reduce the overall annual grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities to £539,500. **Recommended for implementation.**
 - b) Proposal Two: To primarily accept funding applications that meet the core Short Break Activity priorities but retain a small 'exceptions' fund of £20,000 per annum. **Recommended for implementation.**
 - c) Proposal Three: To require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources. **Not recommended for**

implementation. Two-year grant funding in next round, in response to feedback: **Recommended for implementation.**

- d) Proposal Four: To reduce the annual grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network to £17,500. **Recommended for implementation.**
- e) Proposal Five: To commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body. **Not recommended for implementation.**
- f) Proposal Six: To introduce a two-tier Gateway Card scheme, including proposed evidence requirements to support Gateway Card applications for each tier. **Recommended for implementation.**
- g) Proposal Seven: To place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities. **Not recommended for implementation.**
- h) Proposal Eight: To redesign the Community Buddy Scheme. **Recommended for implementation**, including:
 - Increases to parental hourly contributions from £5 per hour to £6.50 per hour, and mileage from 25p to 30p per mile.
 - no longer giving access to non-Hampshire County Council area residents, or young people aged 18 years of age or over, saving £11,000 at current levels.
 - Commissioning a new service, incorporating a single point for coordination and a differentiated offer within the scheme.

Executive Summary

3. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 bring into effect Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008), requiring local authorities to provide services to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.
4. The Short Break Activities Programme seeks to offer a range of fun and educational activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs so that their parents or carers can have a short break from their caring responsibilities. The Short Breaks Activities Programme also aims to provide parents or carers with a break in their caring role enabling them to pursue education, training, leisure activities, day-to-day tasks and to meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively. Short Break Activities are offered during evenings, weekends and school holidays.
5. Families access the Short Break Activities Programme through the use of a Gateway Card. In order to apply for a Gateway Card, children and young people must:
 - have a disability or additional needs;

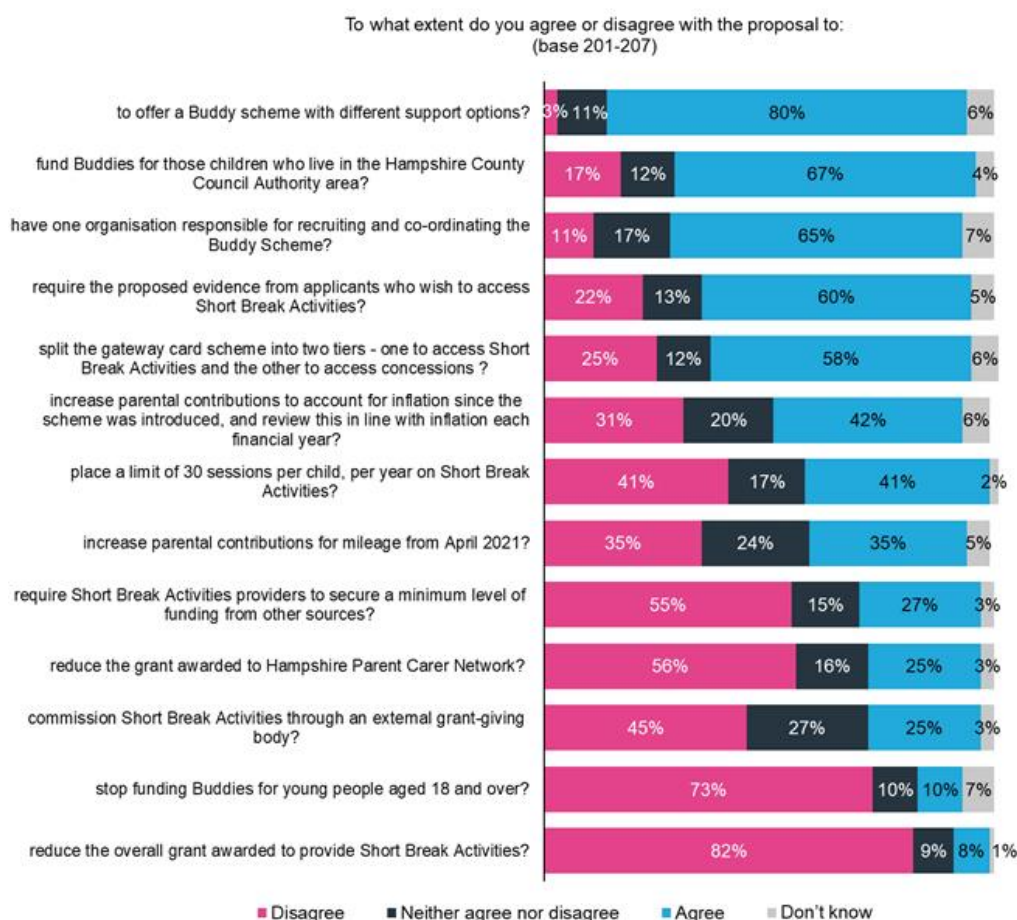
- need support to take part in leisure activities;
- be under 18 years of age; and
- live in the Hampshire County Council authority area.

Evidence from an approved and published list must be provided to support each Gateway Card application. There are 2,632 registered Gateway Card holders in Hampshire as of September 2020.

6. In 2019/20, 550 children accessed the Short Break Activities Programme. Activities are provided by voluntary sector organisations funded via grants, by some special schools directly, and by other community-based services such as sport and leisure centres (collectively referred to as ‘providers’) who can apply for funding to meet an individual’s additional care and support needs on an ad-hoc basis via a separate ‘exceptions’ fund.
7. The prolonged period of austerity has led to significant reductions in government grant for the County Council. In response, the County Council has worked diligently to stretch every penny and deliver more with less money – achieving over £480 million in recurring savings, whilst protecting the quality of services as far as possible and keeping Council Tax low.
8. In November 2019, a range of savings proposals, including a reduction in the Short Breaks budget, was considered and approved by Full Council, subject to further consultation and executive decision-making where necessary. The Children’s Services Department (excluding schools) has an indicative savings target of £17.2 million to be delivered by April 2021, which represents an overall budget reduction of c.13%. In February 2020 under-achievement against the Home to School Transport Transformation to 2019 savings target led to further savings being targeted from other Children’s Services budgets as part of Transformation to 2021. A saving from the Short Break budget would be part of the proposed solution in respect of the increased savings target.
9. The current budget for Children with Disabilities is £16.8m, of which £15.1m supports families eligible for social work support and interventions through Children with Disabilities social work teams. The remaining £1.7m is funding for a short break programme; £1.4m of this is used to provide open access Short Break Activities delivered by third sector and charitable providers; a Community Buddy Scheme; participation grant to Hampshire Parent Carer Network; and includes the cost of maintaining the Gateway Card IT system. The remaining £0.3m is spent on Care Support and Direct Payments. Children’s Services is proposing to save £1.3m from the Children with Disabilities budget by April 2021, a 7.5% budget reduction.
10. If the decision is taken to progress changes to the current Short Break Activity Programme offer as proposed in this report, it is estimated that £696,000 (a

4% reduction in the Children with Disabilities budget), could be saved. Local Authorities have an obligation to provide a range of services that is sufficient to assist carers to continue to provide care or to do so more effectively, including educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, but there is Local Authority discretion around what is provided.

11. The County Council carried out an 18-week open, public consultation from 9 March to 12 July 2020 to seek residents' and stakeholders' views on proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme. The timescale of the consultation was extended by six weeks (from 12 weeks to 18 weeks), to enable as many contributions as possible during the government-enforced lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Eight proposals, incorporating 13 questions, were included within the consultation.
12. During the consultation period, communication took place in a range of ways and, in partnership with Hampshire Parent Carer Network, flexed in order to respond to the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. This provided additional opportunities to raise awareness of the consultation and provide opportunities for parents, carers, young people and providers to raise questions and to have their say, as further described in paragraphs 118-139.
13. **373 responses** were received to the consultation. 82% of respondents to the Response Form were parents or carers, family members or children or young people that either use short breaks activities now or did in the past.
14. The summary of responses was as follows:



15. A comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) on the impact of reducing the budget for the Short Break Activities Programme was carried out and published in November 2019, as part of the medium-term financial strategy: [https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s40046/Annex Appendix 6 - CS EIAs.pdf](https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s40046/Annex%20Appendix%206%20-%20CS%20EIAs.pdf). This EIA has been further considered and revised for this decision day, taking into account the consultation findings.

Contextual information

16. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 bring into effect Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008), requiring local authorities to provide services to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.

17. The Children Act 2004 provides a general duty of cooperation of the Local Authority partners to improve wellbeing of children which includes parents or

other persons caring for them. This duty sits alongside the specific duty for the provision of health services which the Local Authority cannot substitute.

18. The County Council is required to produce a Short Breaks Service Statement as set out in the *Short Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children – Departmental Advice for Local Authorities*. The Short Breaks Service Statement was first produced in 2012, in collaboration with representatives from Hampshire Parent Carer Network (HPCN), Parent Voice, the Disabled Children's Teams and County Council officers. The Statement explains how the County Council's short breaks and social care support services for children and young people with disabilities are organised and how parents and carers can access them. The Short Breaks Service Statement is regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects the current service and was refreshed in 2019, in conjunction with the key stakeholders listed above.

