

Children with Disabilities

Overnight Short Breaks Consultation

Key findings

9th March 2023

Agenda

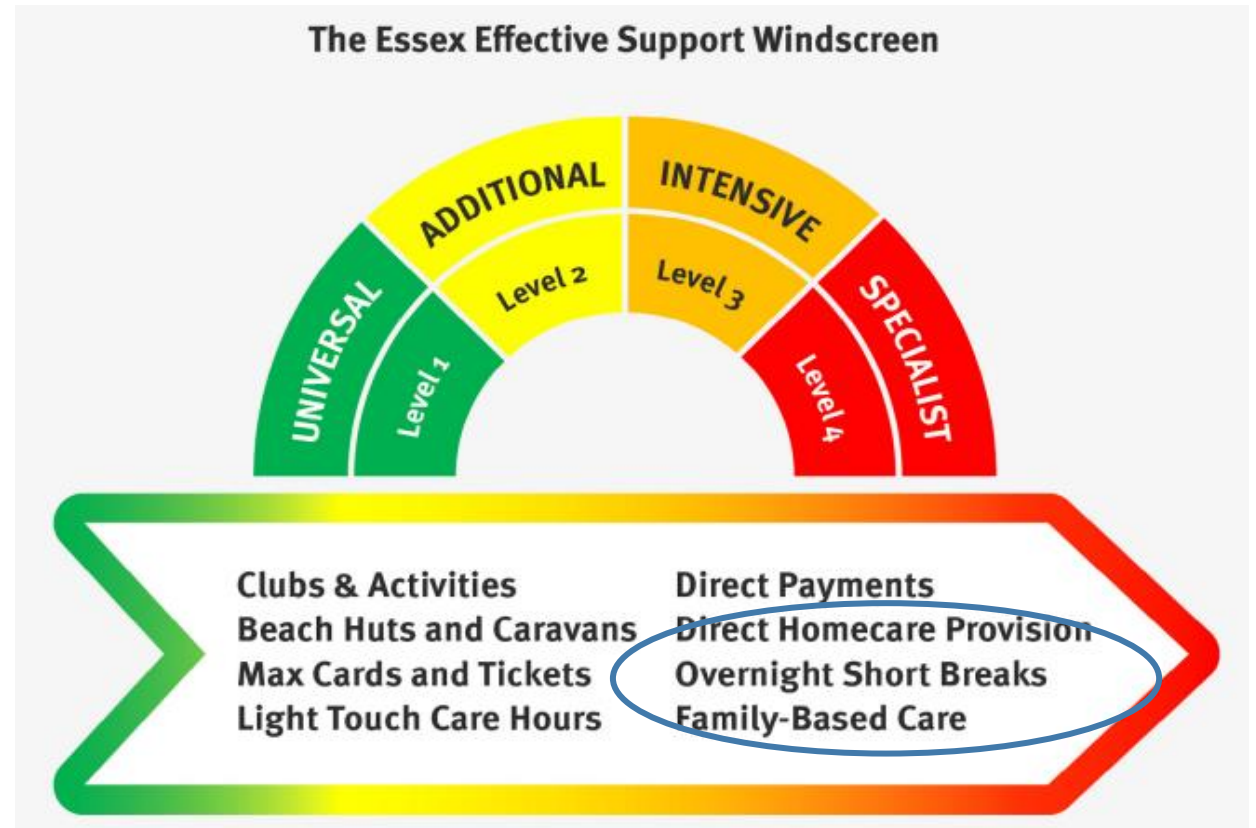
- 1 Councillor Egan to introduce the session**
- 2 Background and Context**
- 3 Current Demand**
- 4 Introduction to Consultation**
- 5 Consultation Findings**
- 6 Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment**
- 7 Next Steps**

What are Short Breaks?

Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks gives parent carers and siblings a break while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.

Children and young people can access ECC short break services if they are:

- aged between 0-18, or 19-25 and have a personal budget
- have a diagnosis of special educational needs and/or a disability
- living within the administrative borders of Essex County Council



Strategy Objective

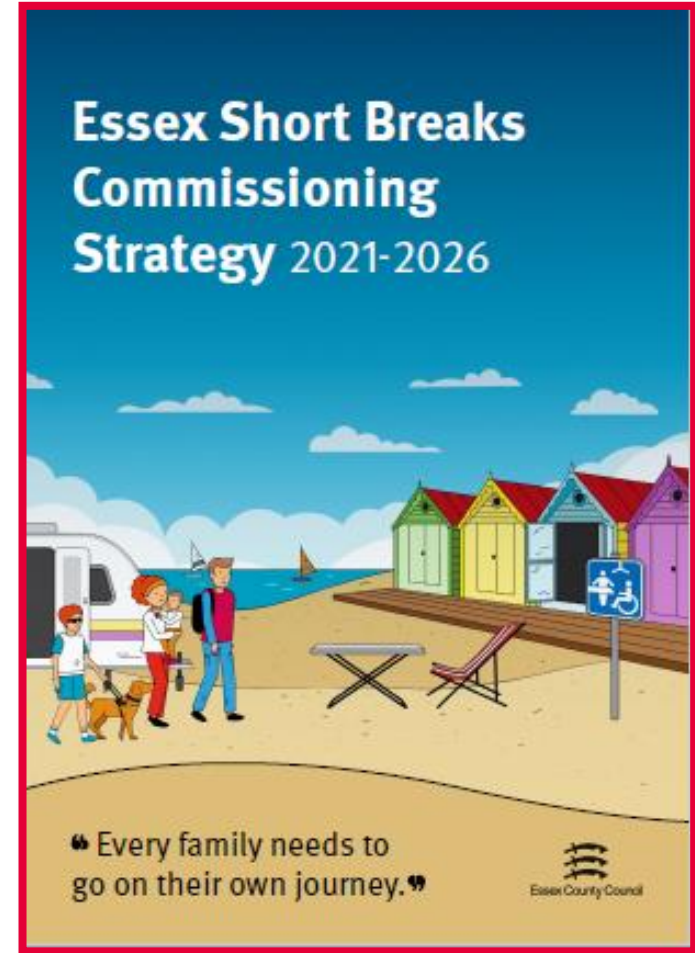
Objective 5: Parents, children and young people can access overnight short breaks provision which meets need and enables good outcomes

What will we do:

We will review our offer for overnight short breaks to ensure it is sustainable and meeting need.

