

Short Breaks Meeting 1st May 2024: summary notes

This document summarises the key discussion points which emerged from the meeting between parent carers and Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC), including representatives from PaCC, *SEND Us A Break* campaign group, and Amaze. Input was gathered from parent carers in the room, those attending virtually, through contributions online via a padlet set up by *SEND Us a Break*, and from comments on post-it notes gathered during the meeting. For a more detailed account from the meeting see:

- The full notes of the meeting
- The presentation shared by BHCC at the meeting. Note, not all slides were discussed in the meeting due to time constraints/prioritising hearing from parents. Some of the issues raised below are covered in the slides.
- The Short Breaks statement produced by BHCC for the meeting.
- PaCC's consultation report on Short Breaks from 2023, PaCC Position Statement BHCC Budget 2024/25 Social Care Position Statement 2022.

If on reading these notes you feel that your question or concern hasn't been addressed within the discussion or the Council's slideshow presentation please let PaCC know (admin@paccbrighton.org.uk) or bring your thoughts to the next meeting where we will ensure that outstanding questions are discussed.

Anyone wanting to put forward ideas of further short break providers please contact Katie Rowe, SEN & Alternative Provision Commissioning Officer, Katie.Rowe@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Introduction

The meeting was arranged in response to significant concerns within the community about the lack of information and the inadequacy of short break provision particularly for children and young people with high support needs during the recent Easter holiday, and to seek reassurances about plans for the future to ensure improvements are made, especially in time for the summer holidays. It should be noted that on top of PaCC representing these issues to BHCC in recent months/years, 1,164 people have recently signed the *SEND Us a Break Campaign group's petition saying that Brighton & Hove should urgently provide short break, holiday activities for all children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 and their families, which is suitable for all levels of needs including children with complex needs*. BHCC acknowledged these concerns and restated their commitment to listening and working with parents on implementing solutions.

Key points:

1. The next meeting with parent carers on short breaks will take place within a month and to provide a clear strategy, risk assessment, action plan for summer provision, and detailed approach to communicating with families around provision. **The next meeting between BHCC, parent carers and representatives from PaCC and Send Us A Break will be on Monday 10th June, 11am – 1.30. Friends Meeting House, Ship Street Brighton BN1 1AF.**
2. Parent carers question whether BHCC is fulfilling its legal duties under relevant legislation (Childcare Sufficiency Act, Public Sector Equality Duty, Childcare Act 2006). Sharing data on the SEND population eligible for short breaks in the city, categorised according to levels of need, will help demonstrate BHCC fully understands the level of need and extent to which it is/isn't meeting this. The Specialist Community Disability Service should contact all families to proactively assess support they need in the holidays to inform required capacity planning, and Special School Heads should have input as it is known that families with a high level of need may not be known to the SCDT.
3. The impact of Extratime's closure is long-lasting, on lost relationships between providers/families and in lack of trust held by community with BHCC as commissioners. Families feel there has been a lack of timely action in response and risk assessment of BHCC taking a multiple provider approach. Families are seeking reassurances around BHCC's duty of care to SEND CYPs and their parent carers, and it is essential

to note that PaCC and the parent Carer community registered ongoing concern around the capacity of Extratime to provide sufficient holiday places.

4. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in B&H is out of date referencing only one SEND provider Extratime. When will be this updated?
5. Parents asked for clarity on the budget for short breaks provision, which BHCC said is £3mn+. Parents asked if a case needs to be put to Cllrs with lead responsibility for SEND to increase this. *By way of a reply to the point raised regarding budget BHCC direct parent carers to the slides they presented at the May 1st meeting, which state that BHCC have a high unit cost compared to the England Average of £28 per head compared to £20 per head for statistical neighbours.*
6. Parents also asked who the lead Councillors are since the recent changes in the organisation of the Administration.
7. The summer offer needs to be developed, at pace, taking on board all the feedback shared in the meeting. Parents ask that BHCC aims high, not for 'good enough'. Key issues to address include ensuring there is:
 - Sufficient skilled staff capacity to meet specialist / complex needs of CYPs (SLD/PMLD). Provider commitment to 1:1s, 1:2, 1:3, 1:4, 2:1 etc needs to be real, ie based on assessed need of CYPs (not a provider's opinion of this) and 1:1s not at risk of cancellation which then prevents a CYP from being able to attend.
 - Provision for all ages, different geographies, of meaningful duration ie 4-8hrs, with diverse activities (not just sport) and calm / quiet sessions. It is essential that BHCC commit to providing Short Breaks which reflect the intention of a meaningful break for families, it is noted that an Extratime Short Break was eight hours.
 - Trusted relationship with providers, who know the CYPs. Settling in sessions required
 - Safety/security of sites and provision, especially for those CYPs who a flig, ht risk are. There needs to be follow up on the incidences which occurred at from Easter and reassurances that issues have been addressed, and a clear process for all providers to mitigate and record risk issues going forward. *By way of reply for this summary BHCC confirm that this has been done.*
 - Suitable facilities, sensory space, hoists, full size changing facilities, wheelchair access for those with severe mobility impairment
 - Living wage or higher salaries for the provider workforce.
 - Effective communication and promotion of the short breaks offer available
 - Contingency planning at BHCC for potential more families tipping into crisis if provision isn't in place.
 - More Compass Card offers for Children and Young People with PMLD, alongside a wider Short Breaks offer for CYP with PMLD.
 - BHCC asked that families suggest alternative providers BHCC can approach for summer (see list in full notes). Parent carers ask that they are involved in future decision making around short breaks.
8. There needs to be **significant** improvements made to the holiday scheme booking system, including timely access to full information which families need to ascertain whether providers can meet need and a single point of contact for support/advice on provision and bookings at BHCC. See PaCC's detailed guidance on this which was provided during the commissioning process for Easter, but time pressures prevented this being embedded in the Eequ system.
9. It is unclear who is responsible for continuous performance monitoring of provision, how feedback is being gathered and reviewed, and who has oversight of this. Clarity is needed around accountability and risk management. *By way of reply for this summary, BHCC inform parent carers that oversight of these essential areas sit under the BHCC Commissioning team.*

10. It is positive that daytime holiday scheme provision is being developed at Tudor House and Drove Road, and potentially the special schools. BHCC needs to confirm eligibility and how bookings will be made, especially by families not currently accessing this in-house residential short break provision.
11. BHCC needs to facilitate parents accessing more 1:1 support for their CYP to attend mainstream holiday provision:
 - Clarify details around accessing inclusion funding for 1:1 support.
 - Confirm the current PA pay rate and who sets this.
 - Address the barrier of paying PAs who aren't Ofsted registered.
 - Clarify if parents will be able to access Happiest at Home care pals at higher day rate to support access to provision, if a holiday provider can't offer PA. Or if those families with a PA can pay the same higher rate BHCC is paying care pals.
12. Developing a pool of PAs trained in providing support to specialist and complex need CYPs remains a high priority in the city and progress on this is lacking. Can BHCC lead a recruitment drive, including mainstream and special schools, apprenticeships, universities etc. BHCC will produce a clear strategy with timelines/budget to develop a PA register including plans for training, peer supervision/support, a better interface to choose a PA, and help to make PA roles a more attractive offer/addressing pay rates.
13. BHCC needs to strengthen the financial model behind short breaks provision by commissioning a fully paid for service, as well as free/low-cost short breaks. Parents of disabled children who work need a full day of childcare to be available and would expect to pay the same rate as a parent of a non-disabled child would pay. Making provision available that parents pay for would increase the budget available to providers. Parents on lower incomes can claim money back from Universal Credit/tax credits and parents who need the provision for breaks from caring role could pay from direct payments budgets. Childcare for working parents needs to be OFSTED registered.
14. Afterschool club provision remains limited. When will Downs View club start / capacity at Hill Park increase? Parent Carers with disabled children need improved access to after school provision.
15. BHCC will establish regular (monthly) communication updates and meetings with parent carers, especially SCDS. PaCC and Amaze continue to disseminate information and strengthen their reach into diverse communities, taking on board learning from the Short Break campaign group's communication.
16. BHCC needs to refine the milestones in the Short Breaks Statement, which has recently been updated, to be more specific on the timeframe for change.

"The council need to properly scope the summer options being put forward and provide comprehensive information about each option in relation to the staffing ratio it's offering, risk assessment of the environment, staff experience of working with LD, the rates of pay required and if DPs can be used and topped up if required. The SEND community has worked so hard trying to piece together what was on offer over Easter and it's caused no end of additional stress, pressure and upset. Why should we be the ones doing this work to find out in the end the provision cannot meet the needs of our children anyway. Please don't repeat this lack of communication and understanding of our children needs going forward."