19. In order to access Hampshire's Short Break Activities Programme, children and young people must currently meet the following eligibility criteria:

- have a disability or additional needs;
- need support to take part in leisure activities;
- are under 18 years of age;
- live in the Hampshire County Council authority area; and
- have a Gateway Card.

20. The Gateway Card is free and gives eligible families access to activities, play schemes and buddy schemes through the Short Break Activities Programme. Eligible families should have a Gateway Card to use any activities funded by Hampshire's Short Break Activities Programme. The application process is conducted online and requires submission of evidence from an agreed list of documentation. Card holders are required to confirm their details annually and re-apply every three years. There are 2,632 registered Gateway Card holders in Hampshire as of September 2020. In 2019/20, 550 children accessed the Short Break Activities Programme, of whom 110 were known to social care Disabled Children's teams.

21. In July 2018, an Executive Decision was made to implement nine changes to the Short Break Activities Programme, following a public consultation held earlier that year. This resulted in a reshaped Short Breaks offer and the adoption of a charging and hardship policy.

Current Short Break Activities grant funding programme

22. Currently, Short Break Activities funding is awarded to a variety of providers across the county through a system of grants, whereby providers propose a wide range of activities for the County Council to fund. Activities are commissioned to meet specific priorities agreed with parent representatives.

Parents are invited to review grant applications and are involved in their evaluations. Current grant awards are for 18 months to 31 March 2021.

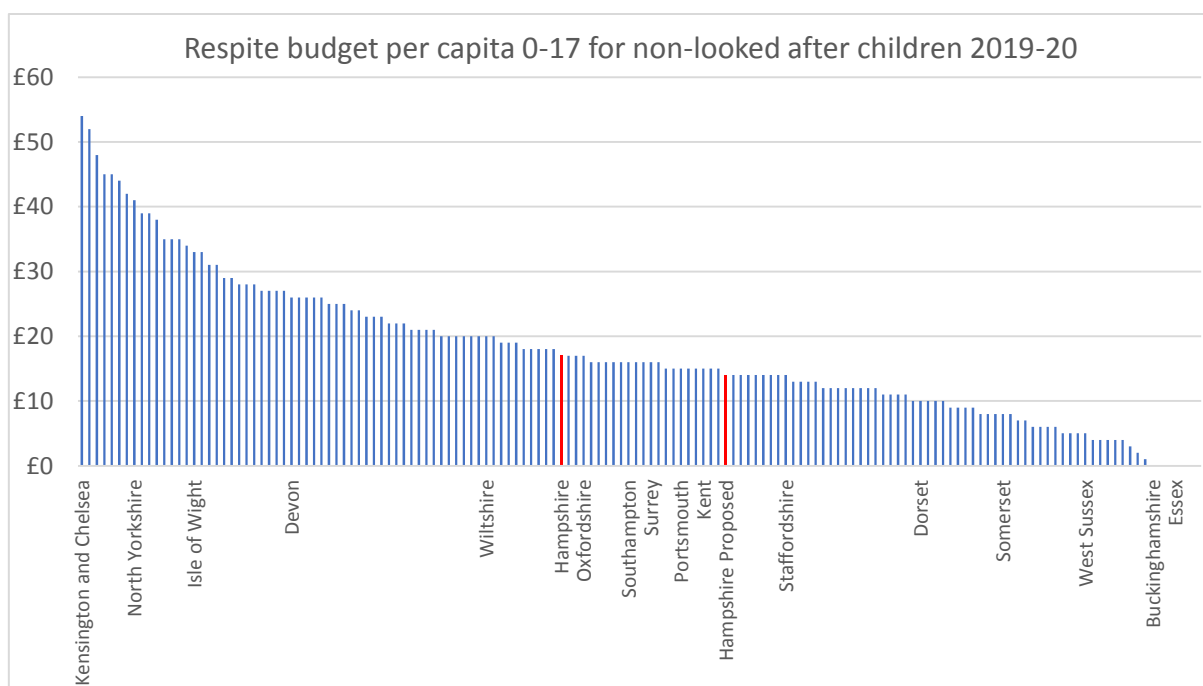
23. Any applications for grants of £5,000 or over are considered within each grant round and recommendations presented to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People for approval.
24. All successful providers are required (under the terms and conditions of the funding) to return quarterly monitoring reports. These reports provide evidence of the uptake of each project and how the County Council's funding is being used. The Gateway Card IT system enables card details to be input or scanned to record attendance at Short Break Activities.

Finance

25. The prolonged period of austerity has led to significant reductions in government grant for the County Council. In response, the County Council has worked diligently to stretch every penny and deliver more with less money – achieving over £480 million in recurring savings, whilst protecting the quality of services as far as possible and keeping Council Tax low. In November 2019, a range of savings proposals, including a reduction in the Short Breaks budget, was considered and approved by Full Council, subject to further consultation and executive decision-making where necessary.
26. The Children's Services Department (excluding schools) has a two-year savings target of £17.2million to be delivered by April 2021, representing an overall budget reduction of 13%. The current budget for Children with Disabilities is £16.8m, of which £15.1m supports families eligible for social work support and interventions through children with disabilities social work teams. Children's Services is proposing to save £1.3m from the Children with Disabilities budget by April 2021: a 7.5% budget reduction. The budget includes £1.7m of funding for a Short Break programme and £1.4m of this is used to provide open access Short Break Activities delivered by third sector and charitable providers, a community buddy scheme, participation grant to Hampshire Parent Carer Network and maintain the Gateway Card IT system. The additional £0.3m is used to fund Direct Payments and Care Support.
27. The proposal to achieve further savings to Children's Services means that options the County Council may have considered and rejected previously were re-considered. In February 2020 under-achievement against the Home to School Transport Transformation to 2019 savings target led to further savings being targeted from other Children's Services budgets as part of Transformation to 2021. A saving from the Short Break budget would be part of the proposed solution in respect of the increased savings target. If the decision is taken to progress proposals for changes to the current Short Breaks offer as recommended in this report, it is estimated that £696,000

would be saved on an annual basis, representing a 4% reduction in the overall Children with Disabilities budget.

28. The current budget per capita of 0-17 year olds for respite for non-looked after children with disabilities is broadly average among English councils at around £17, and is predicted to be £14 if the savings from the Short Breaks budget are achieved, with all other factors remaining the same. This unit cost includes all elements of Short Break provision, including overnight respite and care support, as well as Short Break Activities. The graph below shows Hampshire's position (in red), relative to other local authorities (shown in blue), with the general 0-17 population being used to calculate the unit budgetary cost.



The financial impact of the proposed changes would be as follows:

Budget heading	Current budget	Proposed budget	Proposed saving
Short Break Activities Programme	£1,136,500	£539,500	£597,000
Exceptions fund	£90,500	£20,000	£70,500
Participation grant to Hampshire Parent Carer Network	£35,000	£17,500	£17,500

Buddy scheme	£140,000	£129,000	£11,000
IT system	£31,000	£31,000	0
Total	£1,433,000	£737,000	£696,000

Proposals for changes to the Short Break Activities Programme

29. Proposal One: To reduce the overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities

30. This proposal seeks to continue to commission Short Break Activities that are important to families, meeting specific agreed priorities, but with a reduction in the overall total value of grant funding available.

31. This would be possible for several reasons:

- in the current grant round, the Council has been able to purchase far more places than anticipated within the budget available, in comparison to the amount required according to indication of local need. For example, places for 268 children and young people were commissioned at weekend sessions, rather than the 118 anticipated. This indicates that the desired number of places could be purchased at lower cost;
- only 21% of Gateway Card holders accessed Short Break Activities during 2019/20 and most providers have informed the County Council that they rarely have a waiting list;
- in some cases there has been a surplus of places that have not been taken up, resulting in schemes being closed.

Consultation feedback about Proposal One

32. 82% of respondents disagreed with this proposal. 33 comments were received, including 15 mentions of the potential impact the proposals may have on funding and support for Short Break Activities. Specifically, it was noted how the proposal adds to the budgetary reductions from previous years, putting further pressure on services that support children and young people with SEND in general. 13 respondents mentioned how the service was highly valued, emphasising that it is fundamental to families that rely on it for respite.

How this proposal would be implemented

33. This proposal, if implemented in combination with other proposals, would leave a grant pot of £539,500 to allocate towards the provision of Short Break Activities, achieving an annual saving of £597,000. The Council would support the next grant round with a commissioning strategy that reflects the highest priorities and sets out how to best use the funds available to maintain a Short

Break Activity Programme. The strength of opinion regarding this proposal is acknowledged, however with 79% of the Short Break budget being spent on Short Break Activities, it is not possible to achieve the full saving from other budget lines. 38 consultation respondents suggested alternative approaches to achieving the savings target, with 15 suggesting that budget reductions should be made elsewhere but did not specify which budgets. Additionally, 20 respondents fed back generally that the Council should not be making budgetary savings.