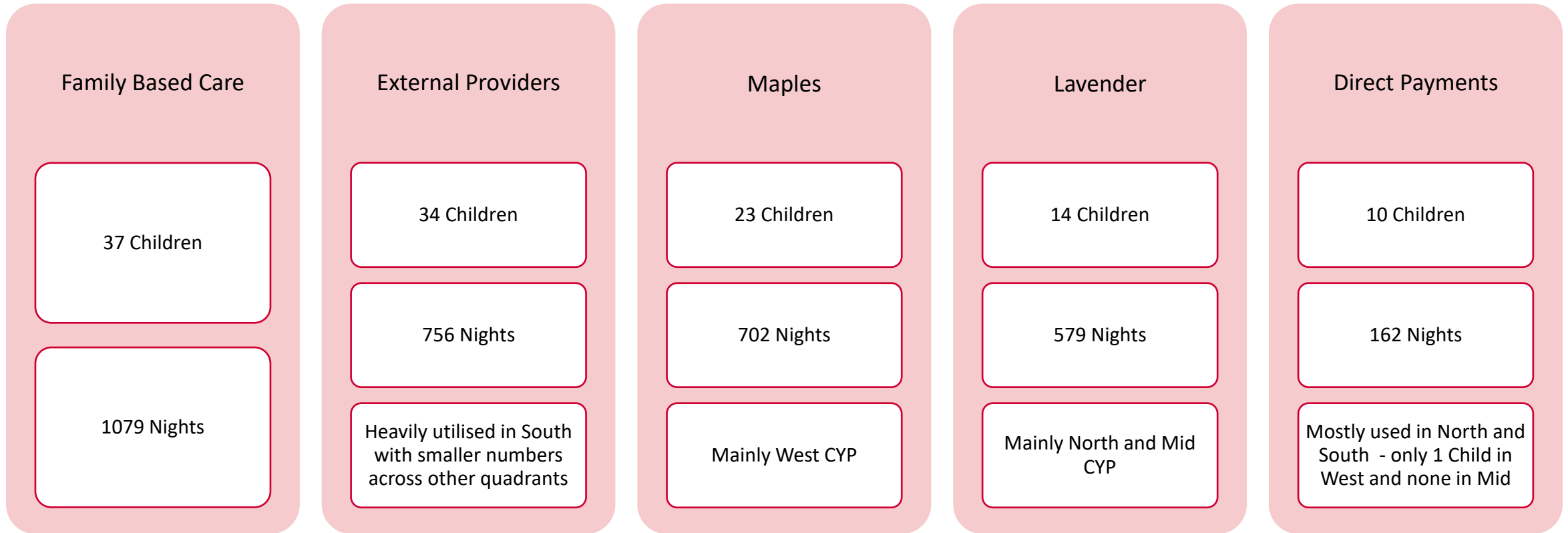
We will expand the range of options that are available as an alternative to overnight residential care, including our foster care offer, considering improvements that could be made through developing improved commissioning frameworks for short break foster care.

We will ensure our existing provision is as efficient as possible and appropriately targeted to those most in need of support.



Current Demand

This table shows the current demand of the 5 main elements of the overnight short breaks offer.



142 children and young people currently have agreed OSB packages of **4128** nights between them.

Admission to EEC-run Overnight Short Breaks

Year	Lavender House Admissions		The Maples Admissions	
	Number of young people	Number of nights per annum	Number of young people	Number of nights per annum
2016	2	36	4	72
2017	7	270	1 3 emergencies	24 300
2018	4	140	11	240
2019	1	36	2	24
2020	5	156	4	124
2021	4	171	1	24
2022	4	168	4	73
2023	-	-	3	30

Introduction:

The Overnight Short Breaks offer includes internal provision (The Maples in Harlow and Lavender House in Colchester), Family-based care (foster carers that enable families to have short breaks), Direct Payments (where a professional carer attends a family home overnight) and Externally commissioned provision such as Achieving Aspirations and St Christophers Cottage

Following a review of the Overnight Short Break provision, the Council is proposing to make changes to the overnight short breaks offer which would mean that the Lavender House site in Colchester will no longer provide Overnight Short Breaks and therefore families may need to use alternative provision. A consultation was undertaken to gather the views of parent carers and their families who are currently accessing overnights short breaks, or may need to access them in the future. The consultation findings will help ECC understand the impacts the changes will have on families across the County.

An online consultation ran for a period of 8 weeks from the 7th December until the 31st January (extra weeks were included due to the Christmas Period).

Prior to the consultation going live and throughout it being live, families who currently access Lavender House were given the opportunity to meet with officers from the Overnight Short Breaks Project Team to understand the proposed changes and to have an initial discussion about how this may impact them.

The consultation was circulated to all families currently receiving Overnight Short Breaks, CWD Social Care Professionals and staff at both the Lavender and Maples sites.

The Consultation was also promoted via social media via the ECC Short Breaks Facebook page and shared by Essex Family Forum.

Understanding families who use Overnight Short Breaks

The proposed changes will mean that there will be increased availability at one site, The Maples in Harlow. It will be staffed at full capacity, 7 nights per week, and have a maximum of 8 beds capacity per night – a maximum of 2,912 available per year.

The proposed change means that families currently accessing Lavender House will no longer have access to Overnight Short Breaks at this site, and this will may mean that alternative provision will need to be sought, which will include The Maples in Harlow.

ECC understands that the impact of the changes will be most felt by families who currently access Lavender House and live in the Colchester and Tendring areas, through possible increased travel times to access alternative provision for overnight short breaks.

Therefore, ECC understand that families who live in the North East of the County may have different views to families who live outside of these areas so the consultation findings seek to reflect the difference in the views provided by respondents.

Key conclusions from the consultation process

- For a majority of the families who access Overnight Short Breaks, the proposal to condense the ECC internal provision at The Maples and Lavender House sites to the Maples only will have minimal impact and many families feel that it is positive that there will be more availability and flexibility on when they are able to access overnight short breaks
- For families that currently access overnight short breaks via direct payments or family based care only, there will be no impact from the proposed change.
- Some families who are eligible for short breaks clubs and activities and who do not currently access overnight short breaks feel that they need to be aware of what social care services are available and how they may be able to access overnight short breaks. Some feel at crisis point around needing additional support.
- It is recognised that families who access Lavender House that live in the Colchester and Tendring areas are the most impacted by the proposal through increased travel times and costs
- Families who live in the north east of the county have told us they will feel anxious about their child/young person being far from home during the duration of their short breaks if the only option is to travel to The Maples in Harlow. Some have indicated that they may have to cease using the provision if the proposal is approved.
- For most families living in the west, mid and south of the county, travel times and costs from home or school setting to access the Maples remains the same or improves.
- When asked if they thought families would be impacted by the proposal, 41% said they would be affected, 18% felt they would not be affected and 41% were not sure.

Face to Face Meetings with Families

November 2022 – January 2023

Face-to-Face Meetings with Families accessing Lavender House

- 14 Families who access Lavender House were contacted by letter in November 2022 to advise them that ECC was about to open a consultation regarding a proposed change to the way Overnight Short Breaks is delivered.
- Each Family were offered a face-to-face meeting with ECC to hear about the proposal in more detail and to have an initial discussion about any possible impact.
- 14 families are currently accessing Lavender House. 3 families are not impacted as their young people will become 18 and not be using the service from April 2023.
- 6 Face-to Face meetings with families took place during December 2022 and were attended by the ECC Commissioning Team and Operational CWD colleagues.

