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Introduction

Context and Aims

From 9 March to 12 July 2020, Hampshire County Council consulted residents and stakeholders across Hampshire on proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme.

In the context of an anticipated £80million shortfall in the County Council's budget by April 2021, and informed by feedback from the [County Council's *Serving Hampshire - Balancing the Budget \(2019\) consultation*](#), Children's Services developed a range of proposals to deliver a programme of Short Break Activities within a reduced budget. If agreed, these would continue to provide short breaks for parents and carers and fun, educational opportunities for the children and young people with disabilities but could help Children's Services to make anticipated annual savings of up to £696,000. Other proposals were intended to improve the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme, thereby making the best use of available funding.

The Short Break Activities consultation sought views on these options and their potential impacts and invited alternative suggestions as to how savings could be delivered. The consultation ran between 31 March 2020 till 12 July 2020. The consultation period was extended to July in order to account for the COVID-19 pandemic

Information on each of the proposals was provided in an Information Pack, that clarified that a combination of the proposals would be needed to make the anticipated annual savings for the Short Break Activities Programme, as well as helping develop a more effective service.

The consultation was promoted to residents and stakeholders through a range of online and offline channels (detailed in Appendix One), including a series of drop-in engagement events and dedicated website. Information Packs and Response Forms were available in both virtual and hard copy formats and as standard, Easy Read and Young Person versions, with other formats available on request. Feedback was also welcomed via email or letter and captured at each of the engagement events.

In total **373** responses were submitted across all channels. The views provided through this consultation have been shared with Children's Services and will be used to inform decisions by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People later in 2020.

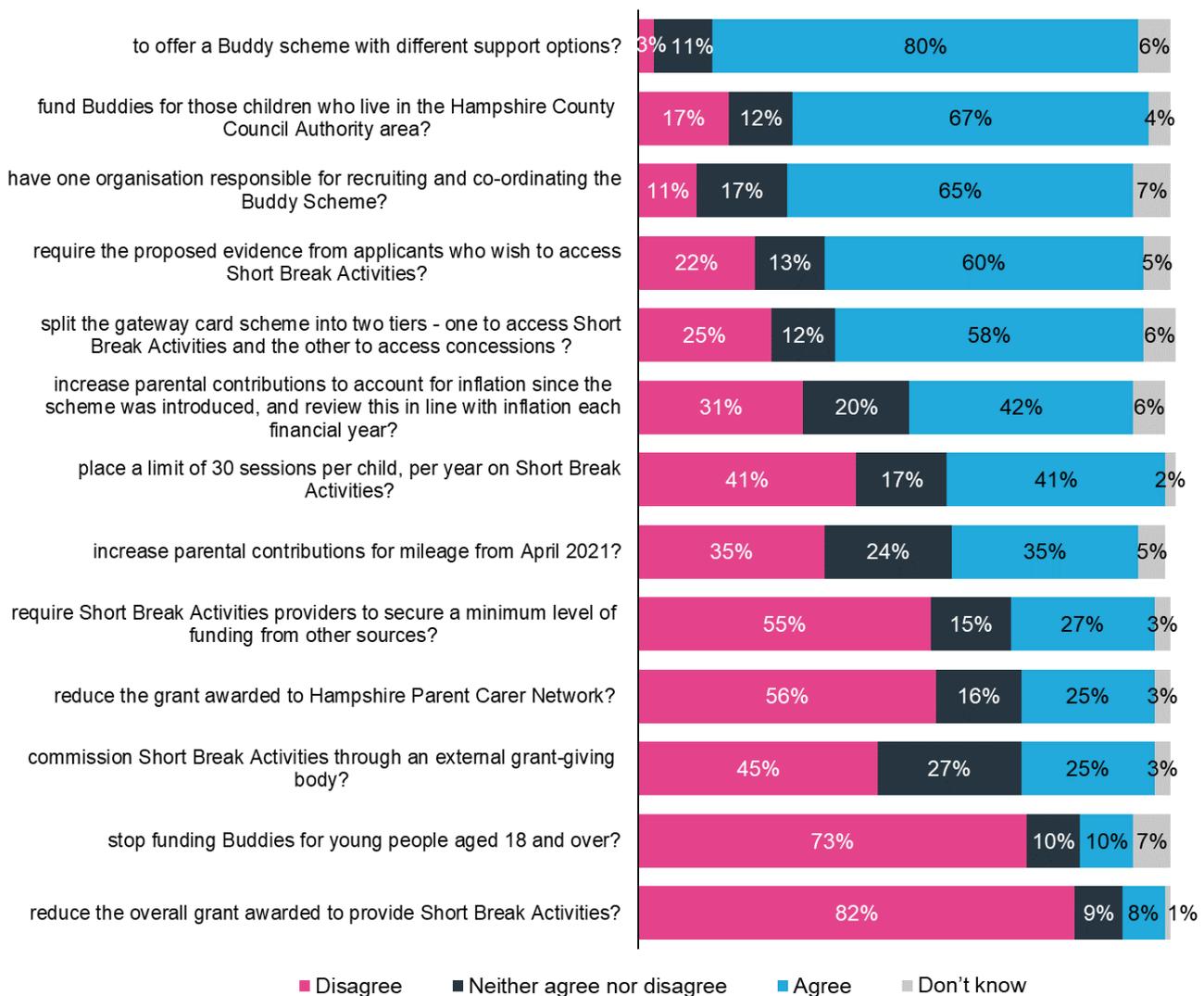
Summary of key findings

The majority of respondents to the consultation were parents or carers of a child or young person with disabilities, with 82% of the respondent profile coming from this group.

