

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Short Breaks for Disabled Children

Parent Carer Consultation



“

The short breaks I have accessed for my daughter have given myself time to spend with her brother, my daughter the chance to interact with new people and children and experience new things in a supported and fun environment. I have found them incredibly beneficial during school holidays. I value the services very highly.

”

Introduction

Purpose of the survey

Through October and November 2019 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation called the 'CEC Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Parent Carer Consultation.' This was to review the service provision currently commissioned from 10 providers whose contracts were due to expire in August 2020. Views were gathered to make sure the services commissioned by the council reflected what is important for the people who use them.

Survey methodology and number of responses

The consultation was widely promoted, most notably to:

- The CWD database (approximately 300 members on record)
- The Parent Carers Forum
- The Cheshire East council website

A total of 123 responses were received which is inline with previous response rates achieved last time the contracts were commissioned (127 responses). Of the 123 responses received only one respondent reported not being a parent or carer of a child with disabilities however, due to the nature of open comments left the response is still considered within this report.

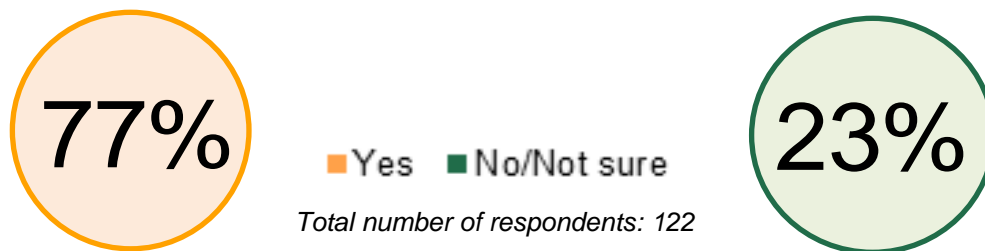
Section 1 – Accessing Short Break Providers

Overall use of short break providers

Respondents were asked if they had accessed any of the current commissioned short break providers in the last 24 months from the current list of 10 providers.

Have accessed short breaks
in the last 24 months

Have not accessed short
breaks in the last 24 months



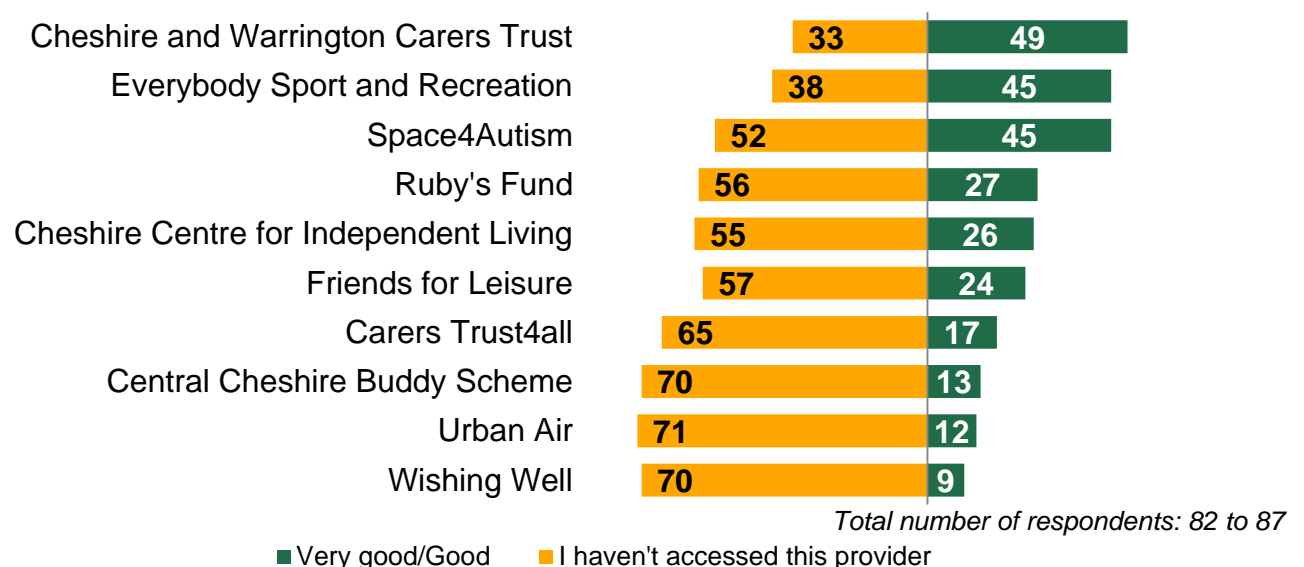
The majority of respondents had accessed short break services within the last 24 months (77%, 94 respondents). 23 respondents had not accessed services within the last 24 months, and a small number of respondents (4%, 5 respondents) weren't sure or didn't know if they had accessed services.