Key Themes from Face-to-Face Meetings

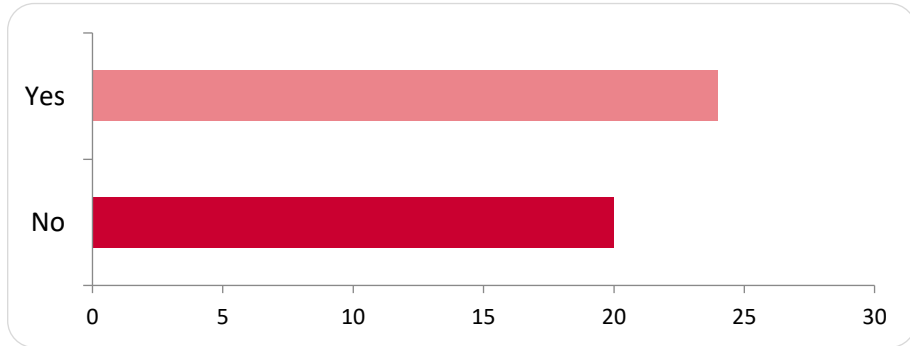
- Initial reservations by all families were shared about the possible additional distance and travel time to access The Maples in Harlow
- Some families started to share initial thoughts about options for travelling from home to The Maples, but most felt they would need support to look at any suitable solution.
- Some families shared that they felt that any alternative provision locally, e.g. Externally commissioned provision, Family Based Care or Direct Payments was not an option for their child.
- Some families were concerned about the transition to a new provision and that relationships will be lost with the current staff at Lavender House and there could be a lengthy process to build new relationships.
- Some families were concerned that the additional travel would mean very long days for their child which they may not tolerate and the distance may make it difficult to get to School on time.
- One family supported the proposal due to the potential ability to block book nights for longer than 5 days, affording them a longer short break still within their allocated provision.

On-line consultation - Who gave their views

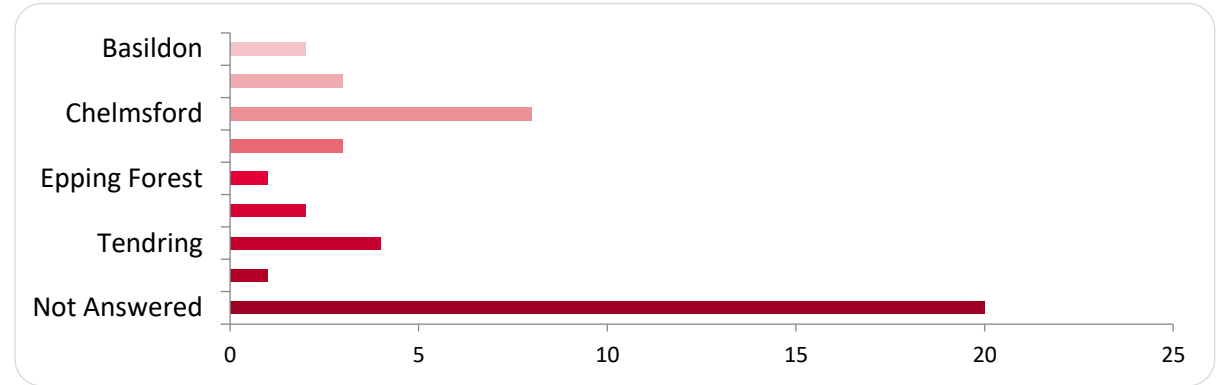
7th December 2022 – 31st January 2023

44 Responses were received by 31st January 2023:

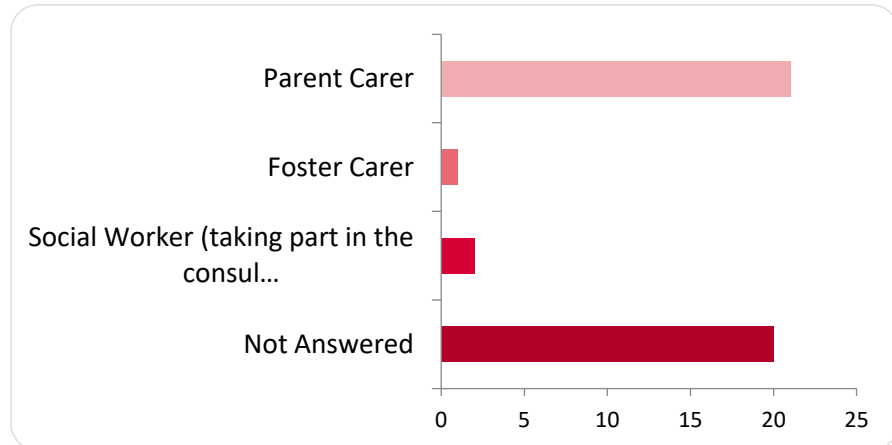
Do you currently access Overnight Short Breaks?



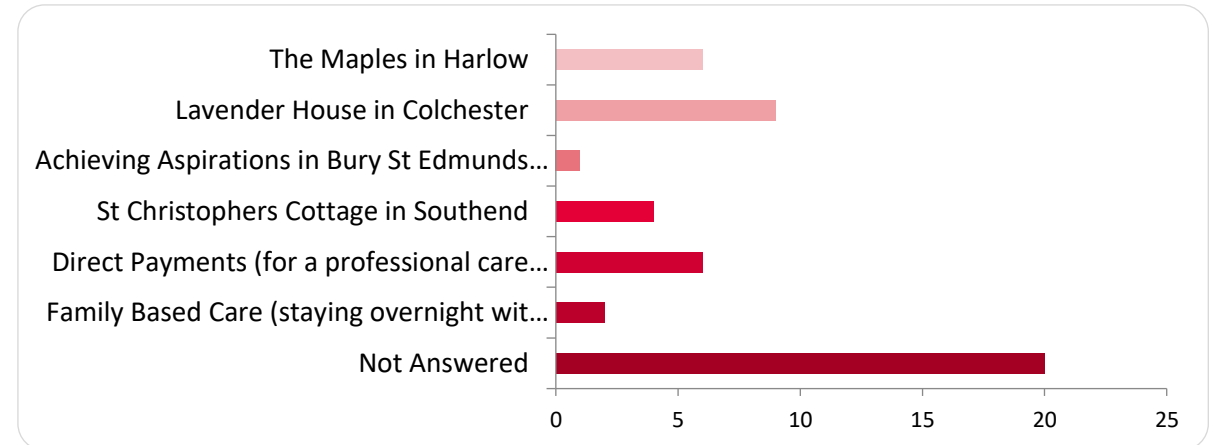
What district do you live in?



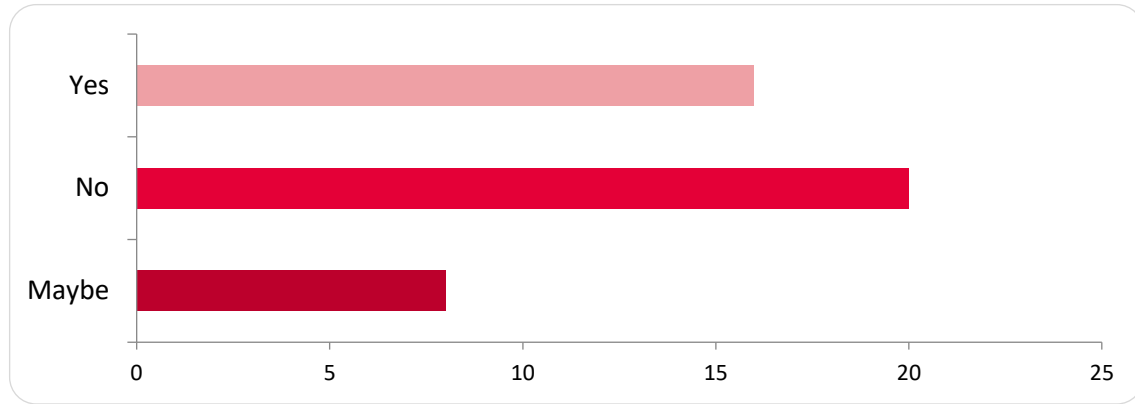
What relationship do you have with the child or young person(s) who is receiving Overnight Short Breaks?