34. In order to reflect parental concerns, and to inform the commissioning strategy, the Council would:

- engage with young people and their parents to help determine priorities for Short Break Activities
- use Gateway Card data and data on usage of schemes to target schemes where they are needed most
- consult with parent/carers and young people to determine if provision for children with autism should be a priority within the grant round
- continue to offer subsidised rates for activities where families can evidence receipt of benefits to enable families on low income to be able to access Short Break Activities and maintain the charging and remissions policy
- if it is confirmed as a priority by parents/carers and young people, explore innovative approaches to delivery, the sharing of resources and closer joint working to reduce costs and help break down geographical barriers to delivery.

35. The County Council would work with providers to develop additional activities where needed if there are gaps in provision. This would enable the service to respond flexibly to changing priorities and ensure that funded activities continue to meet the needs of local families. If Proposal Two is implemented, this would enable ad-hoc grant applications to be made to consider activities that fall outside the main priorities. If Proposal Six is implemented and a two-tier Gateway Card scheme introduced, services can continue to be targeted to those who most need them. If Proposal Eight is implemented, a differentiated offer for the buddy scheme would introduce different approaches to enable children and young people to work towards their desired outcomes, thus complementing the programme of Short Break Activities.

36. It is recommended that this proposal is implemented from April 2021.

37. Proposal Two: To only accept funding applications that meet the core Short Break Activities priorities

38. The main Short Break Activities grant round invites applications based on the core Short Break priorities, which are co-produced with parents and carers. Where activities do not fall within the identified Short Break Activity priorities, providers may currently apply for ad-hoc grant funding via an 'exceptions' fund, which has been underspent during the last three years. This proposal

seeks to either remove or reduce the 'exceptions' fund of £90,500 per annum in order to save between £70,500 and £90,500 each year.

Consultation feedback about Proposal Two

39. 61% of respondents were supportive of changes to the 'exceptions' fund. 53% preferred to reduce the 'exceptions' fund by 78% in line with current demand to achieve a saving of £70,500, leaving £20,000 for exceptions, whilst 8% preferred that the 'exceptions' fund was removed to achieve an annual saving of £90,500. 39% of respondents said they would prefer the County Council to retain the 'exceptions' fund at its current level of £90,500.
40. Comments concerning Proposal Two either mentioned that there was a lack of advertising or promotion of the 'exceptions' fund, suggesting that this may be the reason why the fund was not being utilised to its fullest extent. Others felt that the 'exceptions' fund could be directed towards funding for activities for children and families that are in need of respite but unable to find suitable Short Break Activities.

How this proposal would be implemented

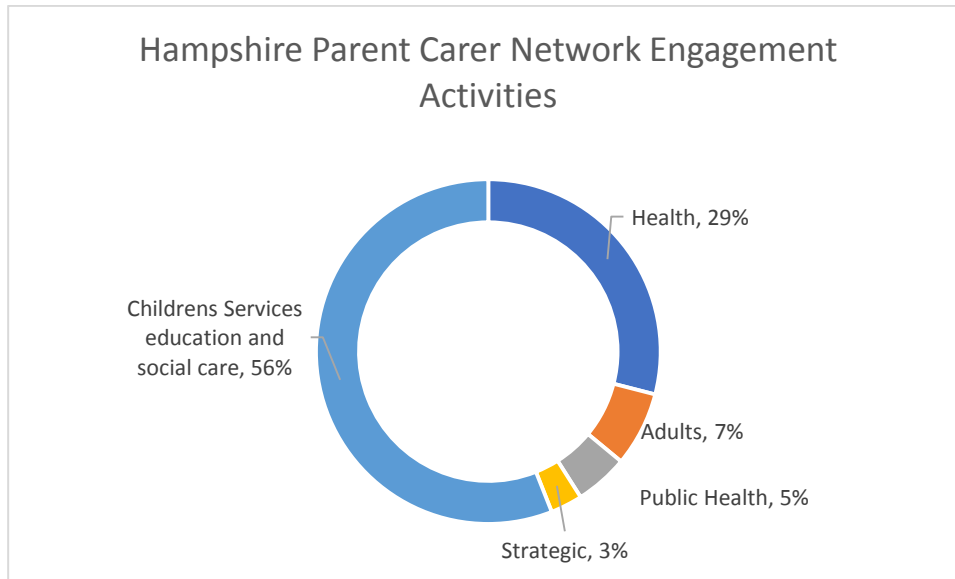
41. If approved, the changes to the 'exceptions' fund would be included alongside the main grant round. In line with the opinion of the majority who responded, a reduced 'exceptions' fund of £20,000 per annum would be retained within the Short Break budget, to enable ad-hoc grant applications to be made.
42. **It is recommended that this proposal is implemented from April 2021.**
43. **Proposal Three: To require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources**
44. This proposal seeks to introduce a requirement for providers to contribute at least 10% of the value of the grant being requested towards the cost of running a Short Break Activity, to prove that they are not entirely reliant on the County Council's funding. The 'match-funding' contribution could be generated from a range of sources such as other grant applications and fundraising. At current levels, this proposal was estimated to generate £65,000, which would help to offset the savings required.

Consultation feedback about Proposal Three

45. 55% of respondents disagreed with this proposal, 27% agreed, whilst 15% neither agreed nor disagreed. Most comments focused on the impact that the proposal may have on providers, specifically that providers could be at risk if they were unable to secure 10% of the value of a grant being awarded.
46. Those that provided the official response of an organisation, group or business were asked what grant period would best enable the proposed level of match funding (at least 10%) to be achieved. The consultation heard from 10 organisations, five of which preferred a longer grant period of 24 months, two who thought that 18 months would be sufficient, and one organisation which felt 12 months would best enable them to source match funding.

How this proposal would be implemented

47. Each grant round previously has required providers to include in their bids how they would seek to contribute resource towards their schemes. It is proposed that this would continue. The introduction of a minimum level of 'match funding' is considered to put detrimental pressure on the sector at a time when it is hard to secure other sources of funding, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
48. A minimum level of match-funding is a proposal that the Council may wish to revisit in future, in a desire to ensure that schemes are sustainable over the medium term and not reliant on Council grants.
- 49. It is recommended that this proposal is not implemented.**
50. In response to feedback from the consultation, a two-year grant allocation would be beneficial in terms of providing a degree of certainty about provision for both providers and families.
- 51. It is recommended that this is implemented from April 2021.**
- 52. Proposal Four: To reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network**
53. Hampshire Parent Carer Network (HPCN) is the parent carer forum for the Hampshire local authority area. It supports and trains parent carer representatives to influence service design and decision-making (based on their own circumstances). In Hampshire, national funding is insufficient to meet local levels of activity. This is because Department for Education annual funding of £15,000 is the same for all local authority areas, irrespective of geography or population and only 50% of that core funding can be used on salaries. Consequently, Children's Services has been providing additional 'top-up' grant funding to Hampshire Parent Carer Network each year of £35,000.
54. This proposal seeks to reduce the annual grant awarded by the County Council to Hampshire Parent Carer Network by 50% from £35,000 to £17,500. Around 56% of the HPCN's current activities relate to Children's Services (covering education and social care), with other activity also relating to health, public health, and education or social care support for 18-25 year-old adults, all being covered by the annual £35,000 grant.



55. The grant reduction would align the level of funding provided by Children's Services with the level of service that would be required in future to support HPCN input to services for children with special educational needs and disabilities within social care and education.

Consultation feedback about Proposal Four

56. 56% of respondents disagreed with this proposal, whilst 25% agreed. 16% neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed option.

57. 42% of respondents were members of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network as either a parent or carer, and 72% of them disagreed with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded.

58. Those that were not current members of HPCN had a mixed response: 47% disagreed and 33% agreed with the proposal.

59. Specific comments reflected how the service that HPCN provides is highly valued, offering a helpful resource to parents and carers.

How this proposal would be implemented

60. The proposed grant for Hampshire Parent Carer Network would be reduced by 50%, in line with the anticipated level of activity required to support services for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities from April 2021. 29% of HPCN activity has related to health activity. The NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in Hampshire have committed to contributing to annual HPCN grant funding, in reflection of this work, which will result in no net reduction in funding for 2021/22 for HPCN.

61. **It is recommended that this proposal is implemented from April 2021.**

62. **Proposal Five: To commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body**

63. There are other organisations in Hampshire that support vulnerable people in local communities that might be willing to work in partnership with the County Council to direct grant resources to where they are most needed. This proposal seeks to work with an external grant-giving body to conduct the process of awarding grants to deliver Short Break Activities either on its behalf or in collaboration. No saving was attached to this proposal, rather it was aimed to help direct resources to where they are most needed across Hampshire.

Consultation feedback about Proposal Five

64. Responses to this proposal were that 45% disagreed, 25% agreed and 27% neither agreed nor disagreed.

65. 58% of respondents felt that it would be appropriate for the County Council to work in collaboration with partner organisations in order to administer grants to the Short Break Activities Programme, compared to only 6% who preferred the option of commissioning an external grant-giving body to conduct the process on the County Council's behalf. 22% felt that neither of the proposed ideas was appropriate.

66. The main feedback received via comments was that an external grant giving body may increase administration costs and may create a lengthier process for providers to obtain funding.

How this proposal would be implemented

67. If Proposal Five were to be implemented, clear and rigorous governance arrangements would need to be approved, and suitable grant-giving organisations identified. However, with no clear advantage having been identified with implementing this proposal, and with other grant-giving bodies likely to be facing funding challenges post Covid-19, no advantages were identified to pursuing this proposal.