Those that mentioned that they were parents and carers were also likely to own a Gateway Card (91%), which they used for a variety of activities such as access to holiday clubs (32%), for concessionary access (28%) and to access weekend Short Break Activities (23%).

Five of the 13 proposals presented within the consultation attained majority agreement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to:
(base 201-207)



These were proposals designed to either improve the effectiveness of the service or redesign the Community Buddy Scheme, namely:

- to offer a Buddy Scheme with different support options (80% agreement).
- to only fund Buddies for those children who live in the Hampshire County Council Authority area. (67% agreement).
- having one organisation responsible for recruiting and co-ordinating the Buddy Scheme (65% agreement).
- requiring the proposed evidence from applicants who wish to access Short Break Activities (60% agreement).
- splitting the Gateway Card scheme into two tiers – one to access Short Break Activities and the other to access concessions (58% agreement).

Four of the 13 proposals received a mixed response, with **no overall majority** of agreement or disagreement, namely:

- increasing parental contributions to account for inflation since the Buddy scheme was introduced, and review this in line with inflation each financial year (31% disagreement and 42% agreement).
- placing a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities. (41% disagreement and 41% agreement).
- increasing parental contributions for mileage from April 2021 (35% disagreement and 35% agreement).
- to commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body (45% disagreement and 25% agreement).

The **four** least popular proposals, which **most respondents disagreed** with, all related to changes in funding, and in particular the proposal to deliver the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget.

- Reducing the overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities (82% disagreement)
- Stopping funding for Buddies for young people aged 18 or over (73% disagreement)
- Reducing the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network (56% disagreement)
- Short Break Activities Provider to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources (55% disagreement)

Verbatim comments regarding the proposals for delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget (67), highlighted the impact of reduced funding on the support available to parents and carers (22 mentions), and their access to essential breaks (four mentions) – particularly given the negative cumulative effect with other budgetary savings previously made by the service (13 mentions). Concerns were raised that the proposals could have the potential to put families into crisis (13 mentions).

Comments also focussed on the potential for the proposals to impact upon service users (14 mentions), with particular concerns about a lack of other suitable activities (six mentions) and that a reduction may impact upon the service users social development (five mentions). Others mentioned the implications of a reduction in Short Break Activities on other services (14 mentions) such as an increased reliance on more costly social care interventions (eight mentions)

Verbatim comments relating to the proposal to stop funding Buddies for young people aged 18 or over identified concerns that young people may not have any follow-on care during a time where other significant changes are likely to occur (three mentions). Respondents also felt the Community Buddy Scheme was currently not fit for purpose (19 mentions), mainly due to a perceived lack of Buddies (12 mentions).

Respondents who were current members of Hampshire Parent Carer Network (HPCN) were more likely to disagree with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network with 72% of current members in disagreement compared with an average of 56% across all respondents. In their verbatim, 10 respondents commented how the service which HPCN provides is highly valued, offering a helpful resource to parents and carers.

38 respondents provided an alternative suggestion to the proposals presented in the consultation, 15 of whom wanted the County Council to look for budget reductions elsewhere. Others suggested that the service could look to understand where there is the most need so resources could be directed to offer more targeted support (eight mentions). Others simply stated that the budgetary savings should not be met through Short Break Activities at all (20 comments).

Accessibility of the scheme was a running theme throughout the consultation, with respondents questioning the reason for more budgetary savings as it was perceived that services were already stretched and oversubscribed - some saying that support for SEND has decreased in general. Others highlighted that Short Break Activities are one of the only support services available to parents and carers, with four comments noting the additional pressures arising due to COVID-19.

There were 29 unstructured responses to the consultation, which did not use the Response Form provided by the County Council. These included 18 responses that were sent from Play at Maple where young Gateway Card users filled in an adapted version of the consultation Response Form. 10 responses were collected in a similar way by The Kings Arms, using an adapted version of the Young Person Response Form. One response was received from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council – which stressed the importance of breaks for parents and carers within the borough and that lower income families could be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.

134 comments were shared and recorded through the 13 engagement sessions ran by the service. Overall participants provided a mixture of comments relating to the proposals in the consultation. Most notably, participants spoke of the issues around finding suitable provision and mentioned how valued the service was.

Responses to the consultation

Who responded?