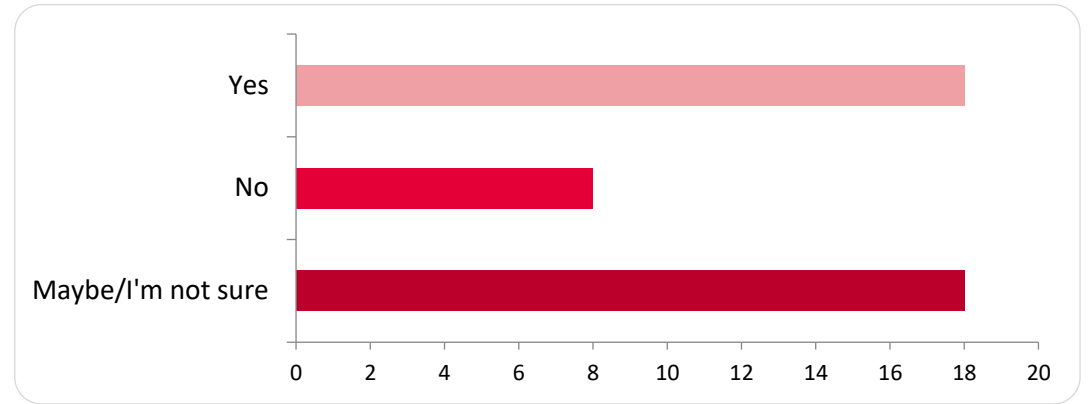
What types of Overnight Short Breaks does your child/young person(s) currently receive?



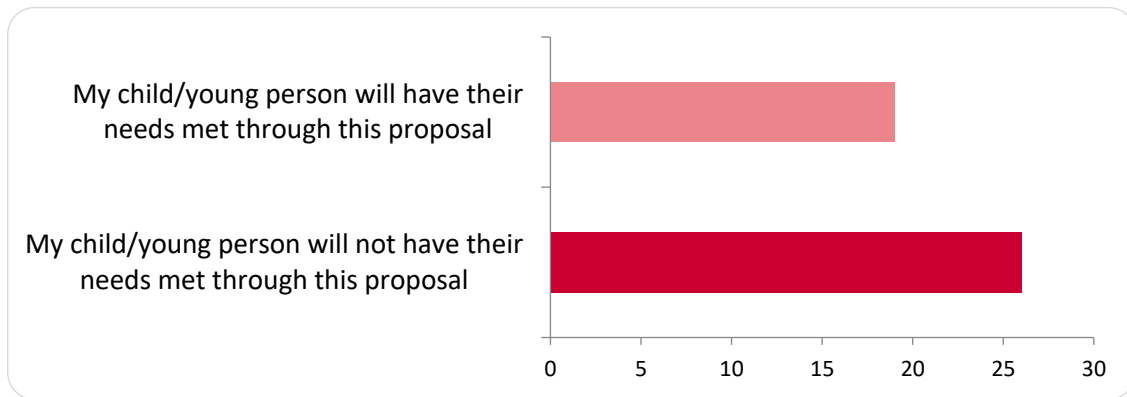
Do you understand the reason why the Council is proposing this change?



Do you think that your family will be directly affected by this proposal?



Thinking about the increase in the number of overnights available do you think that your child or young person(s) needs will be met?

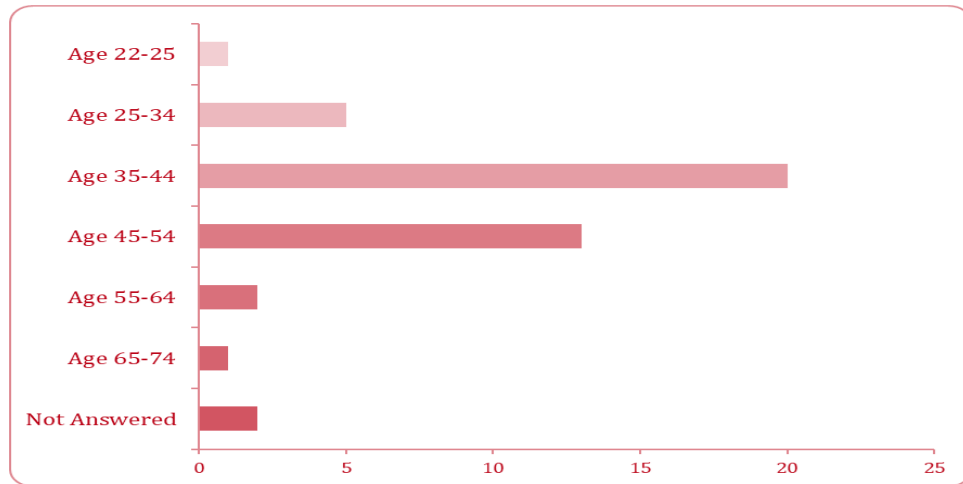


Number of children/young people by condition

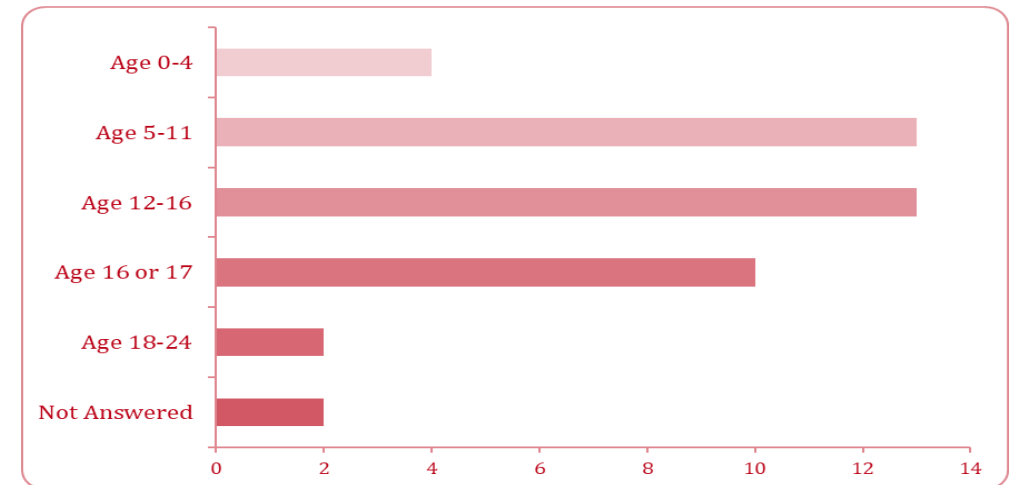
Hearing Impairment / Deaf	0
Visual Impairment / Blind	3
Deaf-Blind	0
Behaviour that challenges	23
Physical Impairment	9
Learning Disability/Difficulties	26
Autism Spectrum Condition	23
Complex Medical Conditions	7
Other	11