68. It is recommended that this proposal is not implemented.

69. Proposal Six: To introduce a two-tier Gateway Card scheme

70. This proposal seeks to create a two-tier Gateway Card system, to ensure that those families who solely use a Gateway Card to access concessions remain able to do so, whilst also providing the County Council with a better understanding of local need for Short Break Activities in order to plan services and further develop the Gateway Card scheme. No savings were attached to this proposal. All current Gateway Card applications need to be accompanied by evidence from a specific list and it was proposed that in order to access Short Break Activities, the evidence should be:

- Receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- A Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- An Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- A referral from a social worker.

Consultation feedback on Proposal Six

71. All respondents were asked whether they currently have a Gateway Card.

77% said that they currently do, and 91% of those who said they were a parent or carer of a child with disabilities, said that they held a Gateway Card.

72. Respondents indicated that Gateway Cards are used for a variety of activities:

- access to holiday clubs (27%)
- to access weekend Short Break Activities (25%)
- concessionary access (24%)
- Buddy Scheme (four respondents) and
- afterschool care or weekend activities (four mentions).

73. 10 respondents mentioned that there was a lack of appropriate or suitable provision, whilst seven respondents mentioned that they have not had a chance to use their Gateway Card yet.

74. 58% of respondents agreed with the proposal to split the Gateway Card scheme into two tiers and 25% disagreed with this proposal. 60% of respondents agreed that the proposed forms of evidence required from applicants who wish to access Short Break Activities were appropriate.

75. In order to inform how the County Council could extend the range of concessions that might be accessed with a Gateway Card, existing card holders were asked which concessions they would be interested in; days out were most popular (89%), followed by fitness activities (76%) and cultural activities (75%). 20 respondents put forward a range of other activities.

How this proposal would be implemented

76. This proposal would have an IT system requirement if it were to be implemented, as it would necessitate changes to the Gateway Card back-office IT system in order for the tiered approach to be visible to card holders, providers and the administrative staff.

77. Any potentially affected cardholders would be contacted, so they are able to obtain the correct evidence as set out in paragraph 70 if they wish to utilise Short Break Activities. Any changes would take effect from the next annual confirmation of circumstances for existing card holders, and with immediate effect from April 2021 for new applicants, at the time of their application. There would be no change to the existing eligibility criteria for accessing Short Break Activities, as set out in paragraph 19.

78. Providers would need to be briefed on the implications of this scheme, as tier 1 card holders would not be able to access County Council funded Short Break Activities so they could only be accepted on to schemes at full cost. Additionally, the Short Break team would need to work with mainstream providers, to maximise use of the lower-level Gateway Card concessions. Any existing card holders not able to provide the correct evidence would no longer be able to access Short Break Activities, but could request a social care

assessment if they feel that their needs are not able to be met through mainstream activities.

79. It is recommended that this proposal is implemented from April 2021.

80. Proposal Seven: To place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities

81. Gateway Card holders can currently book on as many or as few Short Break Activity sessions as they wish (subject to availability). It has been found that this can create discrepancy in the system, which may lead to some families having less opportunity to book a Short Break Activity. This proposal seeks to place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities.

Consultation feedback on Proposal Seven

82. There was an even split between those who agreed (41%) and disagreed (41%). 17% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

83. 40 respondents provided a comment regarding Proposal Seven. 19 mentioned how 30 sessions was simply not enough to maintain a caring role, and that the limit could impact on the funding and support that they received (12 mentions). Others suggested a different approach to the allocation of Short Break Activities (11 mentions), for example allocating a set number of sessions based on those with the most need for the service (six suggestions).

How this proposal would be implemented

84. In order to implement this proposal changes would be required to the existing gateway Card IT system. The IT requirements would need to be identified, an IT delivery plan produced, budget agreed, and the functionality put in place.

85. The project team would work with the Disabled Children's Teams to communicate and manage any potentially affected care plans. The term "session" would need to be more precisely defined to ensure the cap is meaningful and fair. Communications and engagement would be needed with Short Break Activities providers, social care teams and parent carers to ensure that they understand the changes to the system, especially with regards to ensuring that the cap is understood as a maximum for those who really need it, rather than an aspiration or target allocation for all service users.

86. It is recommended that this proposal is not implemented.

87. In order to evaluate whether levels of use of Short Break Activities are reasonable and appropriate to meet identified needs, an alternative approach would be for social care teams to review the instances of high uptake on a regular basis and consider whether other provisions might be suitable, or whether a social care assessment might be required in order to support a family. This would be more straightforward to implement.

88. Proposal Eight: to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme

89. This proposal sought to make the Community Buddy Scheme more effective, whilst also identifying some specific savings. Potential service changes could involve having one organisation responsible for recruiting and co-ordinating buddies. It could also mean introducing a different buddy 'offer' that provides alternative options for support (such as group mentoring, joint buddy support, or one to one support where this is required to promote independence) - recognising that particular groups of children and young people may have different needs.
90. This proposal also targeted specific savings of £11,000 by aligning the scheme with the rest of the Short Breaks Offer, ensuring the service is within the statutory remit of Children's Services for services up to age 18. The proposal suggested an increase in parental contributions towards the Community Buddy Scheme that could contribute around £8,000 each year towards running the Buddy Scheme.

Consultation feedback on Proposal Eight

91. For the proposed increase in parental contributions to the Community Buddy Scheme, 42% respondents agreed and 31% disagreed.
92. The proposal to increase parental contributions for mileage received 35% of respondents agreeing and disagreeing. 24% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.
93. When asked what level of contribution parents and carers should make with regards to mileage, 40% preferred to increase parent mileage from 25p per mile to 30p per mile, whilst 35% preferred to keep the mileage contribution at the current level of 25p per mile. 8% supported an increase to the full HM Revenue and Customs mileage rate of 45p.
94. 14 respondents gave a specific comment in response to the proposed increases, in particular how some families may struggle to afford additional costs, with this becoming a barrier to accessing the Buddy Scheme.
95. Most respondents agreed with three out of the four proposed ideas to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme. 73% disagreed with the proposal to stop funding buddies for young people aged 18 or over. In the comments, three respondents shared their concern that young people may not have any follow-on care during a time where other significant changes to care are likely to occur.
96. Respondents would like to retain a buddy scheme that offers one to one support to promote independence (74%) but were also open to options for joint buddy support (54%) and group mentoring (35%).
97. Overall, 54% of respondents wanted a combination of the proposed options, with the most popular combination being one to one and joint buddy support. 27% of respondents felt that the scheme should solely provide one to one support going forwards.

Additional comments about Proposal Eight

98. Respondents were asked to provide a comment on the proposals for redesigning the Community Buddy Scheme, or to describe the impact that the proposals may have, with 51 comments received in total
99. General comments focused on the concern that the scheme is currently not fit for purpose (19 mentions), specifically that there is a perceived lack of Buddies (12 mentions).
100. There were 13 mentions of alternative approaches that the County Council could take. Most of these comments mentioned that the scheme needs improvements (10 mentions), primarily to ensure that the right support is offered (four mentions). In their comments, respondents reflected that the type of support should be linked to the needs of the individual.
101. Others provided a comment about the impact the proposals may have, namely that they may have a negative financial impact on parents and carers, with the concern that some families may not be able to afford additional contributions (eight mentions).

How this proposal would be implemented

102. Changes to parent/carers' contributions would be implemented from April 2021, being increased from £5 to £6.50 per hour. Mileage contributions would be increased from 25p to 30p per mile, in line with public opinion. These would contribute up to £7,000 towards the scheme, at current activity levels.
103. Young people not living in the Hampshire County Council area and/or of 18 years or above would not be able to access the buddy scheme from April 2021. At current levels, this would achieve £11,000 of savings per year. To mitigate the potential impact of the loss of service for these families, young people aged 18 and over who are accessing the buddy scheme (and/or their parents and carers), would be contacted by the County Council to advise them of alternative options available to them. For young people already receiving support from Adults' Health and Care under the Care Act, a review would be undertaken of their support plan to ensure any eligible needs continue to be met. The member of the Adults' Health and Care community team would contact the young person to arrange this. For young people not receiving support from Adults' Health and Care they would be advised of alternative options available to them. These may include the following options to be explored; family and friends, community-based activities, voluntary groups, and supported breaks for example. If required they would also be advised of how to contact Adults' Health and Care, Contact and Resolution Team (CART), which could possibly result in a Care Act Assessment.
104. More time is required to re-design the service and it is aimed for this to be relaunched in September 2021. In consultation with families, young people, providers and the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People, different models will be explored, with a view to commissioning a new service in May/June 2021.

105. **It is recommended that this proposal is implemented from April 2021 as follows:**

- Increases to parental hourly contributions from £5 per hour to £6.50 per hour, and mileage from 25p to 30p per mile.
- no longer giving access to non-Hampshire County Council area residents, or young people aged 18 years of age or over, saving £11,000 at current levels.
- Commissioning a new service incorporating a single point for coordination and a differentiated offer within the scheme.

