

Findings of the Public Consultation on Children's Short Breaks

The public consultation on short breaks for children and young people with disabilities and special needs ran for four weeks between 25th October and 21st November 2018. Views on proposals for the development of the short break offer that were developed following engagement with the Parent Forum were sought through an online survey and through four drop-in engagement sessions. Participants also had the opportunity to email their views. Information was made available in Portuguese and Polish. The views of children and young people were sought through a series of four focus groups run in partnership with Mont a L'Abbe School and the Youth Service Inclusion project. Children and parent/carer's views were also sought at a weekend Sportability session.

1) Responses to the consultation

Ninety-one survey responses were received, 53 completed by parents, two completed by grandparents of children with disabilities and special needs, 35 completed by staff or volunteers working with children with disabilities and special needs and one completed by a potential new service provider. Fourteen parents, two grandparents and three staff members attended one of the drop-in engagement sessions and four parents emailed their views. Opinions were gained for families whose children attended both specialist education provision and mainstream schools with representation across pre-school, primary and secondary school age.

Responses to the survey from family members included a fairly even split between those whose child was being supported by a standard short break offer, those whose child was being supported by an enhanced short break offer, those whose child had short break support agreed but were waiting to start and those who had not applied for short break support. There was also representation in those who attended the drop-in sessions across these different levels of service access.

2) Views on the proposals

The States of Jersey are proposing a three tiers or levels model of Community Short Breaks:

Tier 1 - Universal: Universal services are open to everyone, e.g. youth groups, cubs, nurseries and sports clubs.

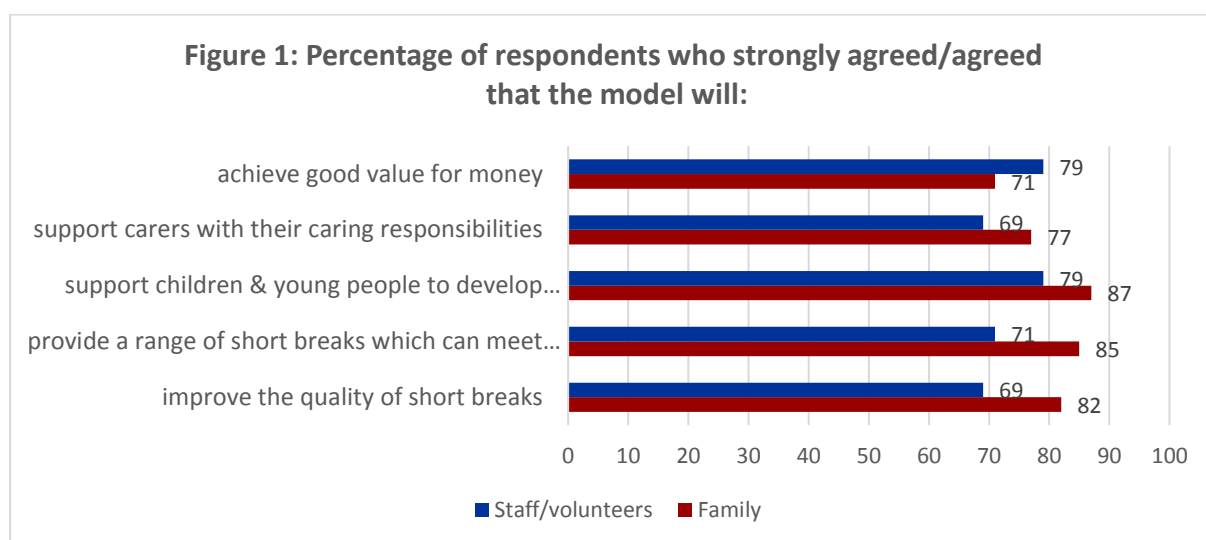
Tier 2 - Targeted: Daytime group activities designed for disabled children. Children do not need a social care assessment to access these services.

Tier 3 - Specialist: Services at this level would help those children with the most need. Families would only be able to access these services after a social care assessment. Services might include some Tier 1 (Universal) and Tier 2 (Targeted) activities as well as more specialised services such as 1:1 support or overnight short breaks.

It was proposed that universal and targeted support could be increased by the States of Jersey funding:

- an organisation to provide inclusion support to universal providers to help them offer their activities to children with disabilities
- targeted groups offering fun activities at the weekend for children with disabilities
- increased school holiday clubs

The survey asked respondents whether they agreed that the proposed model will achieve a number of outcomes. Figure 1 summarises the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements. 82% of family respondents and 69% of staff respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed model will improve the quality of short breaks.