There were 210 responses submitted via the consultation Response Form, which breaks down as follows:



200 were individual respondents



10 represented groups, organisations, or businesses

There were also **29** separate unstructured responses (responses that were submitted as letters, emails and other communication channels that did not use the Response Form) received within the consultation period; these responses are also included in this report.

In addition, Children's Services ran a series of 13 face to face and online drop-in engagement sessions¹ to ensure the views of parents, carers, service users, organisations, and providers were heard. 47 people attended, and a total of 134 comments were collected and are included within this report.

A detailed participant profile is provided in Appendix 5.

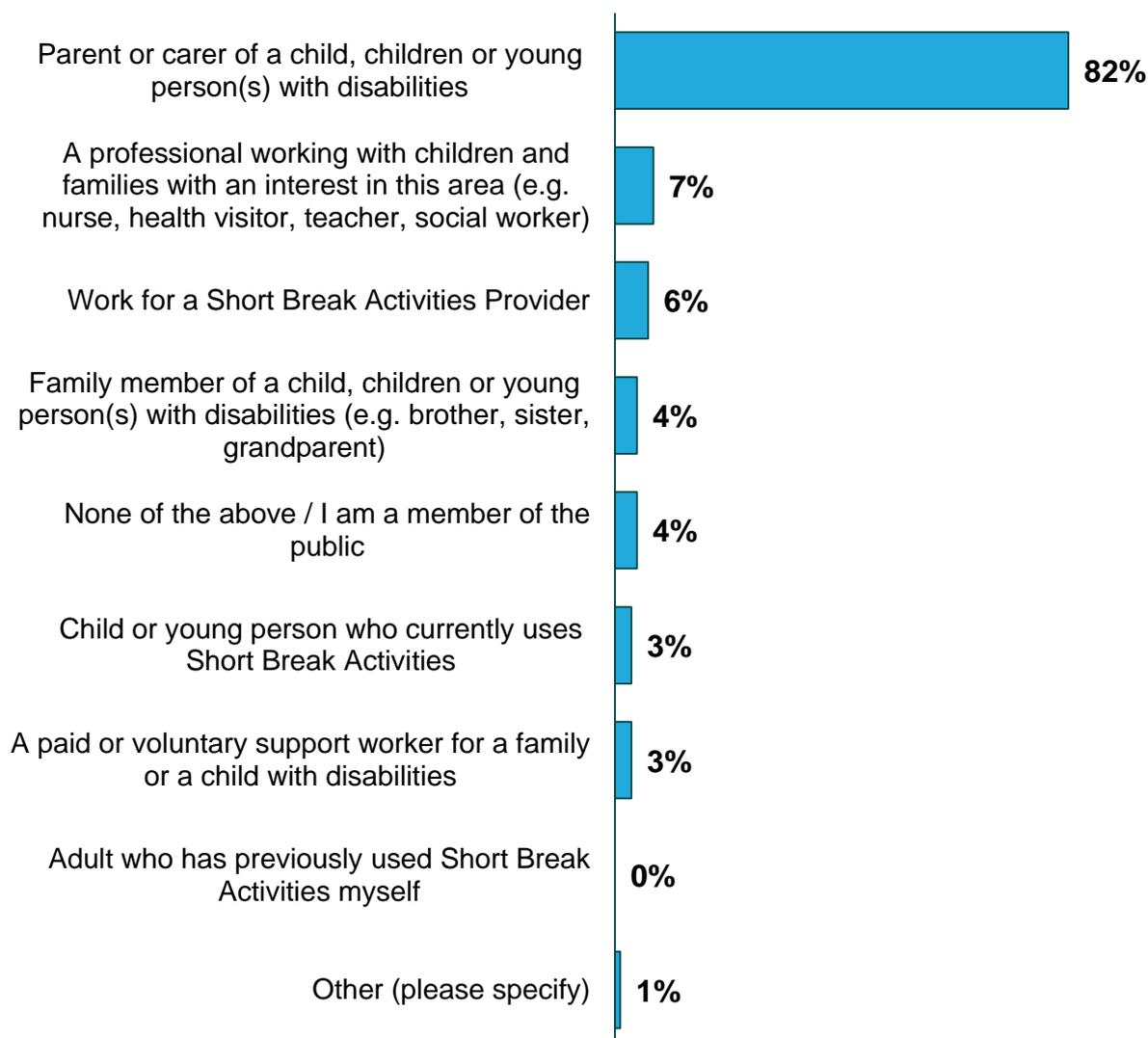
¹ One face-to-face engagement session was held prior to 23 March 2020, then sessions moved entirely online following discussions with Hampshire Parent Carer Network and in accordance with Government Guidance relating to COVID-19.

Respondent relationship with the service

96% of respondents completing the consultation Response Form had some connection with the Short Break Activities service.

The majority (82%) were responding as parents or carers of a child or young person with disabilities. 4% of responses came from family members of a child or young person with disabilities and 3% were from children and young people who currently use Short Break Activities.