Those who responded 'no' or 'not sure/ don't know' were filtered out of further results from Section 1, but will re-join the analysis in Section 2 and Section 3.

Rating the short break service providers

Respondents were asked to rate the service overall from the providers they had accessed. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of respondents reporting the service received was 'very good' and 'good', against those who 'haven't accessed this provider.'

Figure 1: Number of respondents who haven't accessed services versus rating service as very good/good



From Figure 1 we can see that the three services most frequently used by respondents were Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust, Everybody Sport and Recreation, and Space4Autism. These services received a high number of respondents rating them as 'very good' or 'good'.

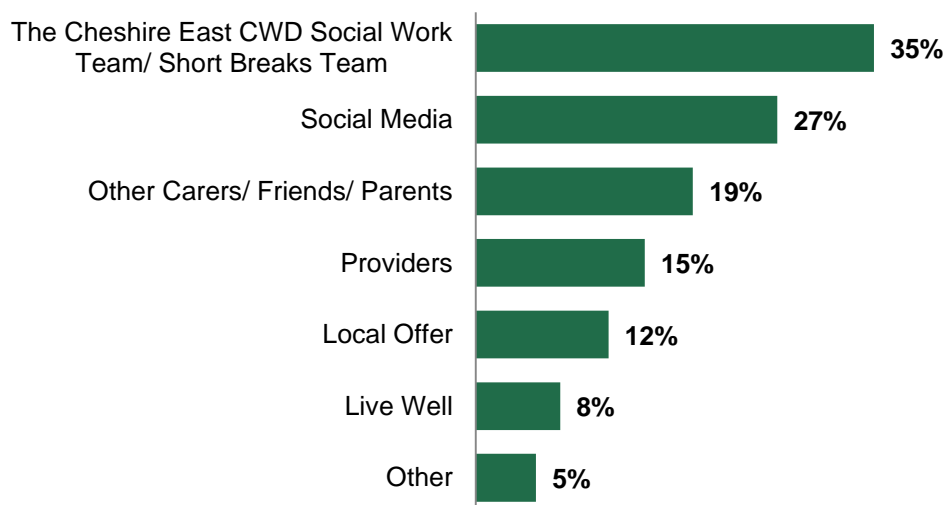
The number of respondents reporting a service as 'not very good' or 'not at all good' was very low across the survey sample, with a total of 20 out of 847 selections made (2%). All services aside from Everybody Sport and Recreation, Space4Autism and Urban Air received at least one negative rating. The service with the most negative rating was Carers Trust4all with three 'not at all good' ratings.

The services least likely to be used by respondents were the Central Cheshire Buddy Scheme, Urban Air, and Wishing Well.

Finding out about short breaks

Respondents were asked where they found out information about short breaks. Figure 2 shows the full breakdown of responses to this question. Please note as respondents could select all that apply, totals will not sum to 100%.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who had found information about short breaks from...