A number of qualitative comments from both workers and family members supported the model and particularly welcomed group options:

“There needs to be choice, not all children need 1 to 1 support” (parent)

“I think more group options but just for the people who are short breaks would be fab” (parent)

“I think many children accessing current 1:1 provision could access groups which would allow them spend time with peers having fun rather than being with an adult. Those children who would not cope in a group will still get support which suits them” (worker)

For those who disagreed or strongly disagreed that the proposed model will improve the quality of short break provision, a number of suggestions were made:

“My son requires 1:1 support and would not manage in mainstream settings” (parent)

“It should be up to the families to decide, through a direct payment system, what service they would like to access. This will stimulate the market and create more options for

parents - it should not just be about access to short breaks. It has to incorporate access to other services which may meet the family's needs and create a more sustainable model for themselves”(worker)

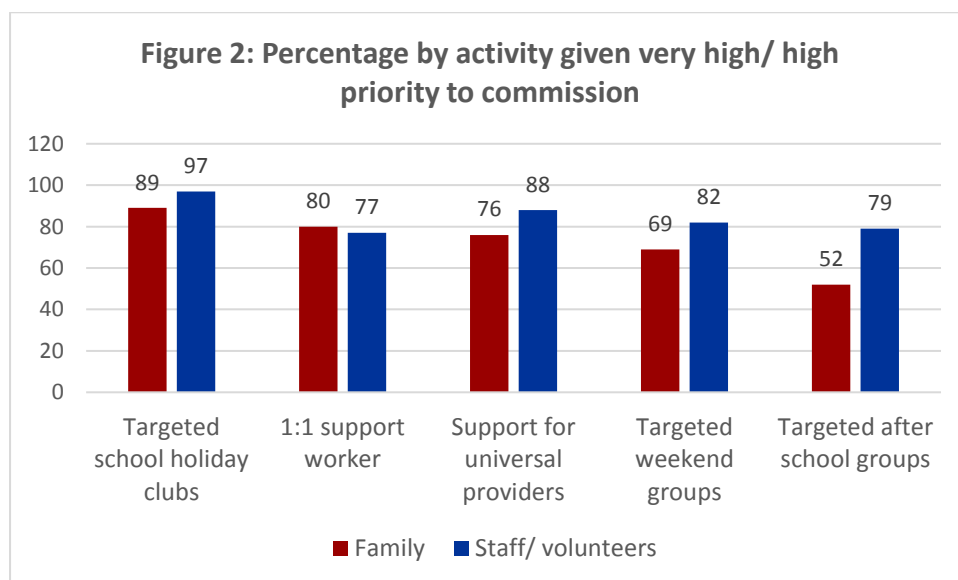
A number of qualitative comments highlighted the importance of adequate staffing with appropriate training, particularly at tiers 1 (supported universal) and tier 2 (targeted groups):

“These proposals require investment in training to develop a skilled workforce and targeted support for universal services to meet the expectations put upon them” (worker)

3) Views on the types of short break services we should commission

Respondents were asked to give their views on the short breaks services that should be commissioned by rating priority for a number of short break activities. Figure 2 summarises the percentage of responses which gave a high or very high priority for each short break activity.

Targeted school holiday clubs achieved the highest percentage of very high and high priority ratings by both family and staff respondents (89% and 97% respectively). The results support the provision of a range of options across the proposed tiers. Targeted after school groups received the lowest number of high priority ratings from family respondents (52%). Qualitative comments from both family members and staff raised that children were tired after school and that this was not therefore the best time for activities.