Other comments on proposals to achieve savings

106. Respondents were asked to provide a comment on any of the proposals for delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget or to describe the impact that the proposals may have. Respondents mainly provided general comments (69 comments) and comments that reflected the perceived impact of the proposals (67 comments).

107. General comments about delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget focused on how much the service was valued (38 mentions).

108. 27 respondent comments described how Short Break Activities were fundamental to the wellbeing of families and children with disabilities, with many expressing how important the scheme was to them. Others commented on the negative impact the proposals may have on the family unit (13 mentions).

109. 29 people mentioned access to the scheme in its current form, stressing that services are stretched and the demand for Short Break Activities is high (26 mentions).

110. 67 respondents mentioned a perceived impact of delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget. They highlighted the impact of reduced funding on the support available to parents and carers (22 mentions) – particularly given the potential cumulative effect of this and other service cuts (13 mentions).

111. Others mentioned the impact the proposals could have on service users (14 mentions). Some highlighted the implications that a potential reduction in Short Break Activities may have on other services (14 mentions), such as an increased reliance on other more costly social care interventions (eight mentions).

112. A smaller number of respondents mentioned potential alternatives to those proposed (30 mentions), particularly that funding should be increased, not decreased (seven mentions). Others suggested that the required budgetary savings should be taken from other County Council departments (five mentions), whilst some mentioned that funding should be redistributed to priority Short Break Activity areas (five mentions).

Other comments on proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme

113. Respondents were asked to provide a comment on any of the proposals for improving the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme, or to describe the impact that the proposals may have. Respondents mainly provided general comments (54 comments) and comments that reflected the perceived impact the proposals may have (30 comments). 15 respondents suggested an alternative approach to the proposals.

- The main point raised within the general comments was that 30 sessions per year per child would not adequately meet parents' and carers' needs (19 comments).
- Respondents expressed how the Short Break Activities service was highly valued (18 comments) and that it provides a lifeline to parents and carers. Respondents were also concerned that access to Short Break Activities was already difficult to obtain (14 comments) and felt that a reduction in the number of sessions on offer would exacerbate this.
- Nine respondents gave a positive perspective, mentioning how they felt the proposals may improve accessibility, and allow for a more equitable distribution of breaks for parents and carers.
- 14 respondent comments mentioned that there could be an impact on the funding and support that parents and carers receive for children with disabilities, some commenting how they could receive less respite and that Short Break Activities is the only form of support that is currently available to them.
- 11 respondent comments reflected on the wider service impact the proposals could have, with some suggesting that there could be additional long-term cost implications such as a reliance on other social, medical and health services if adequate respite was not provided.
- 20 respondents gave suggestions as to how Short Break Activities could be allocated differently, specifically that there should be a fairer (seven mentions), holistic (three mentions) or needs-based approach (six mentions).

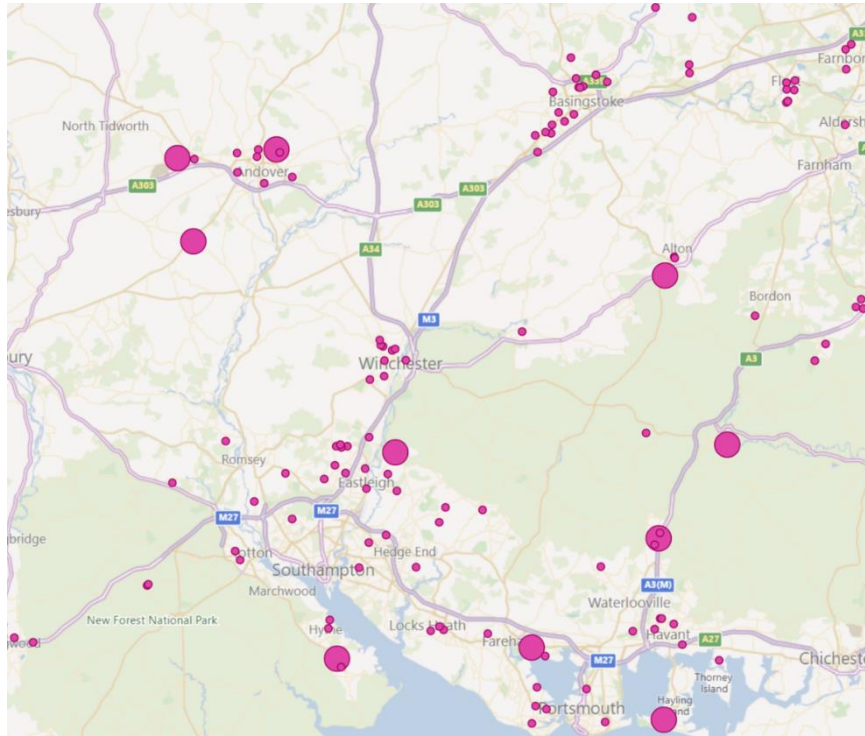
Alternative suggestions and comments

114. Respondents were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposals for how the County Council could make anticipated annual savings of up to £696,000 from the Short Break Activities Programme budget, or to outline any other comments they might have regarding the consultation. Respondents provided both alternative suggestions (38 mentions) and general comments (30 comments), whilst a few focussed on the impacts the proposals might have (seven mentions).

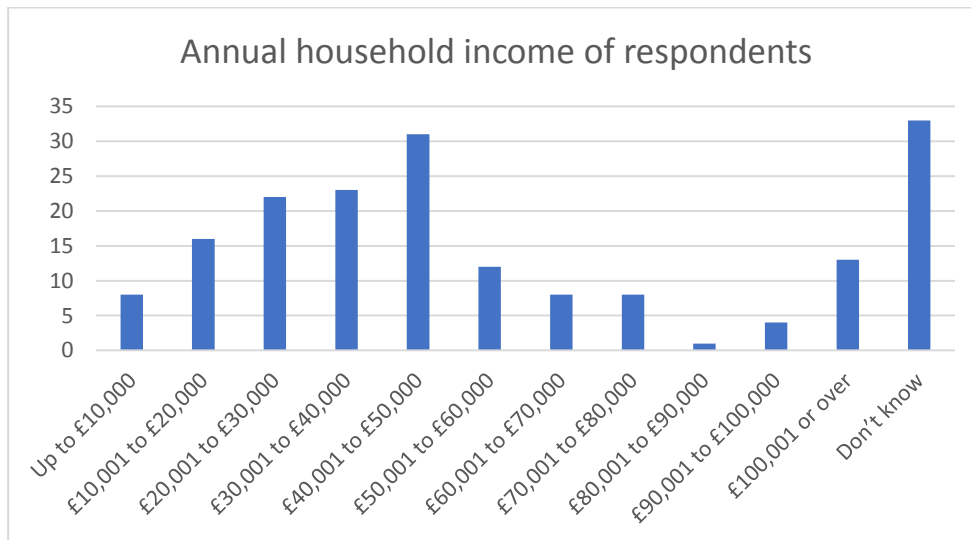
115. Respondents provided a mixture of alternative suggestions, the most mentioned option being to make budgetary savings elsewhere (15 mentions), specifically through staff salaries (seven mentions).
116. 30 respondents gave general comments, the most notable was that respondents felt the budgetary savings should not be made through the Short Break Activities Programme.
117. Some respondents commented on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic could have on Short Break Activities. Four respondents raised concerns about the impact on parents and carers and their need for respite during these unprecedented times; that there could be a knock-on impact for providers, potentially resulting in the need to scale down what is currently offered; and that lockdown measures had already had an impact on the mental health of children, so a reduction in funding was seen to add to these current concerns.

Consultation

118. The County Council carried out an open consultation designed to give all Hampshire residents and wider stakeholders an opportunity to have their say about the proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme. The consultation ran between 31 March 2020 and 12 July 2020. The consultation period was extended by six weeks (from 12 to 18 weeks) in order to account for the government-enforced lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 210 responses to the consultation questionnaire, including Easy Read and Young Person versions of the Response Form. An additional 29 unstructured responses and 134 items of feedback raised via engagement activities were also considered. The full consultation findings report is contained in Appendix A.
119. Respondents were asked to provide their postcode. The map (below) shows the distribution of respondents by postcode, with larger circles representing a higher number of respondents. Respondents came from across the County, with a concentration of responses coming from bigger towns and cities such as Basingstoke, Fareham, Gosport, Winchester, and the surrounding areas of Southampton.