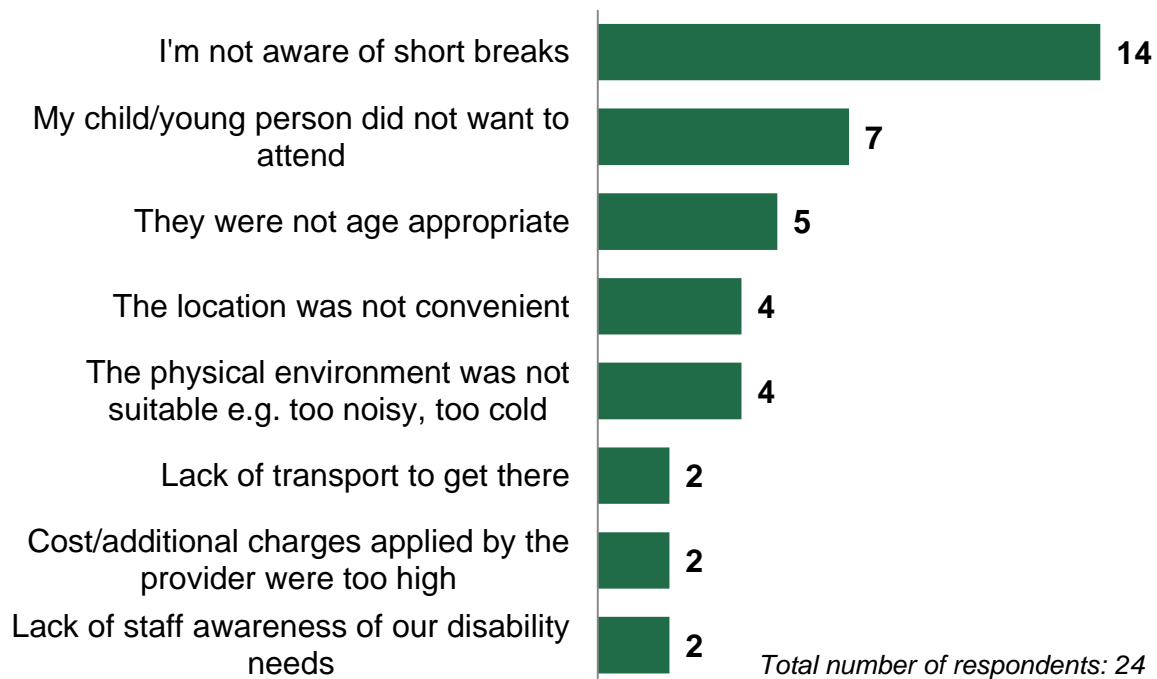
Total number of respondents: 93

Respondents were most likely to have found information about short breaks from the Cheshire East CWD Social Work Team/ Short Break Team (35%) or from Social Media (27%). From the 'other' category two new options were coded, 'other carers/friends/parents' to represent those hearing from others and word of mouth (19%), and 'providers' to represent those who had heard from organisations directly such as Space4Autism or Ruby's Fund.

Section 2 – Reasons for not accessing short breaks

Respondents who had not accessed short breaks in the last 24 months were asked why. Please note due to a low response to this section respondent counts have been used rather than percentages.

Figure 3: Number of respondents by reasoning for not accessing short breaks



The main reason given by respondents for not accessing short breaks was that they were not aware of them (14 out of 24). Respondents were also able to leave comments as to any other reason why they were not able to access short breaks, below is a summary of these comments (16 comments total).

- Child did not want to/ Group not suitable for child/medical needs (5 comments)
- Request for information on short breaks/ how to access (4 comments)
- Young person would struggle to attend groups alone (2 comments)
- Travel is too far to attend/ no location suitable (2 comments)
- Time of activities would require time off work (1 comment)
- Young person is educated out of area and is away from home during week (1 comment)
- Have own provision for short breaks (1 comment)