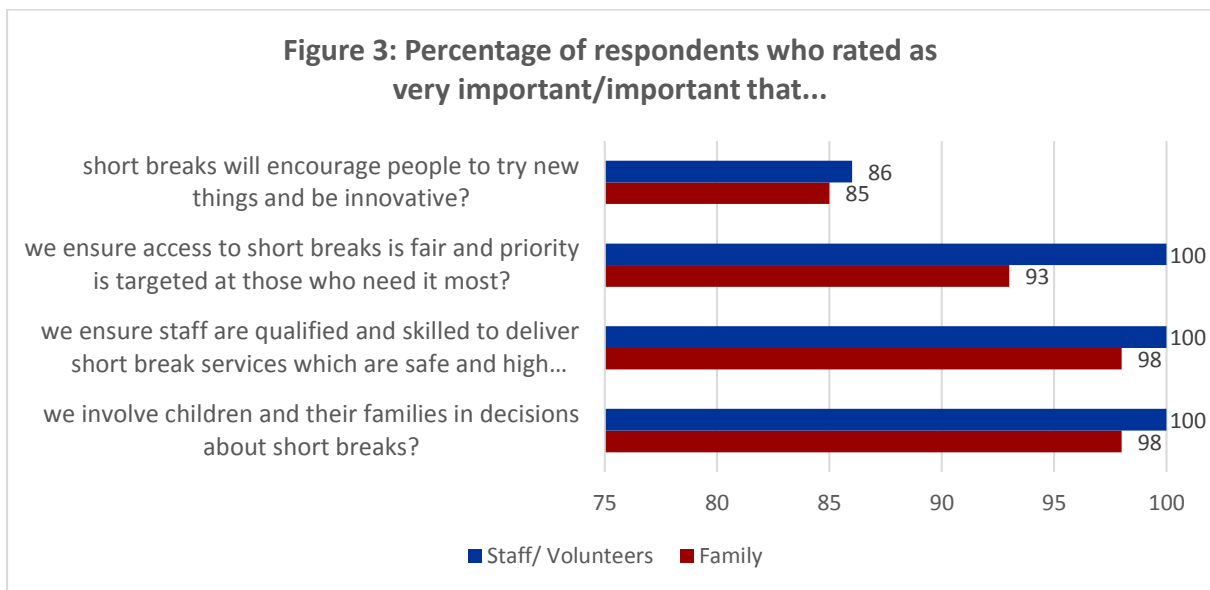
The following other options were raised in comments:

“More money needs to be invested in disability sport in the island; not for carers to take children to but to encourage participation together as a family” (parent)

“Supported outdoor activity events such as Les Ormes or the Valley Centre, SEN swimming, SEN dance etc. This isn’t about funding, it’s about choices for parents (which most will happily pay for)” (parent)

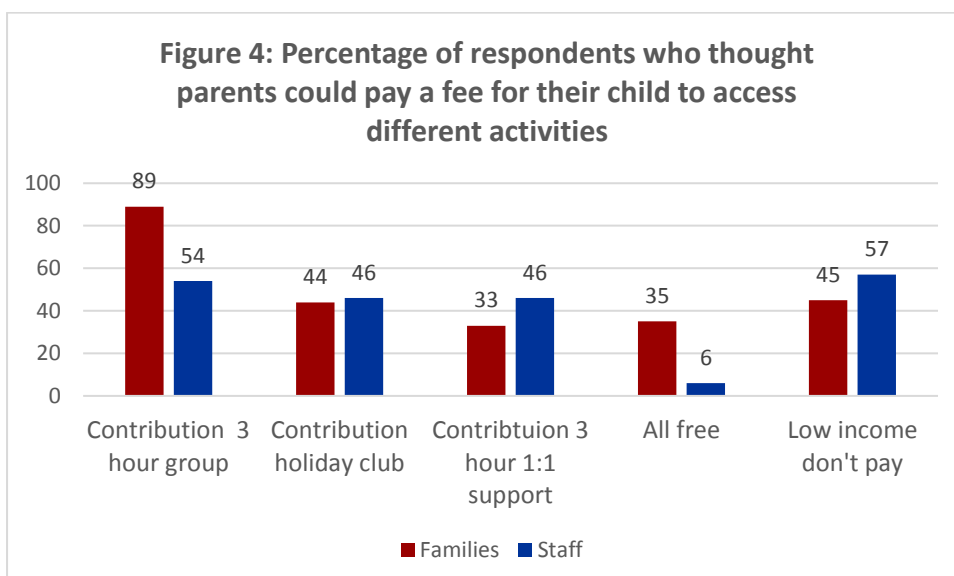
4) Views on how short breaks are provided

Respondents were asked their views on how short breaks are provided. As summarised in figure 3, there was a high level of consensus on the importance of involving children and families in decisions, ensuring skilled and qualified staff and ensuring fair access for short breaks. Eight-five percent of respondents also rated as very important or important that short breaks encourage people to try new things and be innovative.



5) Views on how short breaks are funded and direct payments

The survey asked, ‘Which activities do you think parents could pay a fee for their child to access?’ The responses are summarised in figure 4:



Just over a third of family respondents thought that all short break activities should be free and 45% thought that parents who have a low income should not be expected to pay a fee.