Demographic Information of Respondents

Please tell us what age bracket you fall into

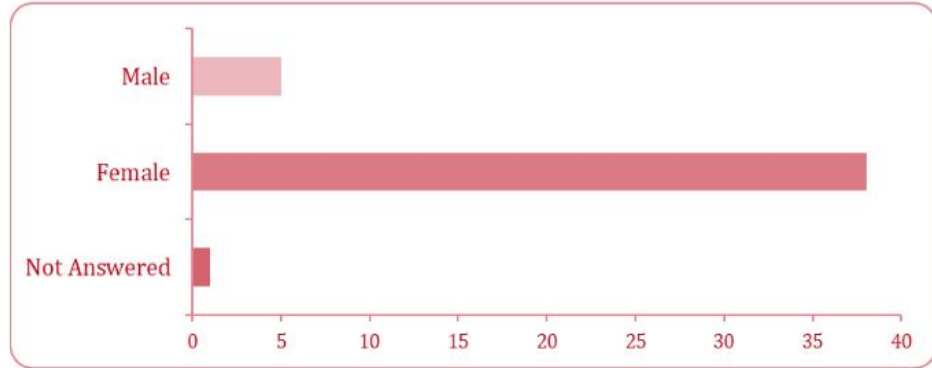


Age bracket of your child or young person(s) you care for

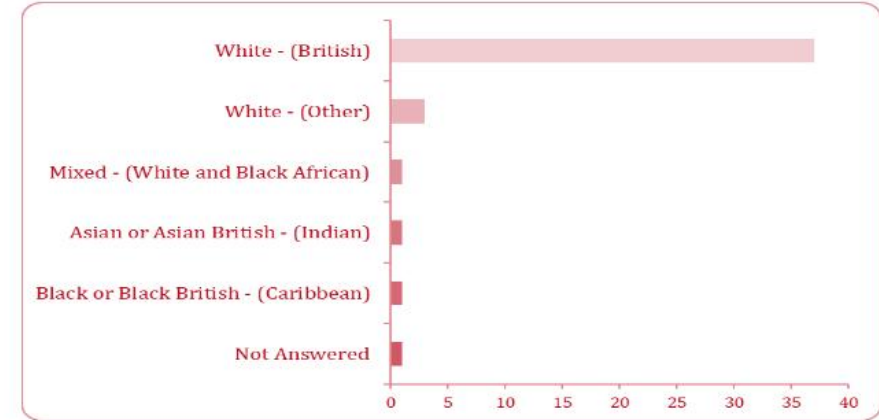


Demographic Information of Respondents

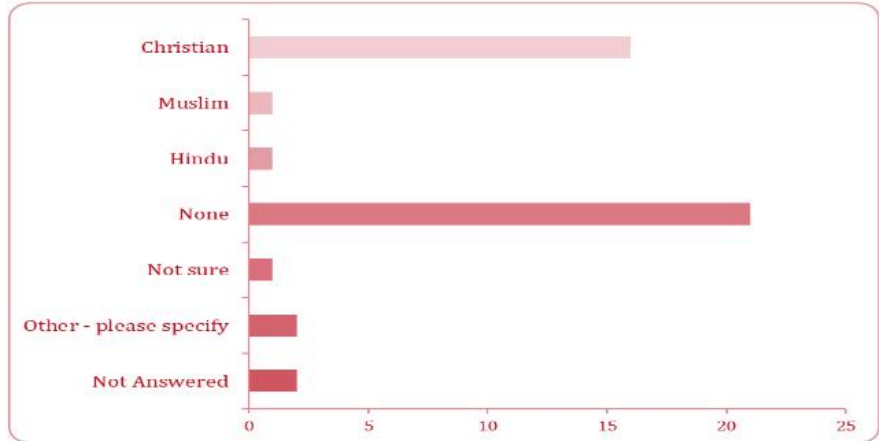
What is your gender ?



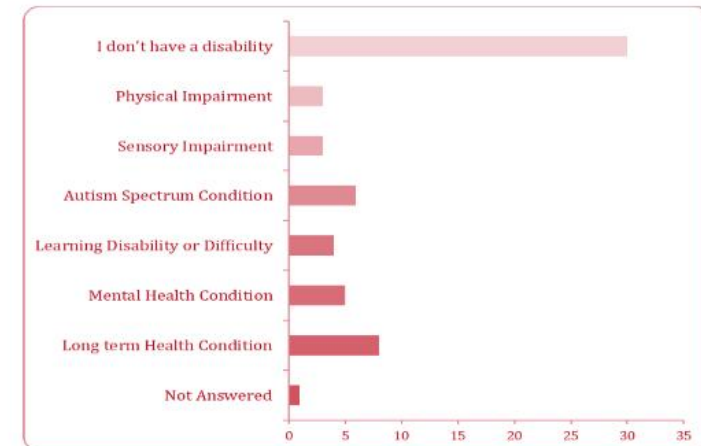
What is your Ethnicity?