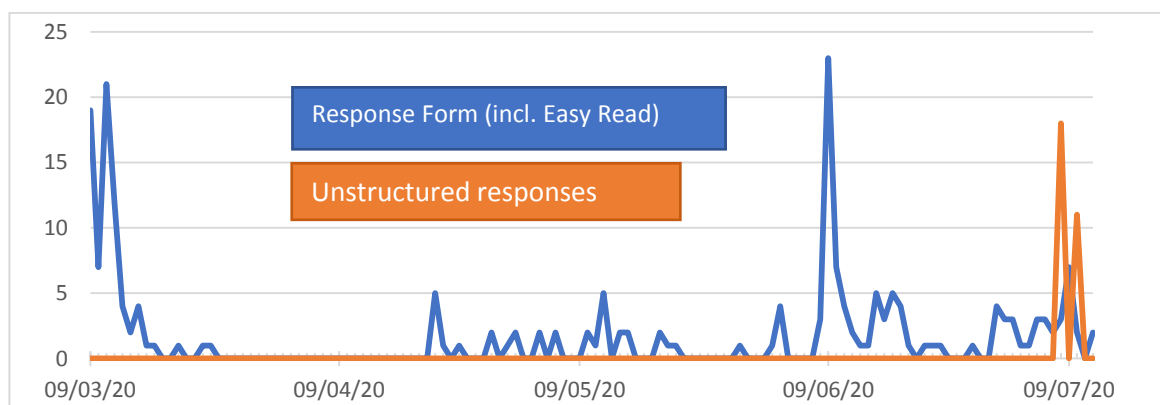


120. Respondents were also asked to indicate their household incomes, with these being as shown in the below graph.



Consultation approach

121. Responses could be submitted through an online Response Form, or as a paper form, which was made available on request. An Easy Read version was also produced, along with a Young Person Response Form in both paper and an online format option, which included the ability to submit audio/ video recorded answers to the consultation questionnaire. Alternative formats were also made available on request.
122. Unstructured responses sent through other means, such as via email or as written letters, and received by the consultation's closing date were also accepted. A summary of these findings is included as part of the consultation findings. A series of engagement sessions were held in order to answer queries regarding the consultation – suggestions and feedback gathered during these meetings were also included as part of the consultation findings.
123. An Information Pack was produced alongside the consultation, providing information about each of the options presented. The Information Pack was also available in Easy Read format. A short informative video was produced to help communicate each of the options presented for, parents, carers and providers.
124. Different approaches to capturing parent/carer and young person's views were explored throughout the consultation period, in conjunction with Hampshire Parent Carer Network. These included: development of an informative video; an adapted shortened questionnaire with video and audio upload facility for young persons' views to be captured; offering facilitated questionnaire completion sessions and distribution of hard copy Information Packs and Response Forms for those without access to the internet. Receipt of responses across the consultation period was as shown in the graph below.



Promotion and publicity

125. The consultation was promoted through the County Council's social media channels and released to local press.

Communications Activity

126. Media releases were sent to all Hampshire media at the start of the consultation and six weeks before the closing date of the consultation on 12 July 2020. The media release sought to generate coverage which would reach the attention of readers and encourage their participation in the consultation. The media release was also sent to all Hampshire MPs and all Hampshire County Councillors. A briefing for County Council members took place during the first week of the consultation and supporting documentation and links to the consultation were made available to those who could not attend.
127. Calls to participate in the consultation, which included a link to the consultation web page, as well as posts highlighting the opportunity to take part in the virtual information sessions and ask questions of officers, were published organically (i.e. free and not paid-for 'boosts') on the County Council's corporate social media channels (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) periodically between 9 March and 11 July, achieving a combined reach of 59,331 of the County Council's followers for each media.
128. A 'newsflash' message highlighting the consultation and including a direct link to it, was added to the top of the key public facing webpages on hants.gov.uk, to make visitors to those pages aware of the consultation and encourage participation.
129. Information about the consultation, including link to the consultation page was included in the March and June issues of HALC News - Hampshire County Council's newsletter to Hampshire's Town and Parish Councils.
130. Six weeks prior to the end of the consultation, reminder information, with link to the consultation was included in the Assistant Chief Executive Covid-19 daily briefing to Hampshire MPs, Hampshire County Councillors and the Chief Executives of the district and unitary authorities in Hampshire.

County Council Staff communications

131. HantsHeadlines (the County Council's news channel for staff), news items about the consultation were published on 9 March, 5 June and 1 July and were viewed 2,330 times. (983 views + 262 + 1085).
132. A plasma slide about the consultation was included in the rolling news reel played on the screens in the public areas of the County Council's headquarters in Winchester across the two weeks prior to lockdown.
133. An 'all Company' notice was placed on Yammer, the Council's internal networking medium, signposting to the consultation and asking staff to publicise it if they work with or know of families with children with disabilities.

Operational communications

134. The consultation was promoted via social care teams, and within two bulk emails to Gateway card holders. There was a video of a PowerPoint presentation on YouTube (165 views), promotion of different approaches as they evolved, via HPCN and Hampshire SENDIASS, Short Break Activity providers and buddy scheme providers. Headline messages and links to the consultation were placed on the Family Information and Services Hub and the Hampshire SEND Local Offer. Links to the consultation were added to email footers of the Special Educational Needs team to raise awareness.

School and college communications

135. A communication was published on the School Communications channel during the first week of the consultation and at the midway point in June. The communications highlighted the consultation to all Hampshire schools (including academies) and encouraged school staff to participate as well as requested that schools help to promote awareness of the consultation, and provide a link to the consultation webpage, in their own communications out to parents and carers. Additional email communications were sent to special schools from Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service, asking for their assistance in promoting the consultation and providing support to parents who may need it, and to colleges asking them to circulate details of the consultation.

Engagement activity

136. At the onset of the consultation, the engagement approach was planned to comprise: face-to-face sessions at ten Hampshire Parent Carer Network (HPCN) Get Togethers, at one National Autistic Society (NAS) South Hampshire Branch meeting, and two sessions arranged by Children's Services in areas where those two groups didn't meet. These were to be complemented by two Facebook Live question and answer sessions hosted by HPCN, two provider meetings and young peoples' sessions arranged with existing short break activity providers.

137. Due to the enforced lockdown circumstances, only one face-to-face session was able to take place. Instead, officers worked with HPCN throughout the consultation period to ensure that their members from all areas had opportunities to engage via nine HPCN Zoom virtual Get Togethers, two specific Zoom question and answer sessions about the consultation, hosted by HPCN; attendance at two 'Meet the SEN Team' Zoom sessions and a NAS-hosted session on MS Teams. Telephone slots were also offered, for anyone without access to online meetings. Provider engagement took place via phone discussions and MS Teams, and the consultation was discussed and promoted during provider forum meetings.

138. Additional support was offered to parent/carers in completing the documents by Hampshire Special Educational Needs Information, Advice and Support Service. Short break activities took place in a range of different ways

during the lockdown period and providers were able to work with young people on either a 1:1 or small group basis to capture their views.

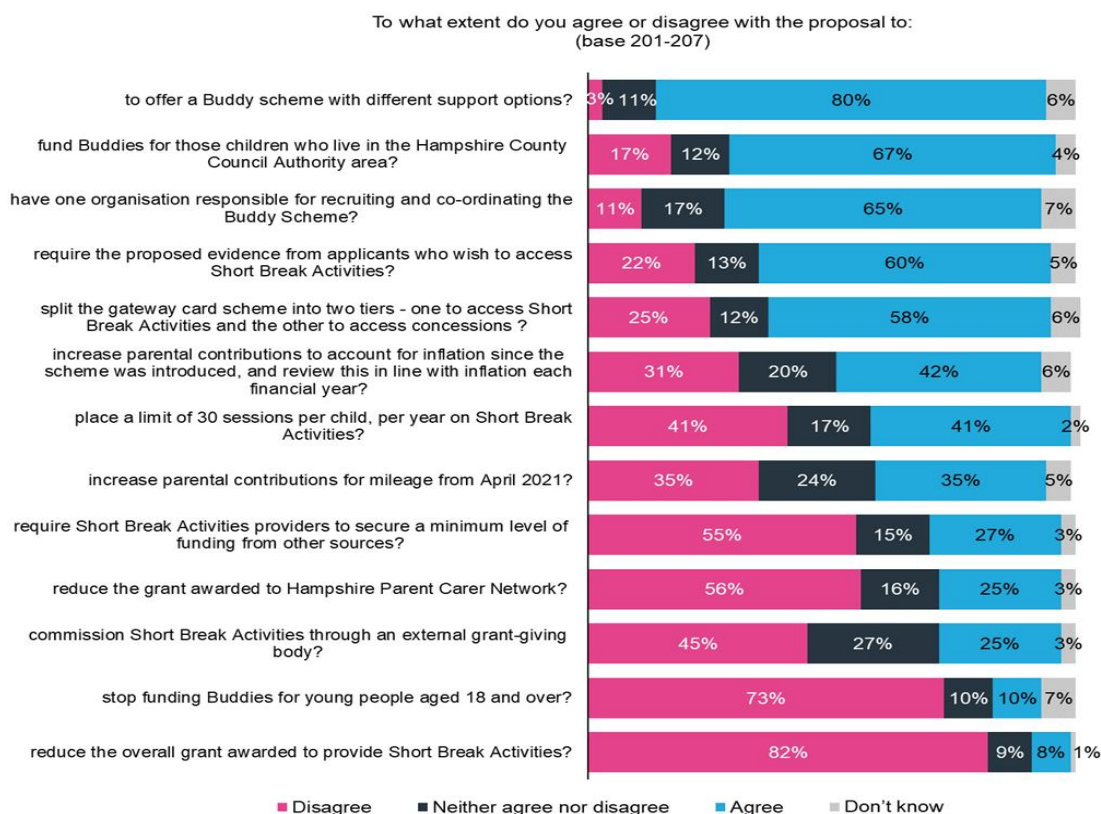
139. The County Council wishes to thank HPCN and NAS for their support to carry out this consultation, helping to flex the approach to engagement and for promoting the consultation proposals among their members and encouraging responses.