Whilst 89% of family respondents agreed that parents could pay £5 to access a three hour group activity, only 33% agreed that parents could pay £5 to access a three hour 1:1 support worker session. Just under half of family respondents (44%) thought that parents could pay a £25 contribution to a school holiday club, however it should be noted that this is the amount parents/carers are currently being charged, which is competitive compared to many universal holiday clubs.

The survey asked about the development of a direct payment scheme for the parents/carers of disabled children requiring tier 3 specialist support. 69% of family respondents and 82% of staff respondents strongly agreed or agreed that a direct payment scheme should be developed and 72% of family respondents and 69% of staff respondents gave very high or high priority to funding an agency who would employ named support workers on behalf of parents.

6) Views on how the current shortage of short break provision is managed fairly

The survey asked whether children who currently receive 1:1 support but whose needs can be met in groups should, with support, change their provision to tier 1 (universal) or tier 2 (targeted) short breaks. 71% of family respondents and 85% of staff respondents agreed. Qualitative comments emphasised the importance of being sensitive to individual needs:

“This would need to be assessed individually. This proposal could have an extremely negative impact upon a child who has a regular short break routine and does not have the cognitive ability to understand why this has changed, this then has repercussions for the whole family” (parent)

“We should use a range of views to establish which children could manage in groups, e.g. health professionals, school staff, parents, social workers, children” (worker)

“My son has accessed short break service for a number of years now and to change his format would cause him great distress” (parent)

“My child does not need 1 to 1 support. He needs more time out with his youth club mates to learn to socialise, learn new things and help build his confidence” (parent)

The survey asked respondents whether, with over 30 families waiting to start a standard short break offer, the number of hours support for those currently accessing a standard offer should be reduced for a six month period so that all families receive some support. 40% of family respondents and 57% of staff respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

7) Views on assessment

Respondents raised concerns about duplication of assessments and the negative connotation of accessing support through a MASH referral. One family whose son had had numerous assessments in Education confirming 1:1 support was required said “why as a family would we have to undertake yet another time wasting activity of a social care assessment?”

One parent highlighted the importance of a needs driven service:

“It must be needs-driven and on an individual basis, not a blanket award for everyone. Family circumstances and child’s interests and needs must also be considered as well as their disability” (parent)

8) Views of Children

In the focus groups, children identified activities that they would like to take part in:



Whilst most children said they would like their short breaks with friends, one said they liked being by themselves and one said they liked being with adults.

The importance of the reliability of short breaks was highlighted. Children said it was important to them for short breaks staff to be on time and that they didn’t like cancellations. Staff consistency was also raised with one young person highlighting that they felt anxious when someone was new.

9) Conclusions and next steps

The consultation has confirmed that the proposed model is the correct model for Islanders. The States of Jersey will seek to:

- identify a provider that can upskill universal settings, this could be through training and/or through providing additional trained support staff. This will enable more children with disabilities and their families to access universal settings across the Island, including accessing universal holiday clubs
- develop a range of targeted groups which will take place over the weekend and during the school holidays. It is likely that there will be a small charge of £5 per weekend group activity, £10 per day for school holiday provision that is part of a child's short break and £25 per day for school holiday provision outside of short break entitlement.
- increase the number of providers on the Approved Provider Framework that can offer 1:1 and 2:1 support. These will remain cost neutral to families that require this support.
- ensure that staff are qualified and skilled to deliver short break services which are safe and high quality
- ensure that services listen to children and parents and carers to inform the short break activities they offer
- work with all partners, including parents and carers to develop a robust clear pathway for service access and eligibility. This will include considering whether some children that are currently receiving 1:1 would have their needs better managed in a group setting.

It is envisaged that the new model will be in place by July 2019.

Work will commence in 2019 to scope the requirements of a direct payment scheme including the option of funding an organisation to employ named support workers on behalf of parents.

Targeted short break groups will be piloted early in the new year by one of our current Short Break approved providers, Centre Point Trust working in partnership with the Jersey Child Care Trust. They will offer three hour fun sessions on a Sunday. This will start with small numbers, tailored to the needs of the children attending and if it is successful, capacity will be increased. If your child has a short break agreed and you would like to consider them attending a group using their short break allocation, please contact Nikki Holmes, Community Short Break Development Officer on 443759 or email n.holmes@health.gov.je for more details.