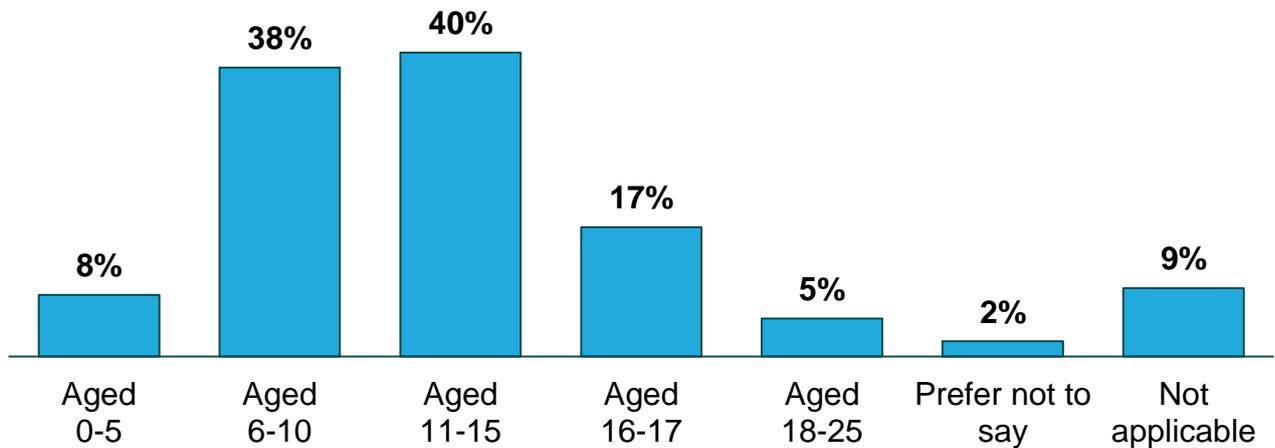
In which capacity are you responding?
(Base: 199, multi-choice)



The remaining responses came predominantly from professionals or volunteers working within the sector.

Respondents who indicated that they cared for a young person with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities were mainly caring for children aged between 6-15.

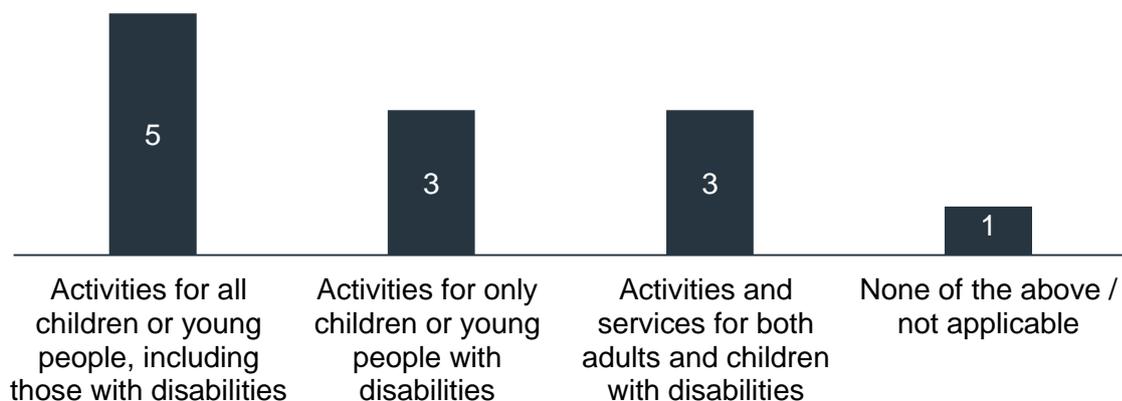
If you care for a young person with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, how old is the person(s) that you provide care for?
(Base: 87, multi-choice)



10 completed Response Forms were received from organisations, groups or businesses.

Five stated that they provide activities for all children or young people, including those with disabilities. Three stated that they only provide activities for children or young people with disabilities, whilst three stated that they provide activities and services for both adults and children with disabilities.