Consultation findings

140. 373 responses across all channels were received to the consultation. The majority (82%) of respondents who replied using the Response Form were parents or carers, family members or children or young people that either use short breaks activities now or did in the past. Sources of responses were as follows:

- 200 individual questionnaire Response Forms
- 10 responses from groups, organisations or businesses
- 29 unstructured responses via email, letters or formats other than the Response Form
- 134 items compiled from the engagement sessions, attended by 47 individuals.

141. The summary of responses to the Response Form was as follows:



Key feedback from engagement with Young People

142. 28 unstructured responses were received from children and young people, including 18 from Play at Maple, in which young Gateway Card users filled in an adapted version of the consultation Response Form which explained some of the proposals more visually. 10 responses were collated by The Kings Arms where young people were asked an adapted version of the Young Person's Response Form.
143. The young people from Play at Maple fed back that they liked to stay at home or go to an activity club at weekends; that their activities should have more money and in different amounts; they were keen to have a special card for attending activities and that they didn't want a limit applied to the number of activities they could attend.
144. The young people from the Kings Arms disagreed that their activities should have less funding, with the idea of a Gateway Card having two parts, with applying a limit to the number of Short Break Activities they could take, and restricting access to the buddy scheme to under 18 year olds. They felt it was important that they could attend youth clubs and for one to one support to be available as part of the buddy scheme.

Key feedback from consultation 'drop in' events for parents and carers

145. Where feedback from parents and carers at the consultation engagement sessions related to a specific proposal, such feedback has been outlined in that section of the report. In addition to feedback on specific proposals, parents and carers provided details of some more general issues regarding the Short Break Activities Programme which are outlined below. Please note that attendance at these events was generally very low.
- The accessibility of the Short Break Activities Programme was most frequently mentioned by participants (18 mentions), specifically, they spoke of the lack of choice within Short Break Activities (five mentions), and that the options for breaks was currently inadequate (three mentions).
 - There were 17 mentions of how valued the service was and many also shared the concern that the proposals could impact upon service users specifically (10 mentions).
 - Others talked about the Short Break Activities available within their local areas (seven mentions), with some suggesting they could not find what they needed within their locality or that it was particularly hard to access (five mentions), or needed to be more suitable (six mentions) . Provision required for autism spectrum conditions also received six mentions.
 - Concerns were expressed about the potential impact of proposals upon smaller providers (five mentions) and about the possible impact of Covid-19 (also five mentions).

Key findings from Hampshire Parent Carer Network

146. Hampshire Parent Carer Network provided specific feedback as follows:

- Some families use short breaks for respite as they are not eligible for social care packages. These are the families that worry HPCN the most. Families without these breaks will cost the local authority more money as they will be in crisis without the short break activity.
- The exceptions fund could be reduced as it is not used and not known about.
- During Covid -19 small charities and groups will not be able to fundraise as they have done before. They need time to recover before proposal to match fund could be successfully implemented.
- HPCN need the additional funding to work across a larger area. HPCN stated that they could not run the parent carer forum on the DfE grant and £17.5k. HPCN stated that their Get Togethers are vital for engaging with families across the whole of the county as are the staff they employ to run the service. The funding from Health should be organised internally.
- The two-tier gateway card scheme is needed as parents and carers need a concession card to use to prove eligibility for reduced entry due to having a carer with them. Children and young people who are neuro diverse do not look like they have a disability and often this is what stops them from getting the extra support/ reduced admission. HPCN believe that the Local Offer could be a more well used web site if there were more of these activities advertised on here. Parents from HPCN would like to contribute to this.
- HPCN fed back that they did not feel that the buddy scheme worked in its current form. The demand for the service is high but the buddy agencies cannot find suitable carers to support the services. Families say that it does not work as the consistency of buddies are an issue. Some children need one to one support, but some would benefit from going out in the community with others to support and improve their skills to socialise. Parents would pay more for this service if it was good. HPCN responded that they did not feel that increasing the financial contribution for the buddy scheme would be an issue, and that the challenge would be to identify people in the community able and willing to undertake this sort of work to meet the demand. HPCN felt that volunteers are not reliable and young people need to be supported by the same person each time and it is better when the buddy is near to the age of the young person.

Key findings from engagement with providers

147. The responses of providers who completed the Response Form are captured within the feedback to each proposal. Two sessions, one via telephone and the other on MS Teams, were held during the consultation period. Four providers attended these events, who raised the following general points:

- Concerns that because families supported via the Short Break Activities Programme are already vulnerable, any scaling back could deflect costs elsewhere within the Council or lead to serious consequences for families if they were unable to access the activities;
- Concerns about the range of leisure opportunities in general for disabled children being limited and asking if this funding could be ring-fenced;
- Efforts to manage demand for activities: some maintain waiting lists, others deploy more staff or put limits on numbers of sessions that can be accessed in order to make spaces generally available, for example via a 'fair-usage policy'.

Unstructured feedback from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

148. The Borough Council wished to emphasise the fact that Short Break Activities provide a fundamental role to children and young people with disabilities within the borough. The Borough Council also emphasised that the County Council should seek other available alternatives, before making budgetary savings. There could be an adverse impact upon children and young people with disabilities, parents, carers and providers of Short Break Activities if the proposals went ahead.

Equalities

149. A comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) on the impact of reducing the budget for the Short Break Activities Programme was carried out and published in November 2019, as part of the medium-term financial strategy: <https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s40046/Annex Appendix 6 - CS EIAs.pdf>. This EIA has been further considered and revised for this decision day, taking into account the consultation findings.

Legal Implications

150. Short Breaks provisions are set out in Children Act 1989 and The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. In essence, the statutory duties of Hampshire County Council are to have regard to the needs of those who provide care for a disabled child who would be unable to provide care

unless breaks from care given to them and have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from care were given to them to allow them to: Undertake education, training or regular leisure activity; meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively; carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

151. Hampshire County Council must provide a range of services so far as is reasonably practicable to assist carers to continue to provide care or do so more effectively. This must include a range of services daytime/ overnight care, educational, leisure activities and services to assist in both the evenings, weekends and during the school holidays.
152. Hampshire County Council must prepare a statement for carers which gives details of the range of services provided under the Regulations setting out the eligibility criteria and how the range of services will meet the needs of the carers.
153. In addition, under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 a local authority must make arrangements for services for disabled children including outings and other recreational activities outside of the home.
154. Under Children and Families Act 2014 it is stated that a local authority must keep these services under review and consider how the proposed services will be sufficient in meeting the needs (educational, training and social care) of the children and young persons concerned. Furthermore, in reviewing these services there is a specific duty to consult with relevant people set out in section 27(3).
155. The Care Act 2014 states that where it appears to the local authority that the adult may have needs for care and support the local authority must assess whether the adult has needs for care and support and what those needs are. Similarly for carers where it appears to the local authority that a carer may have needs for support now or in the future the local authority must assess whether the carer does have needs for support or is likely to do so in the future and if so what those needs are or are likely to be in the future.
156. On the basis of the assessments the local authority must determine if any of the needs meet the relevant criteria for care and support for an adult or support for a carer and consider what could be done to meet those eligible needs. The eligibility criteria are set out in Regulations.
157. In addition, the local authority has duties in respect of providing written advice and information about what can be done to reduce or delay the development of needs for care and support.
158. Local authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 section 149 to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and

victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Conclusions

159. Following the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People's Decision, the next round of commissioning for Short Break Activities will commence. This will be supported by a revised commissioning strategy, working with parents to confirm commissioning priorities for Short Break Activities from April 2021 and to design a new buddy scheme.

160. To ensure that a Short Break Activities Programme for Children with Disabilities can be provided from April 2021 within a reduced budget, and taking into account relevant information and the outcomes of the public consultation, it is recommended that approval is given to take forward the proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme as follows:

Proposal One: To reduce the overall annual grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities to £539,500. Recommended for implementation.

Proposal Two: To primarily accept funding applications that meet the core Short Break Activity priorities but retain a small 'exceptions' fund of £20,000 per annum. Recommended for implementation.

Proposal Three: To require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources. Not recommended for implementation. Recommendation for two-year grant funding in next round, in response to feedback.

Proposal Four: To reduce the annual grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network to £17,500. Recommended for implementation.

Proposal Five: To commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body. Not recommended for implementation.

Proposal Six: To introduce a two-tier Gateway Card scheme, including proposed evidence requirements to support Gateway Card applications for each tier. Recommended for implementation.

Proposal Seven: To place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities. Not recommended for implementation.