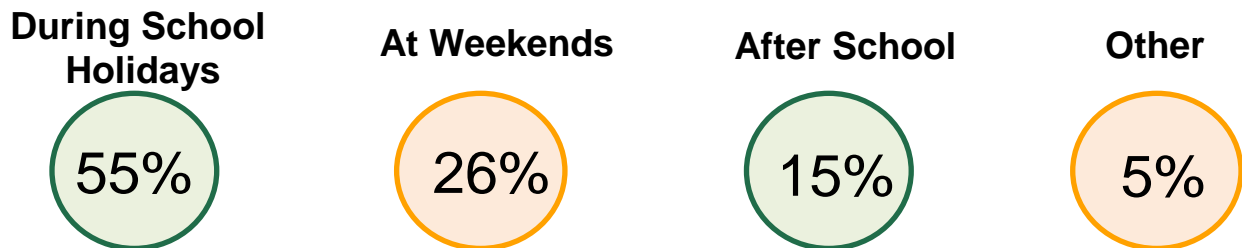
I don't think that they are widely known about, i.e. how to access them, Or wouldn't benefit my child as they don't meet his complex needs. Also not provide adequate respite.



Section 3 – Accessing short breaks in the future

Most convenient time to access short breaks

All respondents, whether they had accessed short breaks in the last 24 months or not, were asked about accessing short breaks in the future. Respondents were asked when would be the most convenient time to access short breaks in the future.



Total number of respondents: 121

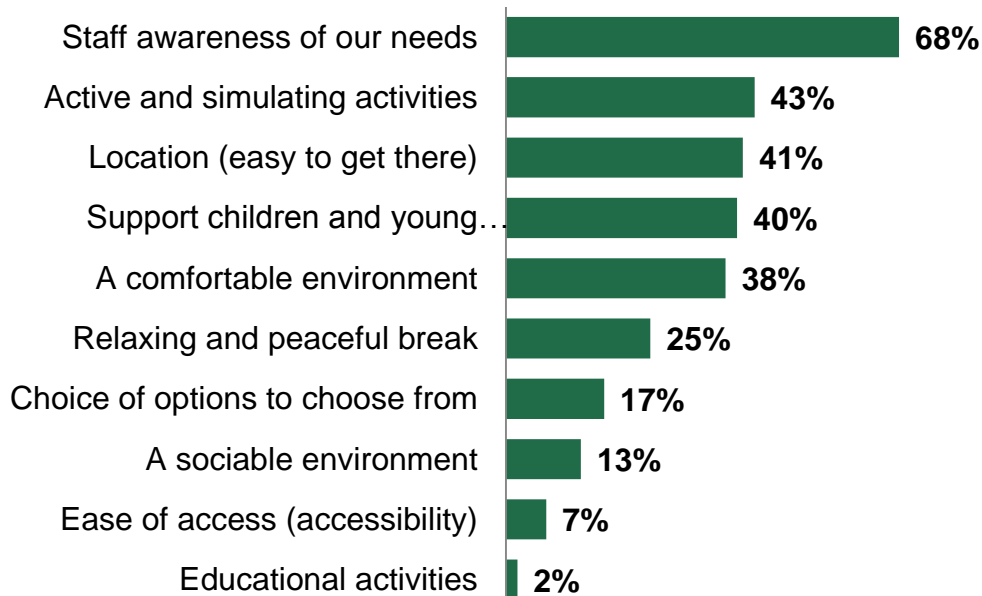
While this question was single response a number of respondents expressed a need for the service to be available across multiple options (16 out of 121). This question has been recoded to allow multiple response so 121 respondents made a total of 132 selections.

Respondents were mostly likely to find during school holidays the most convenient time to access short breaks in the future (71 out 121 respondents). However, just over one in four respondents also would find at weekends the most convenient time to access short breaks. Responses left under 'other' that were not recoded emphasised a need for flexibility and an 'as and when approach' to accessing short breaks.

Most important factors when accessing a short break

Respondents were asked what the three most important things were when selecting a short break. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of responses to this question.

