

Equality Impact Assessment - head of service review

Reference: EQIA402957689

Submitted: 09 March 2022 13:04 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy or decision: Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities Contracts 2023-2028

Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks give carers a break from caring while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.

The current contracts for Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities end 31st March 2023 and this report recommends the recommissioning of the Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities offer which will ensure Essex County Council meets its duties.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Help create great places to grow up, live and work: Healthy lifestyles, Promoting independence, Carers

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Transform the council to achieve more with less: Educating outcomes, Family resilience and stability, Safety, Outcomes for vulnerable children

Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?: a change to an existing policy, practice or project

Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqlA relates:

<https://shortbreaks.essex.gov.uk/>

Please upload any documents which relate to this EqlA, for example decision documents:

<https://shortbreaks.essex.gov.uk/>

Assessing the equality impact

Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision): Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks give carers a break from caring while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.

There has been significant public consultation on the development of Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities, including consulting over 420 families through surveys, interviews and focus groups to develop the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy.

Additionally, further engagement was undertaken through focus groups and formal consultation (November 2021 – January 2022) which shapes the recommendations in the paper.

Desk-based research was undertaken to examine the School Census data alongside the current Short Breaks registered families (both club members and non-club members) to better understand how families were travelling from their home address to current provision, and to forecast age profiles for the next commissioning round.

The data tells us that:

- There were 7493 EHC plans in 2021
- Of the children and young people with EHC Plans, 8.1% had a physical or sensory impairment, and 89.6% had a learning disability/difficulty and/or autism. The remaining 2.3% were classified as 'other' which may represent specific types of SEND which could be physical, sensory or learning disability, or autism.
- The district with the most children and young people with EHC Plans in terms of volume was Basildon, followed by Chelmsford, Colchester and Braintree.
- The districts with the least children and young people with EHC Plans in terms of volume was Uttlesford, Maldon, Brentwood and Castle point.
- As of 29th January 2022, there were 4284 total registrations to the short breaks offer, of which 1619 were club members. 79% of registered club members have a learning difficulty and/or autism as their primary SEND type, and 18% have a physical or sensory impairment.
- The largest cohort of children have a learning disability and/or autism and are between 8 and 14 years old. However, forecasting based on existing club members suggests that by 2026 the largest cohort will be reaching their mid-teens.
- Across 2021 there was an average of 65 new registrations every month. If this trajectory continued then we would expect to see the number of children registered increase by 29% in the next 5 years.

Consultation and family engagement tells us that:

- The current offer is not equitable across Essex, with provision being unevenly spread in terms of geographic location. "There is an issue in that West Essex covers such a huge area and none of the activities are based in Saffron Walden" - parent/carer
- The current offer could be improved in terms of age appropriate activities: "There need to be more accessible mainstream services so that young people are better prepared for adult life and transitions and that mainstream workers are better prepared and trained to accommodate young people with additional needs and that they can fulfil their roles in society" - parent/carer
- 47% of families are happy to travel up to 20 minutes to access provision whilst a further 28% indicate that 45 minutes is acceptable. 9% would travel up to an hour and 4% over an hour.
- 59% use a car to get to activities, whilst 10% are picked up by the provider, 11% use public transport, 4 % use Home to School transport and 9% walk
- Some families really valued the virtual offer, especially during the pandemic. Although it was made clear this was not a way to reduce services there were general anxieties among families that this could replace the "in person" offer. "Not all children are able to access virtual offers. This also requires supervision from a. Parent/ carer so takes away the idea of respite" - parent/carer

Does or will the policy or decision affect:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities: Yes

Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?: All Essex

Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?: Yes

Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?: No

Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?: Yes

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Description of impact

Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page: Age, Disability - learning disability, Disability - mental health issues, Disability - physical impairment, Disability - sensory impairment

I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics: I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics: Considerable efforts have been made to ensure a robust programme of engagement through various methods. This includes targeting communications to attract respondents with a diverse range of experiences and views.

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: We know the current offer could be improved in terms of age appropriate activities, and we also know that there should be a stronger focus on transitions to adulthood.