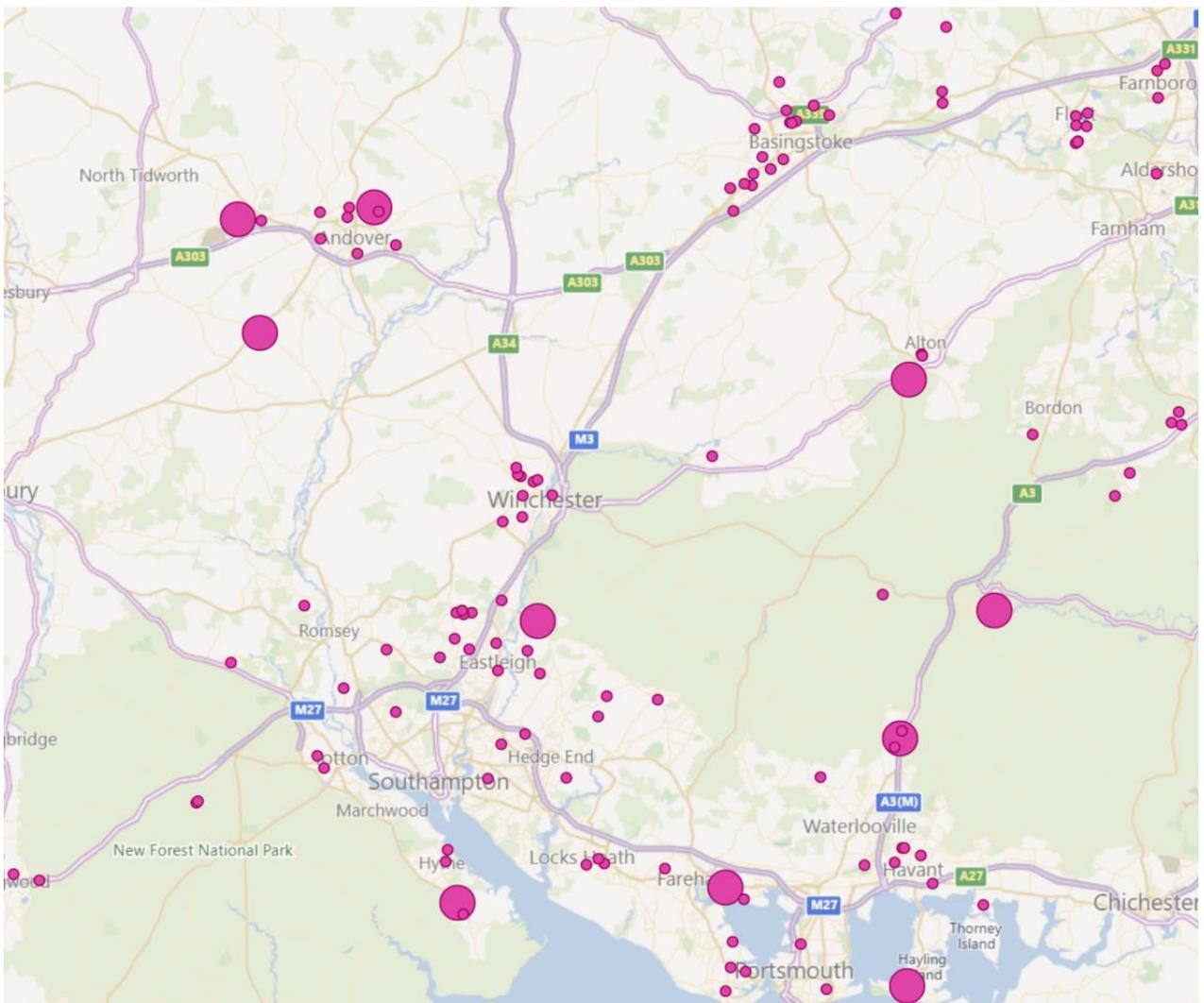
Does your organisation, group or business provide any of the following services? (Base: 10, multi-choice)



Location of respondents

Respondents were asked to provide their postcode. The map (below) shows the distribution of respondents by postcode, with larger circles representing a higher number of respondents. Respondents came from across the County, with a concentration of responses coming from bigger towns and cities such Basingstoke, Fareham, Gosport, Winchester, and the surrounding areas of Southampton.

Distribution of respondents across Hampshire (Base: 140)



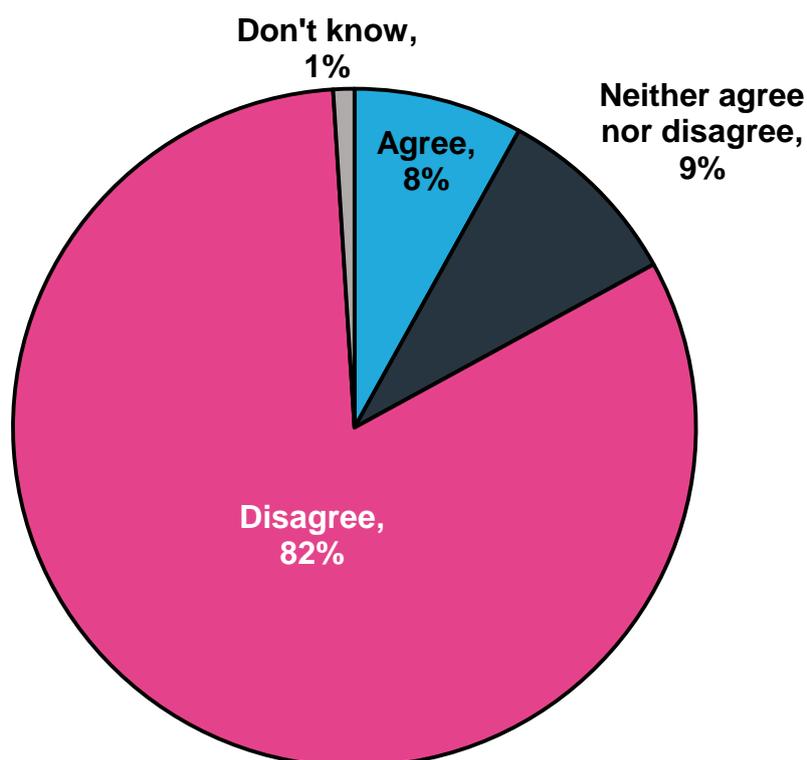
Delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget

Proposal One: To reduce the overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities

This proposal was is to continue to commission Short Break Activities that are important to families, meeting specific priorities, but with a reduction in the total value of grant funding available. It could potentially deliver between £512,000 - £696,000 of annual savings, depending upon the final combination of proposals approved.

82% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to reduce the overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the overall grant awarded to provide Short Break Activities? (Base: 204)



There were 33 respondent comments regarding Proposal One, within which there were 15 mentions of the potential impact the proposals may have on funding and support for Short Break Activities. Specifically, they noted how the proposal adds to the budgetary changes from previous years, putting further pressure on services that support SEND in general. Additionally, 13 respondents mentioned how the service was highly valued, emphasising that it is fundamental to families that rely on it for respite.



My son and I rely on these activities. It would be difficult to find anything that would fill the gap to provide creative opportunities for him to improve his social skills and creative skills in a nurturing environment. Please continue with support for this programme for vulnerable young people.

If funding is reduced most short breaks struggle to supply the support needed. Meaning they cut valuable spaces from families who need them. So many have closed due to so many budget cuts.

The cuts to short breaks already is leaving families of SEN children feeling isolated and like they are being suffocated, further cuts will only make this worse. I have had one of my son's clubs which he attended for 5 years cut. Other clubs are now busier being used by families traveling from further afield desperate for a break taking sessions local families would have used. Stop reducing our breaks or families will stop coping.



Proposal Two: To only accept funding applications that meet the core Short Break Activities priorities

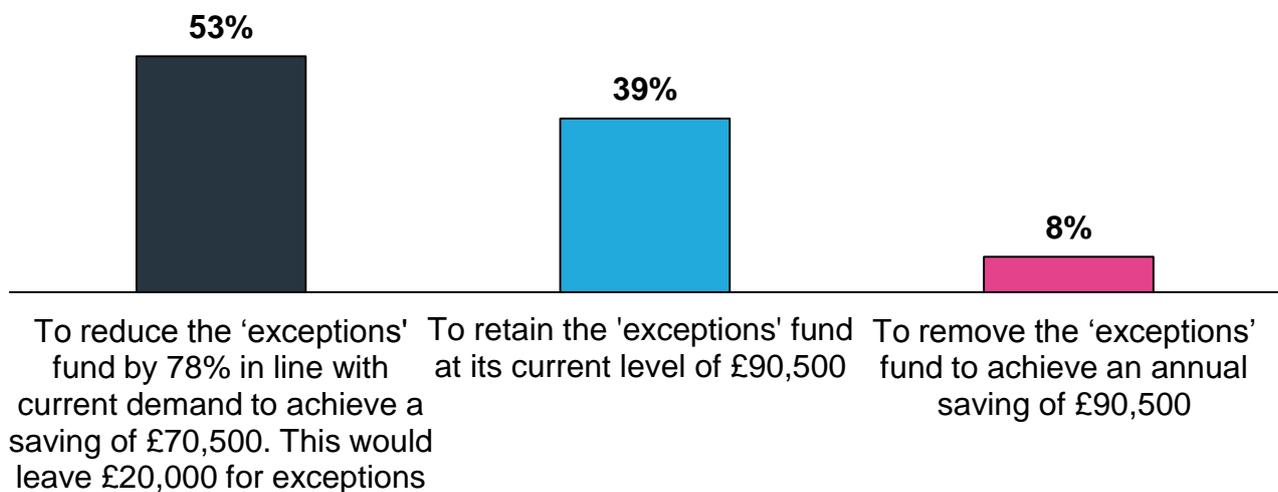
The main Short Break Activities grant round invites applications based on the core Short Break priorities. Where activities do not fall within the identified Short Break Activity priorities, providers may currently apply for ad-hoc grant funding. However, over the last three years the value of ad-hoc applications has fallen well short of the available funding, with almost £450,000 of the Short Break Budget remaining unallocated. Therefore, the County Council proposed to either remove or reduce the 'exceptions' fund.

The majority of respondents (61%) were supportive of changes to the 'exceptions' fund.

Over half (53%) preferred to reduce the 'exceptions' fund by 78% in line with current demand to achieve a saving of £70,500, leaving £20,000 for exceptions, whilst 8% preferred that the 'exceptions' fund was removed to achieve an annual saving of £90,500.

39% of respondents would prefer the County Council to retain the 'exceptions' fund at its current level of £90,500.

Which of the following options would you prefer? (Base: 204)



Five respondents provided specific comments concerning Proposal Two, most mentioned (three mentions) that there was a lack of advertising or promotion of the 'exceptions' fund, with the suggestion that this may be the reason why the fund was not being utilised to its fullest extent.