Figure 4: Percentage of the most important factors when selecting a short break

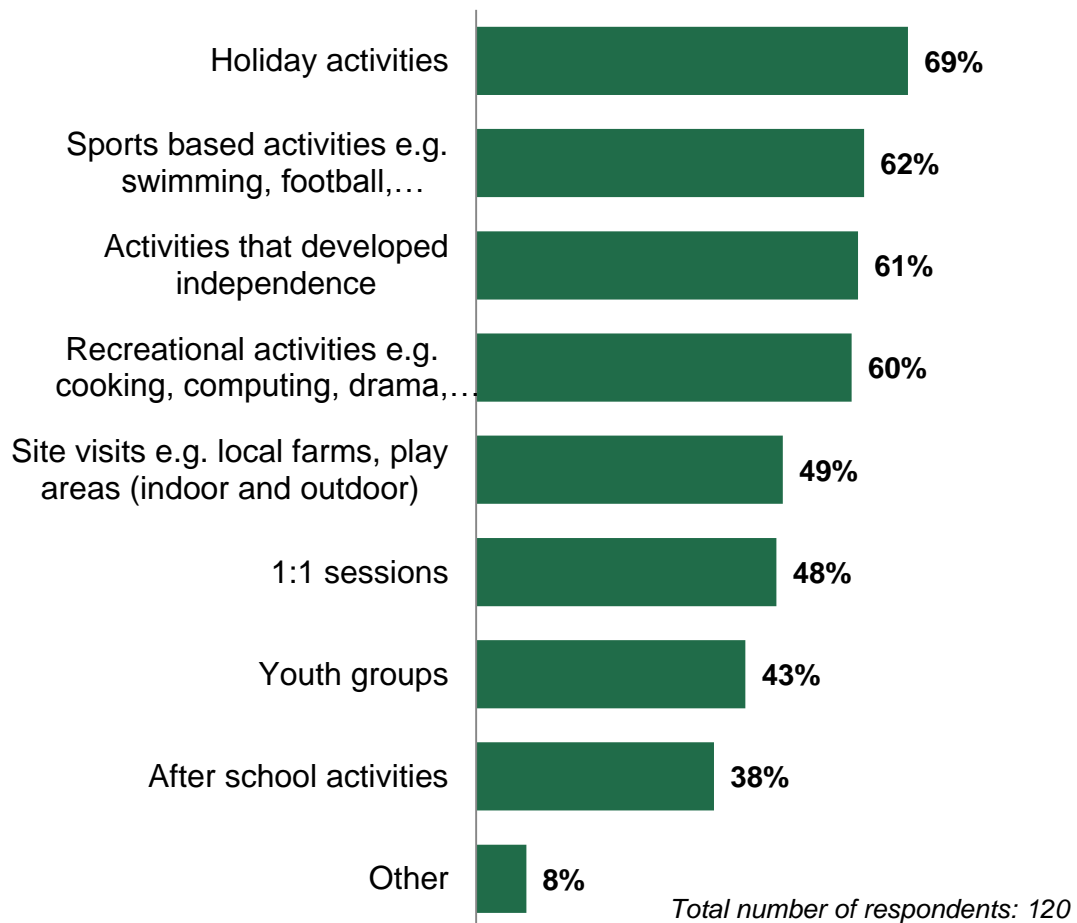


The most important thing, by a considerable margin, when selecting a short break was the 'staff awareness of our needs' (68%). Respondents also felt that active and stimulating activities (43%), an easy to get to location (41%), and support for children and young people to be more independent (40%), were important factors in short break choice.

Preferred types of short breaks

Respondents were asked what type of activities they would like children and young people to be able to access through short breaks. Figure 5 provides a full breakdown of responses to this question. Please note as respondents could select all that apply percentages will not sum to 100.

Figure 5: Percentage of the most requested activities for short breaks



Consistent with preferred time of access respondents again highlighted the need for 'holiday activities' (69%). Also frequently requested by respondents were sports based activities (62%), activities that develop independence (61%), and recreational activities (60%).

Under the 'other' option respondents left a number of alternatives such as: activities than enable the young person to achieve something/ develop communication, where

they can meet others, weekends away, overnight respite and a variety of all to meet individual needs.