The SBCCA tender exercise will have a clear focus on age, with a cohort-based approach. The following cohorts have been identified based on existing registrations and examining wider data available such as the school census.

This focus will ensure providers must respond to the different age profiles, and have a clear and specific offer for older teens who will be approaching adulthood, and will need to transition to other services (whether adults or mainstream).

Extent of impact: High

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: The offer will ensure there is provision that is age appropriate, and locally accessible. The potential impact of this work will mean young people are able to socialise in more age appropriate ways, developing skills and independence is prioritised and therefore a young persons transition to adulthood should be improved. SBCCA are informal education activities, and have the potential to impact young people with SEND by 'bridging' to appropriate activities, and preparing the young person for transition.

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: The service is specifically for children and young people with SEND, and offers informal education opportunities to build skills and independence, develop aspiration and engage in positive activities whilst ensuring parents/carers are able to take a break from their additional caring responsibilities.

Extent of impact: High

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: By ensuring Short Breaks are accessible, children and young people with SEND are impacted positively. The focus on developing inclusive activities in mainstream settings was of particular importance to children and young people with learning disabilities, with families keen to see their children fully included in mainstream activities. This has been directly responded to and providers will be

expected to deliver some of the provision in mainstream settings, whilst some funding has been put aside for organisations to apply for support to develop facilities, practices and equipment to ensure their offers are fully inclusive.

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: The service is specifically for children and young people with SEND, and offers informal education opportunities to build skills and independence, develop aspiration and engage in positive activities whilst ensuring parents/carers are able to take a break from their additional caring responsibilities.

Children and young people who access the offer are able to take part in a range of fun, engaging activities that increase social connectedness, and help them develop which has a positive impact on their mental health.

Extent of impact: High

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: By ensuring Short Breaks are accessible, children and young people with SEND are impacted positively. For parents/carers a Short Break provides space for them to focus on other children in the family, participate in self care, and self development opportunities such as training, education and employment. This has the potential impact of empowering parents and carers to prioritise their own mental health, which has correlative impacts on the mental health of their children and so on.

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: The service is specifically for children and young people with SEND, and offers informal education opportunities to build skills and independence, develop aspiration and engage in positive activities whilst ensuring parents/carers are able to take a break from their additional caring responsibilities.

Parents/carers of children and young people with physical or sensory impairments raised concerns that their children may be 'lost' as a result of being much smaller in number in comparison to children with learning disabilities and/or autism.

The new offer has addressed this, recognising clear cohorts of children, and providers will be expected to respond to all groups within their funding applications.

Extent of impact: High

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: By ensuring that families feel heard, and are represented clearly in the new offer, children and young people with physical impairments will be able to access needs appropriate activities. The new offer also makes space for mainstream settings to develop spaces and staff to better respond to the needs of people with physical impairments, which has the impact of increased mainstream spaces being inclusive.

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: The service is specifically for children and young people with SEND, and offers informal education opportunities to build skills and independence, develop aspiration and engage in positive activities whilst ensuring parents/carers are able to take a break from their additional caring responsibilities.

Parents/carers of children and young people with physical or sensory impairments raised concerns that their children may be 'lost' as a result of being much smaller in number in comparison to children with learning disabilities and/or autism.

The new offer has addressed this, recognising clear cohorts of children, and providers will be expected to respond to all groups within their funding applications.

Extent of impact: High

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: By ensuring that families feel heard, and are represented clearly in the new offer, children and young people with sensory impairments will be able to access needs appropriate activities. The new offer also makes space for mainstream settings to develop spaces and staff to better respond to the needs of people with sensory impairments, which has the impact of increased mainstream spaces being inclusive.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your EqlA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date EqlA completed: 09/03/2022

Name of person completing the EqlA: Hazel NorthStephens

Email address of person completing the EqlA: Hazel.NorthStephens@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Children, Families and Education

Your service area: Commissioning

Your team: Children & Families Commissioning

Are you submitting this EqlA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: Clare.Burrell@essex.gov.uk