Two respondents mentioned that Short Break Activities are currently difficult to access, such as not being able to find suitable breaks or a perceived lack of capacity to accommodate the parent or carers needs, and felt that the 'exceptions' fund could be directed towards funding for activities for children and families that are in need of respite.

“

We as a family are desperate for even an hour of respite. It's saddening and shocking to discover you've had unused budget when we have tried everything to access short breaks and been told there were none available. We've been waiting for buddy for over a year. Maybe the funding could be used to employ PA's/ carers so buddy's would be available?

The Exceptions Fund is an inaccessible, non-advertised source of funding. The clear reason as to why people are not applying to this fund is because they do not know that it exists.

It has never been suggested by providers that they can arrange short breaks for our family by using an "Exceptions fund"...I feel that if there is an "Exceptions fund" then this information should be relayed to families who are not able to use the Short Break Activities Programme because their child's needs are too complex.

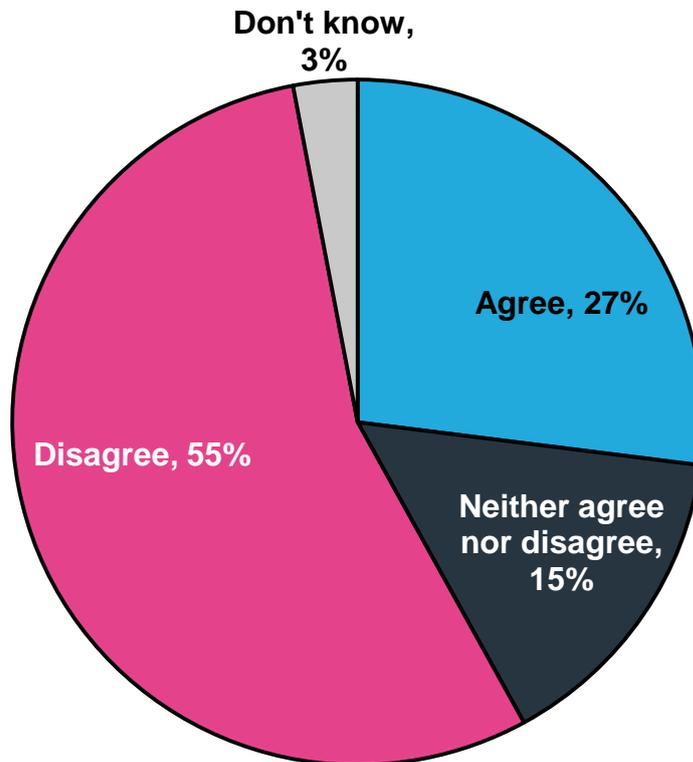
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Proposal Three: To require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources

This proposal would introduce a requirement for providers to contribute at least 10% of the value of the grant being requested towards the cost of running a Short Break Activity, to prove that they are not entirely reliant on the County Council's funding. The 'match-funding' contribution could be generated from a range of sources such as other grant applications and fundraising.

55% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources. 27% said that they agreed with the proposal, whilst 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to require Short Break Activity providers to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources? (Base: 207)



Those that provided the official response of an organisation, group or business were asked what grant period would best enable the proposed level of match funding (at least 10%) to be achieved. The consultation heard from 10 organisations, five of which preferred a longer grant period of 24 months, two who thought that 18 months would be sufficient, and one organisation which felt 12 months would best enable them to source match funding.

Nine respondents made specific reference to Proposal Three in their comments. Most focused on the impact that the proposal may have on providers (six mentions), specifically that providers could be at risk if they were unable to secure 10% of the value of a grant being awarded.

One respondent made reference to COVID-19 and the subsequent impact this might have on providers.



Voluntary income is becoming harder to access and maintain. We agree that all providers should provide the same level of alternative funding to a project. Value for each £1 spent should be a priority, services need to be provided where the need is greatest, not where the parents shout the loudest.

10% is a lot of money for a charity to find but if it means the scheme is 90% funded by Hampshire than better this than the scheme not run.

I would be concerned about the capacity of charities like Enable Ability to raise matched funding especially in the current COVID-19 climate where all charities are struggling to raise funds and at a point where we are likely to see further recession / austerity in the coming years. Organisations such as these who have extensive knowledge and experience in supporting young people need to be protected, not put at risk.