**Proposal Eight: To redesign the Community Buddy Scheme.
Recommended for implementation, including:**

- **Increases to parental hourly contributions from £5 per hour to £6.50 per hour, and mileage from 25p to 30p per mile.**
- **no longer giving access to non-Hampshire County Council area residents, or young people aged 18 years of age or over, saving £11,000 at current levels.**
- **Commissioning a new service, incorporating a single point for coordination and a differentiated offer within the scheme.**

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions
Short Breaks for Disabled Children (Ref 2589) 06/04/11
Short Breaks Statement of Future Provision and Grant Awards (Ref 3153) 28/09/11
Short Breaks Grant Awards (Ref 3353) 17/10/11
Short Breaks Grant Awards (Ref 3440) 18/01/12
Short Breaks Grant Allocations for 2012-13 (Ref 3441) 01/02/12
Short Breaks Grant Allocations for 2012-2013 (Ref 3717) 17/07/12
Short Breaks for Disabled Children: Service Statement Review (Ref 4120) 06/12/12
Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grant Allocations 2013-14 (Ref 4197) 23/01/13

Short Breaks for Disabled Children: Service Statement Review (Ref: 4593)
05/02/13

Short Breaks grant awards: Specialist playschemes in Basingstoke (2013-14) (Ref 4685) **25/03/13**

Short Breaks activities for Disabled Children - Grants for the remainder of 2013-14 (Ref 4707) **12/06/13**

Short Breaks for Disabled Children - Grant Awards for 2014-15 (Ref 5195) **22/01/14**

Short Breaks Statement: Service Statement Review 2014-15 (Ref: 5580) **26/03/14**

Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grants for 2015-16 (Ref 6447) **23/03/15**

Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grants for 2016-17 (Ref 7216) **18/03/16**

Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grants for 2017-18 (Ref 8059) **13/03/17**

Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grants for 2018-19 (Ref: agenda item 1)
15/01/18

Children with Disabilities Public Consultation (Ref 5933) **25/07/14**

Revenue Budget report for Children's Services for 2015/16 (Ref 6286) **21/01/15**

Transformation to 2017 - Revenue Savings Proposals (Ref 6889) **16/09/15**

Revenue budget report for Children's Services for 2016/17 (Ref 7131) **20/01/16**

Revenue budget report for Children's Services for 2017/18 (Ref 8019) **18/01/17**

Cabinet: Revenue Budget and Precept 2015/16 (Ref 6373) **01/02/15**

Cabinet: Transformation to 2017: Consultation Outcomes (Ref 6942) **21/09/15**

Cabinet: Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Transformation to 2017 Savings Proposals (Ref 6920) **05/10/15**

Children and Young People's Select Committee Respite Task and Finish Group report (Ref 6003) **23/07/14**

Children and Young People's Select Committee Consideration of Request to Exercise Call-in Powers (Ref 6083) **12/09/14**

Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget consultation (1) **Summer 2017**

Cabinet: Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Transformation to 2019 Savings Proposals **16/10/17**

Proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme and consultation outcomes **12/07/2018**

Full Council: Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Transformation to 2019 Savings Proposals (Ref: agenda item 10) **02/11/18**

Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget consultation (2) **Summer 2019**

Transformation to 2021 – Revenue Savings Proposals **18/09/19**

Council: Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Transformation to 2021 Savings Proposals **07/11/19**

Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives

Title

Date

Children Act https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/schedule/2	1989
Local Government Act	1999
Equality Act	2010
Short Breaks: Statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks	2010
The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/707/made	2011
Short Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children: Departmental Advice for Local Authorities	2011
Children and Families Act	2014
Best Value Statutory Guidance (revised and updated)	2015

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Name of project or proposal (required): Short Break Activities Programme T21

Is this project a Transformation project? (required): T21

Name of accountable officer (required): Suzanne Smith

Email (required): sarah.1.roberts@hants.gov.uk

Department (required): Children's Services

Date of assessment (required): 28/10/2020

Is this a detailed or overview EIA? (required): Detailed

Describe the current service or policy: Children's Services' Short Break Activities Programme provides support to parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities. It seeks to offer a range of fun and educational activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, so

that their parents or carers can have a short break from their caring responsibilities. Through the respite offered by the Short Break Activities Programme, parents and carers can take part in education and training courses, leisure pursuits, day-to-day tasks, and other activities. Short Break Activities are provided in the evenings, as well as at weekends and during school holidays.

Geographical impact (required): All Hampshire

Describe the proposed change (required): Several changes to the Short Break Activities Programme are being considered (corresponding to Proposals 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 from the 2020 consultation):

- The overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities would be reduced by £597,000.
- Only accept applications that meet the core Short Break Activity priorities, except for a £20,000 exceptions fund.
- The grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network would be reduced by £17,500.
- A two-tier Gateway Card scheme would be introduced, and the evidence requirements changed.
- Redesign the Community Buddy Scheme, increase parental contributions, and limit access to the scheme to Hampshire County Council area residents who are under 18.

Who does this impact assessment cover? (required): Service users
Has engagement or consultation been carried out? (required): Yes

Describe the consultation or engagement you have performed or are intending to perform (required): A public consultation on proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme from April 2021 was held. It was open for 18 weeks, from 9 March to 12 July 2020, having been extended to mitigate the disruption caused by Covid-19. It was promoted through numerous channels (e.g. social media, targeted emails, and partner organisation communications). 15 engagement sessions were held, mostly online, attended by 47 unique individuals. 239 consultation responses were received in total. Additionally, 134 individual comments were collected from the engagement sessions.

Age (required): High

Impact (required): The service is for children with disabilities under the age of 18, therefore any changes made to the service have a high impact on this demographic. The number of registered Gateway Card holders constitutes 1.1% of the 0-17 age population in Hampshire.

Mitigation (required): Mitigations include:

*ensuring the Council engages with young people and their parents to help us determine priorities for Short Break Activities

- * the proposed introduction of a two-tier Gateway Card system to better understand needs of Gateway Card holders and the services required, and the creation of better links to places offering concessions
- * proposed retention of an exceptions fund to enable ad-hoc grant applications to be made.
- * ensuring signposting to support from Adult Health and Care services is available from age 18

Disability (required): High

Impact (required): There are currently around 2,600 Gateway Card holders who are registered to be able to access Short Break Activities. This is a small proportion (0.2%) of the overall Hampshire population of 1.382million (2019) and 1.1% of the under 18 population in Hampshire, however the impact will be on children and young people with disabilities and their parent/carers.

Mitigation (required): Mitigations include:

- * the proposed introduction of a two-tier Gateway Card system to better understand needs of Gateway Card holders and the services required, and the creation of better links to places offering concessions
- * working with social care teams to better understand instances of high uptake of Short Break Activities to ensure the families' needs continue to be met
- * designing a differentiated offer for the buddy scheme in order to commission different approaches to enable children and young people to work towards their desired outcomes.
- * By consulting with children and young people with a disability, and their parents/carers, we will seek to maintain a Short Break Activity Programme that continues the highest priority Short Breaks, in line with activity usage data, within the budget constraints.

Sexual orientation (required): Neutral

Race (required): Neutral

Religion or belief (required): Neutral

Gender reassignment (required): Neutral

Gender (required): Medium

Impact (required): There is a possibility that the proposals have a greater impact on boys than girls, who make up 51.3% of the 0-17 population in Hampshire (2019). In 2018/19 60% of attendees on Short Break Activities were boys. Autistic Spectrum Disorders account for almost 63% of the disabilities of Short Break Activity attendees. The number of estimated boys with autism in this age range is four times higher (2,241) than girls (560). In terms of parents/ carers, many primary carers of children with a disability are mothers. By potentially reducing the

number of Short Break Activities available this may have a greater impact on this group as they may have fewer opportunities for a break from their caring duties

Mitigation (required): Mitigations:

- Consult with parent/carers and young people to determine if provision for children with autism should be a priority within the grant round, and work with National Autistic Society (South Hampshire Branch) and Hampshire Parent Carer Network to evaluate grant applications, to ensure the best opportunity to provide provision to this group of children and young people.
- Consult with parent/carers to seek to maintain a Short Break Activity Programme that continues the highest priority Short Breaks, in line with activity usage data, within the budget constraints.

Marriage or civil partnership (required): Neutral

Pregnancy and maternity (required): Neutral

Poverty (required): Medium

Impact (required): Caring for a child with a disability can have a financial impact on a family, particularly where the primary carer has stopped working to enable their caring role. If there is a reduced Short Break Activity offer these families would potentially have fewer opportunities for a break from caring. Providers may also increase their prices in response to a reduction in grant funding from the Local Authority.

Mitigation (required): By consulting with parents/carers, we would seek to maintain a Short Break activity offer that continues the highest priority Short Break activities, in line with activity usage data, within the budget constraints. We would also continue to offer subsidised rates for activities where families can evidence receipt of benefits to enable families on low income to be able to access Short Break Activities and maintain the charging and remissions policy.

Rurality (required): Medium

Impact (required): There may be some disruption for people accessing this service who live in rural areas. This will depend on which providers apply for and are awarded a share of the grant for April 2021.

Mitigation (required): By consulting with parents/carers, we would seek to maintain a Short Break activity offer that continues the highest priority Short Break activities, in line with activity usage data, within the budget constraints. We would ask Short Break Activity providers to ensure that they give consideration to families from surrounding areas in their grant applications and if it is confirmed as a priority by parents/carers and young people, explore innovative approaches to delivery, the sharing of resources and closer joint working to reduce costs and help break down geographical barriers to delivery.

Any other brief information which you feel is pertinent to this assessment (optional): Specialist services for children with disabilities whose needs have been assessed as requiring a social care package are excluded from the proposals. These services comprise 91.67% of the Children with Disabilities budget.

Please confirm that the accountable officer has agreed the contents of this form (required): Yes