What is your religion/Faith

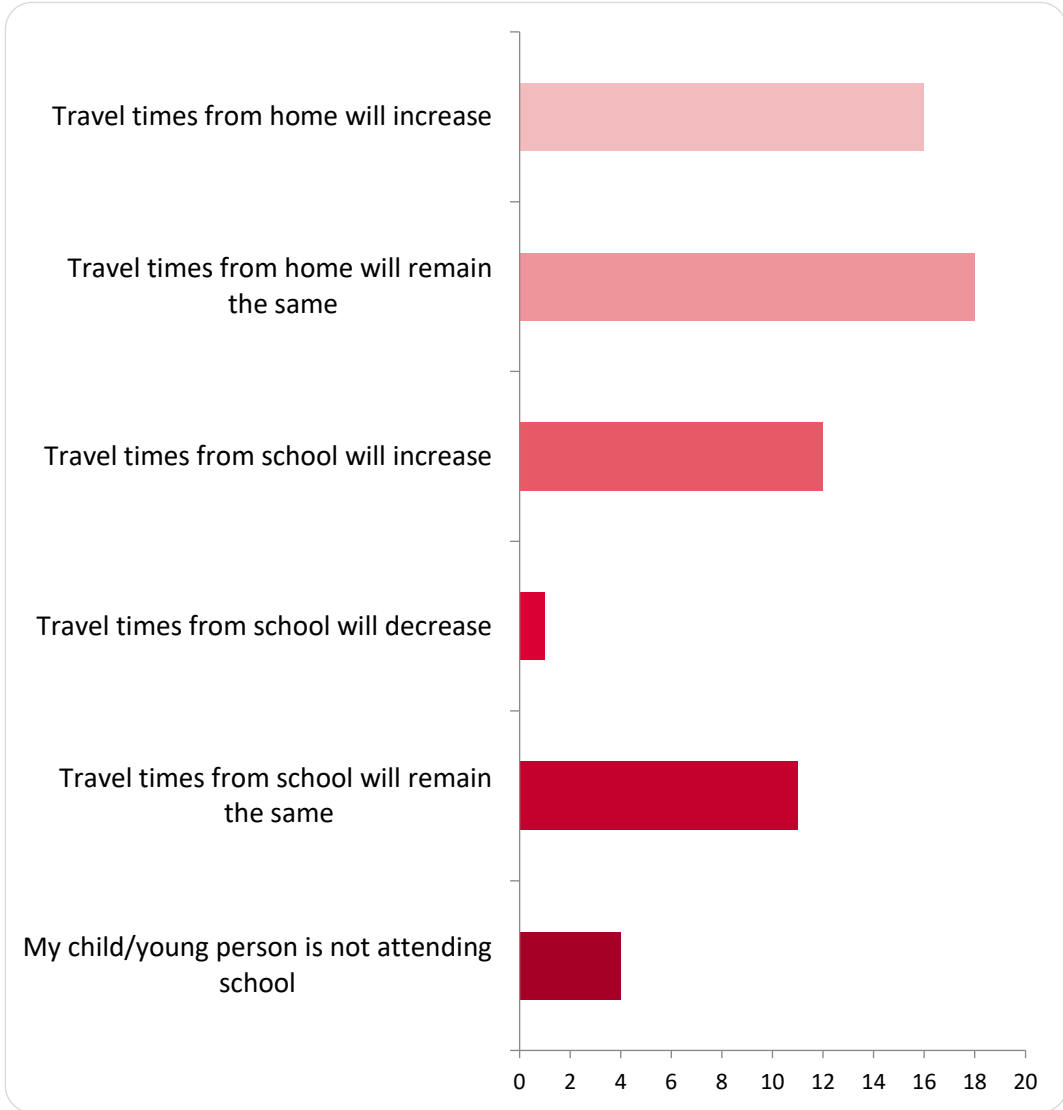


Disability - Do you consider yourself to have a special educational need and/or disability



THEME 1: Travel Times & Costs

Thinking about travel times to access overnight short breaks:



How will families be affected – what families told us

Travel times will increase for families who live in Colchester and Tendring areas who currently access Lavender House, if they were to access the Maples as alternative provision.

Any traffic problems may make the journey too difficult for some children who have complex behaviour/medical needs -they may not tolerate the journey.

There is a clear theme that respondents feel the increased travel times shown on route planners may not accurately reflect the actual journey time.

Families in the north of the county are concerned about their child being so far away in the event of an emergency.

The increased journey times for those affected from Overnight Short Break provision to school will cause them to be late for school and this will be reflected in school absence procedures.

Quotes from the On-line Consultation regarding additional travel

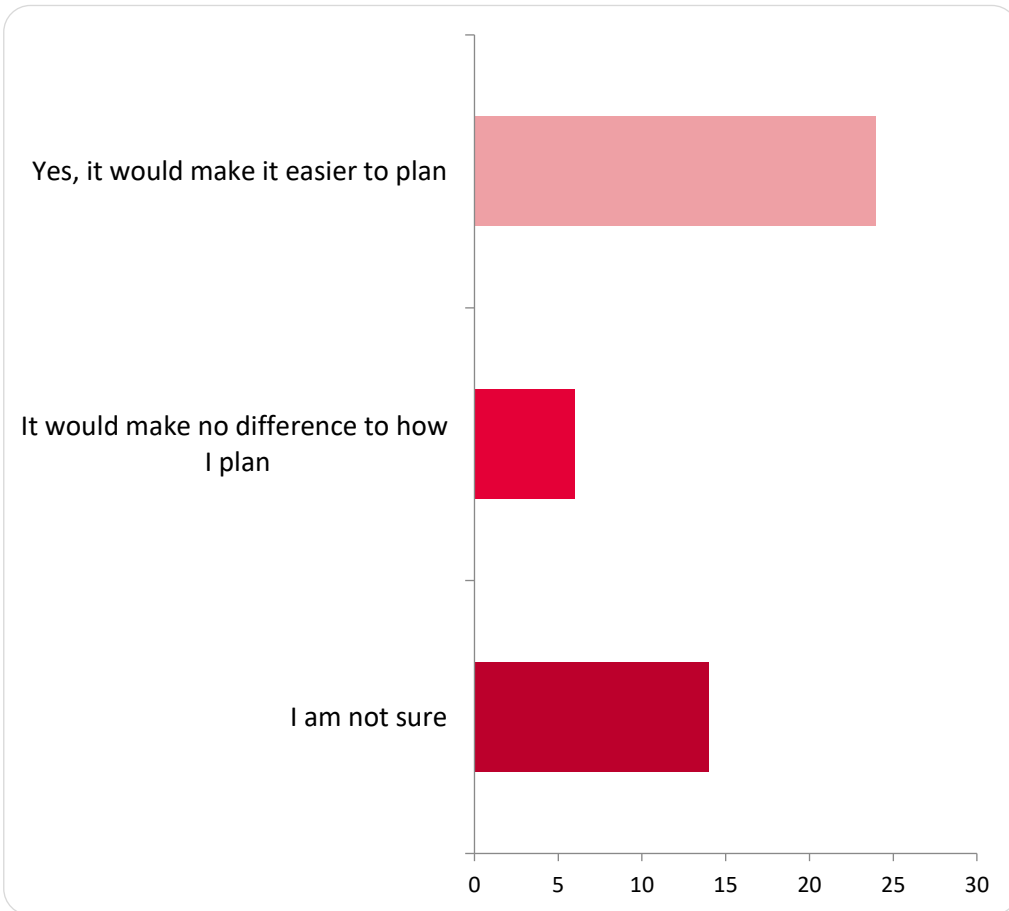
Parent Carer Lavender Family (Tendring) "Moving to Harlow is too far from where we live. Our son doesn't like being stuck in traffic and can present behaviours to show this. Our son doesn't like change. Getting to him in a emergency would take far to long."

Lavender Family (Tendring): "Google maps say 1hr 15 travel time but the reality is very different, more like 2 hours. My child has complex needs including epilepsy. The thought of having to get to Harlow in an emergency terrifies me. My child travels with equipment & has meds at specific times"

Lavender Family (Braintree) "We travel a lot and so the extra few miles from home won't be a problem. The college to maple journey will decrease and this will be rather beneficial in the mornings and after school"

**THEME 2: Increased
Availability of Overnight
Short Breaks**

Would an increase in the availability of overnight short breaks make it easier for you to plan when you access overnight short breaks?



How will families be affected – what families told us:

There was a perception that lots of families would try and access weekend breaks which would mean they would be difficult to access.

Families acknowledged that it may be easier to plan, but felt that the challenges of accessing the service would outweigh this for some.

There was a perception that new families may try to access any increased availability and therefore it would not have an impact due to increased demand.

Consistency in travel arrangements is important to families

Families told us they are concerned that valuable relationships and trust with staff at Lavender may be lost and transition to a new provision would be difficult and take time.