Any other comments

A total of 59 comments were left under the 'any other comments' section of the survey, which have been coded into four themes. A summary of these themes are presented below. Please note that a comment could reference multiple themes so total number of references will not sum to total number of comments.

Barriers to accessing short breaks (34 references)

Respondents reported a number of barriers that prevented them from accessing the short breaks that were on offer. 15 respondents reported problems or had no current access to short breaks in any form. Respondents reported issues getting travel/transport arrangements to and from break locations (5 respondents) as well as activities being not affordable/oversubscribed/difficult to book onto (5 respondents). Respondents generally requested more information about what was available to them as there seemed to be some confusion around what they could access (9 respondents).

Nothing in smaller towns like Nantwich / Knutsford / Alsager - the in between places and no transport from there either. When our car was out of action in the summer we couldn't get to anything.

Current short break provision (29 references)

Respondents reported a number of issues they had encountered with current short break provision. The most commonly reported issue was that the activities were not suitable for their child (17 respondents) due to physical disabilities, the need for 1:1 support and other individual considerations.

Respondents emphasised the need for consistency with short break provision (4 comments) especially for those who find routine beneficial. Short term and inconsistent breaks were not suitable for this group of respondents.

Some respondents also felt that the provision of activities in the evening was not helpful, especially those with children who were educated outside of the borough who had long travel time daily (3 respondents).

Respondents felt more funding was needed for the providers of short breaks (2 respondents) and that more overnight and residential breaks should be provided (2 respondents).

Being able to access many of the activities is difficult because my daughter is so profoundly disabled and needs hoisting, tube feeding, and nappy pad changing. Some creative way of allowing children like my daughter to access trampolining or a social group would be very welcome. She can only access one to one support at Ruby's which is amazing but she will be too old for this soon (0-8) and we will be left with no options for activities where she can be left to interact without me

Positive comments around short breaks (23 references)

Respondents who were currently accessing short breaks left a number of positive comments about them. 17 respondents expressed the benefits and importance of being able to access short breaks, from having time to themselves and time to recharge. Respondents also named various organisations for the good work they do such as Ruby's Fund, Cheshire Buddies and Friends for Leisure (6 respondents).

The Friends for Leisure weekly drama group and fortnightly youth group are of enormous benefit to my son; he is always motivated to go and loves the activities, they give important structure to our week.

Other (4 references)

Respondents made reference to other aspects around short breaks such as: the parent/carers should be more involved in the commissioning side (1 respondent), the purchase system worked better for them (1 respondent), the yearly assessment was unnecessary and a waste of money (1 respondent) and that activities should offer more parent/carer support (1 respondent).

Conclusions

Use of short breaks

The majority of respondents had accessed short breaks in the past 24 months (77%), and the mostly frequently used providers were Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust, Everybody Sport and Recreation, and Space4Autism. These were also the highest rated providers. The lowest rated provider was Carers Trust4all, although the number of negative ratings still remained generally low (three negative ratings total).

Some not using short breaks

A consistent theme through the survey was that there was a small group of respondents who were not accessing short breaks (24 out of 123, 19%), and required further information on where and what they were able to access. This was found throughout the closed and open comment responses, and suggests that current information is not reaching all individuals, or that more may need to be provided. It may be that this group of parent/carers require additional resources or efforts to reach.

Key aspects for future short break provision

For those respondents who were accessing short breaks a number of them expressed how beneficial they were: having time to themselves /ability to recharge.

Based on responses to this survey, ideally future short break provision should:

- Be provided during school holidays
- Ensure staff have awareness of the child or young person's needs
- Be active and simulating
- Involve holiday or sport based activities

Support individual needs

However a consistent theme expressed through the open comments was the need to support individual considerations, and needs of the child or young person. Respondents expressed a need for a variety of breaks to be on offer, some respondents required consistency in a schedule, while others sought short term residential breaks.

Above all else, understanding the needs of the child or young person was paramount, both in the closed questions and under open comment questions. This would help reduce the number of respondents who felt that current activities were not suitable for their child.