Quotes from the On-line Consultation regarding availability of nights

Family currently accessing the Maples:

"We recently requested an additional night per month - although this didn't get submitted to panel through fear of losing what we already have. Just a reminder that respite isn't about us having a jolly - more about us surviving. We don't ask for it lightly. It's a huge deal to build trust in a service that looks after your vulnerable child overnight. Will the new proposed system allow more desperate people onto the list? I'm sure that list in itself will swamp the increase in availability."

Family accessing The Maples

"I fundamentally disagree with the idea that there is a ""low capacity"" need for overnight respite in Essex. This situation has been created rather than being actual. There are several factors at play, but the most significant is ECC setting higher bars for families of disabled children and young people to obtain a Social Worker in the first instance. As a result, a reduced number of families can access funding for overnight respite so the ""need"" goes down. The children and families are still there, their needs however are just not being counted."

Family accessing Lavender House: "I

have concerns with my child being sent so far from home. Whether I'm taking him or transport. My son's social worker already turned down his initial place which was somewhere in Hertfordshire due to distance. If we lose lavender it's another much needed service lost. It's the only respite I have & we waited over 2 years for a suitable placement. Sadly Harlow is not an hour up the road & the A12 is a nightmare."

THEME 3: Eligibility of Overnight Short Breaks

What families told us who are not currently accessing Overnight Short Breaks

13 families (45%) who responded to the online consultation do not currently access Overnight Short Breaks.

Overnight Short Breaks eligibility is identified through social care assessment and agreed at a multi-agency panel. It is not clear from the responses if the families are in receipt of social care.

Many families with children with disabilities told us they wanted more information about how to access Overnight Short Breaks.

Families told us that the referral process can take too long, and they feel they have to fight to be heard despite feeling in crisis.

Some families felt the reason they do not get approved for overnight short breaks is because of where they live.

Some families feel that the proposal to condense the internal provision to one site will restrict the chances of overnight short breaks even further

Quotes from the On-line Consultation from families not accessing overnight short breaks

“I’m being refused despite meeting criteria and having a Tribunal ruling stating overnight respite is required so doubt any increase will have any impact.”

"There is a need for respite care which at the moment is not being met. Many younger children do not have social workers and therefore do not get access to these facilities. If special schools parents/carers were surveyed you would find that both Maples and Lavender House would be full seven days a week.

“Respite has never been offered to our several disabled daughter of 8 years old, I'd imagine this is due to us not being local as we are castle point area”

Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment

Reference: ECIA480755208

Executive Summary

Overview of Decision

Overnight Short Breaks (OSB) provision currently consists of 3 key elements, internal ECC provision (The Maples and Lavender House in Harlow & Colchester), Family Based Care, which is delivered through Short Breaks Foster Carers, and Externally commissioned provision at overnight short breaks homes and through direct payments.

Currently, 142 children and young people have agreed OSB packages of 4128 nights. Of those 142 children and young people, 14 children/young people access Lavender House in Colchester which will reduce to 11 during the period January 23 to April 23 as young people transition to adult services.

Following a planned review of the overnight short breaks offer, the recommended decision is to condense the current internal offer as demand for internal provision can be met at a single location and offer more capacity in terms of the number of weekday and weekend nights available. The single location would be The Maples, in Harlow.

The Maples is a purpose-built facility that is better set up to meet the demand for the overall internal provision for OSB.

Lavender House in Colchester would no longer be used to deliver OSB but will be repurposed to enable ECC to meet other service delivery demands in children's social care.

The condensed offer will be more cost effective and meet Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable increased capacity of OSB nights, including improved availability at weekends, which families are asking for.

Outcomes and Measurements

Outcome: The condensed offer will meet demand and be more cost effective, meeting Overnight Short Breaks budget pressures through having one staff team and will enable an overall increased capacity for OSB by expanding the offer across 7 nights a week with a maximum capacity of 8 nights delivered at any one time.

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?:

An ongoing ECC Project Team consisting of Children & Families Commissioners, Operational CWD Teams, Finance Reps, Legal Rep and Citizen Insight will oversee the decision-making process and will also oversee the implementation of any changes should the proposal be approved. The decision is expected to go to Cabinet in March, following a full consultation with families, social care professionals and staff teams at Lavender House and The Maples. The reference for the paper is: FP/032/02/23 Recommissioning of CWD Overnight Short Breaks Provision 2023.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles, Carers, Levelling up health

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Family resilience and stability, Outcomes for vulnerable children, Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex, Tendring

Equalities Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Age	Positive	Low
Disability (LD)	Positive	Medium
Disability (MH)	Positive	Medium
Disability (PI)	Positive	Medium
Disability (SI)	Positive	Medium
Sex	None	
Gender Reassignment	None	
Marriage/Civil Partnership	None	
Pregnancy/Maternity	None	
Race	None	
Religion/Belief	None	
Sexual Orientation	None	

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Full consultation with families has taken place which included:

- Initial pre engagement contact
- Interviews
- Survey
- Formal Consultation
- Meeting with families accessing Lavender House

Although the proposal positively impacts most of Essex by way of delivering a single internal offer staffed at full capacity, and therefore an improved internal offer, there is a risk to a small number of families who live in the north of the county who access OSB.

7 families currently will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

This will also impact future families who live in Tendring who may have a need identified through social care assessment

Levelling Up

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Children and adults with SEND	Positive	Medium
Jaywick and Clacton	Negative	Medium
Harwich	Negative	Medium
Basildon	Positive	Medium
Canvey Island	Positive	Medium
Colchester (Town) -	Positive	Medium
Rural North of the Braintree District	Positive	Medium
Children on Free School Meals	None	NA
Young Adults	Positive	High

Rationale for Assessment – including data to assess impact

Overall Positive, but recognise that this will impact 7 families that live in the north of the county will be negatively impacted due to increased travel times and costs.

Additional costs for families who live in the Jaywick, Clacton and Harwich areas may range from £158 to £1,331 per annum, dependent on where their young people go to school and travel routes.

ECC will explore ways to support these families through the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Health Groups and Other Priority Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	None	
Homeless / Rough Sleepers	None	
Offenders / Ex-Offenders	None	
Carers	Positive	High
Looked After Children	Positive	High
Veterans	None	
People who are unemployed / economically inactive	Positive	Medium
People on low income	Positive	Medium
Working families	Positive	Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Full consultation with families has taken place alongside data analysis and research.

Overnight Short Breaks offer parent carers a break from their additional caring responsibilities, so that they can rest, recover and spend time on their own interests or other relationships. A quote from a parent carer at the Maples provides insight into the impact of a quality short break: *“This service has saved my marriage - I don’t say that lightly. I am on a range of medications myself – anti-depressants and beta blockers’*

Looked after children with disabilities benefit from the overnight short breaks offer as the short break offers carers the break from additional caring responsibility whilst ensuring the child has access to quality care and social connection.

One parent carer accessing Lavender House told us that their benefits had reduced since taking up work and they were on low income, but that the overnight short breaks enabled them to work overnight at a care home themselves.

Ultimately, delivering overnight short breaks to children and young people with SEND supports the stability, safety and wellbeing of the family or placement environment .

Geographical Groups

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
People living in areas of high deprivation	Positive	High
People living in rural or isolated areas	Positive	Low
People living in coastal areas	Positive	Low
People living in urban or over-populated areas	Positive	Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Overall positive due to the overall impact of the service However, a small population in the North of Essex is negatively impacted in terms of travel times.

In relation to levels of deprivation, at the time of the proposed change, there will be 4 families who may live in the coastal towns of Harwich, Jaywick & Clacton that may need to transition to another alternative overnight short breaks provision.

There is a high negative impact on families who live these areas due to the increased travel time needed to access the Maples in Harlow.

Overnight Short Breaks provision for those living in South of the County will not change as their needs are predominantly provided through external provision and a similar situation for those living in the Rural North of the County.

ECC will explore ways to support these families through the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Families

Characteristic	Nature of Impact	Extent of Impact
Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)	Positive	High
Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition	Positive	High
Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities	Positive	High
Families before, during and after couple separation	Positive	High
Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown	Positive	High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Parents who are carers spend a lot of their time caring for their children in comparison to other parents. Overnight short breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family including other children, thereby contributing to their resilience and stability. Furthermore, by having the opportunity to attend overnight short breaks good developmental outcomes are delivered for children and young people with SEND.

Some families expressed how accessing overnight short breaks had supported their marital relationships, and for others that the overnight short breaks staff had been a lifeline when going through separation.

It is important to recognise the extent of the positive impacts of receiving overnight short breaks on families of children with SEND needs. The consultation makes clear that a range of overnight short breaks enable positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their parent carers.

Climate

Does the policy or decision indicate there could be a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: Yes - Sustainable Transport / Travel

Rationale for Assessment – including data to assess impact:

The decision will impact 7 families that live in the north of the county will be negatively impacted due to increased travel times and costs.

The decision will mean increased transport needs and travel times for families to access one condensed provision in the West of the County. This means increases in carbon footprint.

The distance from the 11 families' homes to Lavender ranges from 0.7 to 36 miles. This equates from 2 to 57 minutes based on google maps, and from 0.4 to 4.12 CO₂/kg. The estimated fuel cost ranges from £0.35 per journey through to £7.87 per journey.

The distance from the 11 families' homes to the Maples ranges from 18 to 63 miles. This equates from 31 to 81 minutes (1 hours 21 minutes) based on google maps, and from 2.4 to 7.24 CO₂/kg. The estimated fuel cost ranges from £3.90 to £18.84 per journey.

Due to routing an increase in mileage does not always reflect increased travel times, and it should also be noted that estimated times are based on travel at peak times but do not account for traffic caused by individual incidents that can increase travel time significantly. For two families both mileage and travel time decrease.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: Yes

What are the mitigating actions?:

The preferred option does present a risk to a small number of families who live in the north of the county who access Overnight Short Breaks. 7 of the 142 families will be subject to increased transport/travel times which may be a challenge around complex medical/behaviour needs of the children/young people being supported.

ECC will explore ways to support these families through the child's individual care plans. This might include:

- Home to School Passenger Transport or bespoke travel arrangements
- Arrangements with families who provide transport themselves to be awarded direct payments to assist with costs
- Assessing whether there are suitable alternative provisions in the wider short breaks offer.
- Working with the family to mitigate risks relating to forgotten medications and planning for emergencies.

Where it is agreed that the increased travel times are not safe or appropriate for the child/young person, ECC will work with the families to explore other options around overnight short breaks, including Home Based Care, Externally commissioned provision, and Foster Carer provision.

Meeting with Families accessing Lavender House

On 9th March 2023, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years hosted a meeting with families accessing Lavender House. Officers reflected the learning from the consultation and review. The feedback from the families in attendance are shown below:

Parents expressed anger as Lavender House has been a lifeline for them.

Parents expressed concern that they may forget to pack the child's medication, and it would take longer to bring it to them.

Parents raised that sometimes taxis are cancelled

Parents said that CAMHS were not aware of the consultation

Two parents set out that they did not want their child to go to someone else's house (family based care). "I want this – I don't want anything else"

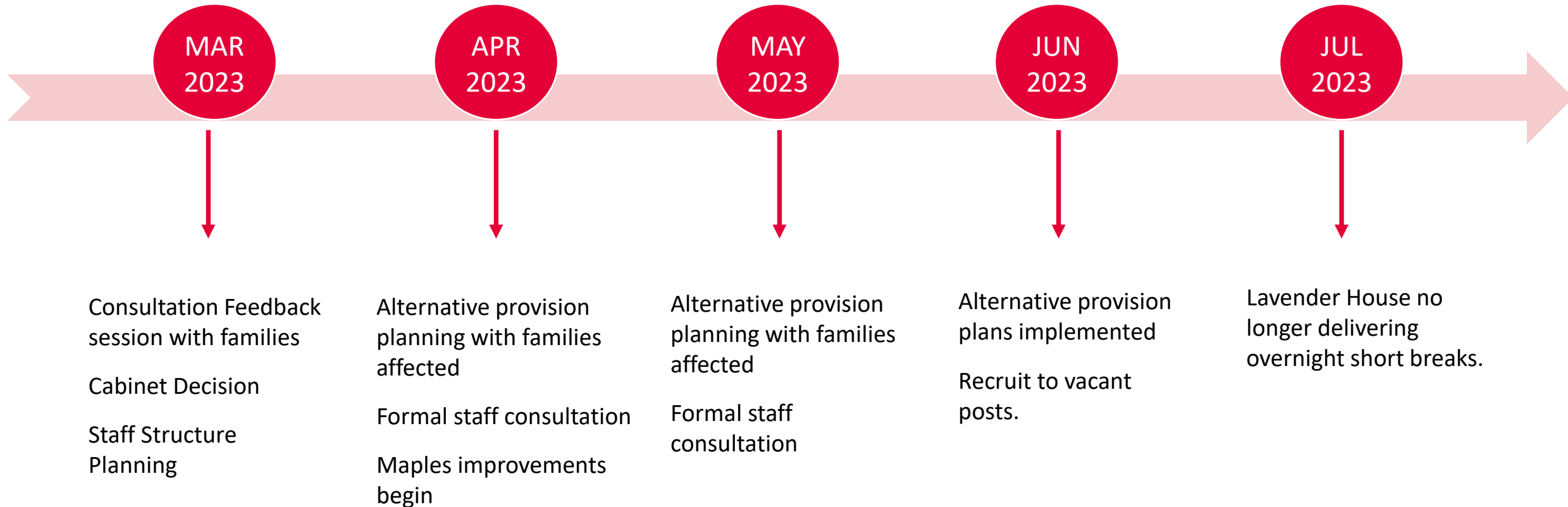
Parents expressed personal experiences of being on waiting lists or waiting a long time to be offered overnight short breaks at Lavender House

Parents expressed a desire to speak at Cabinet – this has been explored and will be facilitated in line with Cabinet procedures.

Next Steps

Next Steps

The recommended option to provide overnight short breaks from one internal premises, The Maples, alongside externally commissioned provision, family based care and home based care will be discussed at March Cabinet. Should the decision be made the following next steps will be undertaken.



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

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