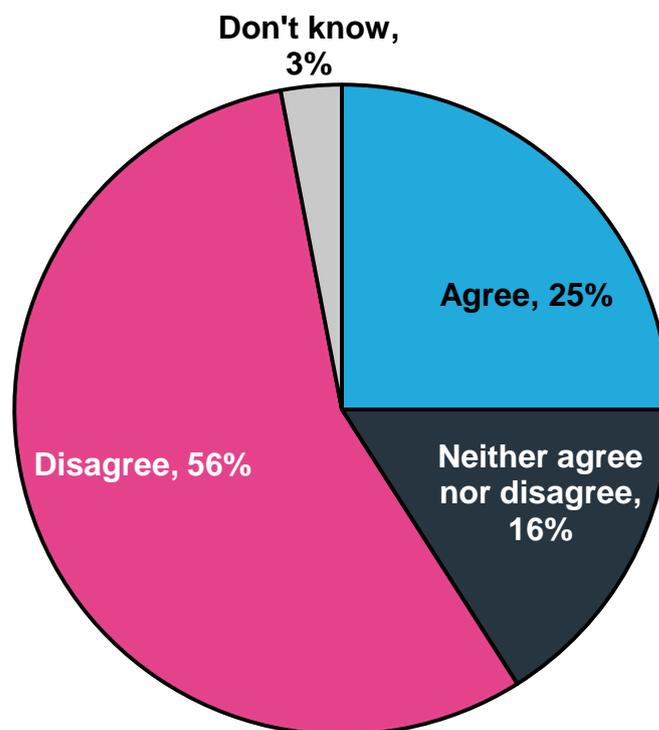


Proposal Four: To reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network

If approved this proposal would seek to reduce the annual amount awarded by the County Council to Hampshire Parent Carer Network by 50% from £35,000 to £17,500. This would bring the level of funding provided by Children's Services more in line with the level of service that would be required in future for Children with Disabilities.

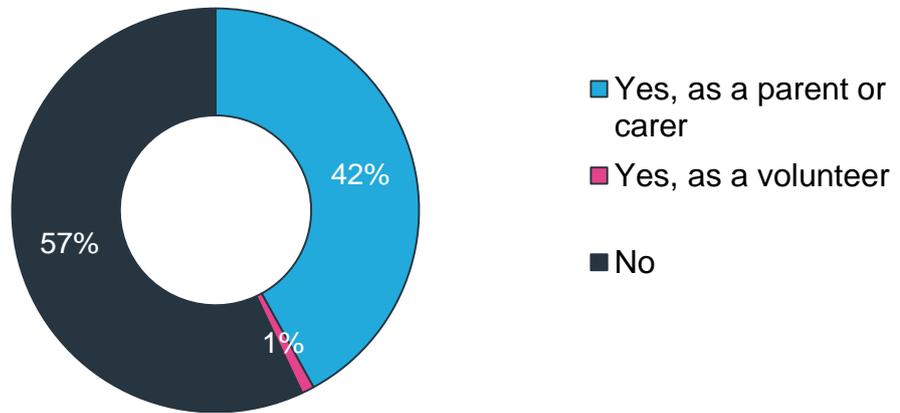
56% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network, whilst 25% of respondents agreed with this proposal. 16% said that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed option.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network?
(Base: 205)



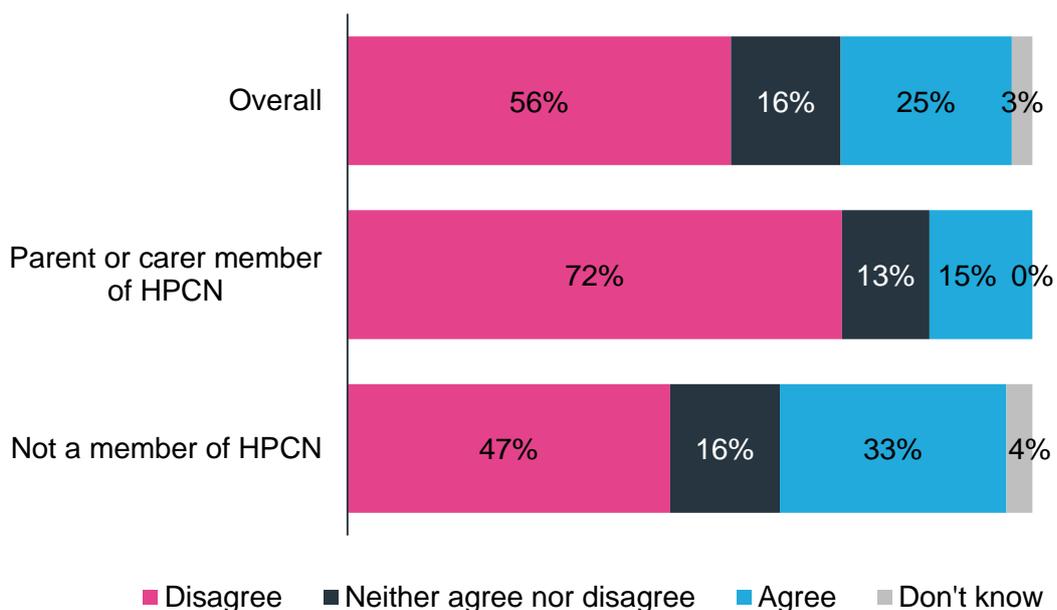
42% of respondents were members of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network as either a parent or carer, and 1% were volunteer members. 57% of respondents were not current members of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network.

Are you a current member of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network as either a parent, carer or volunteer?
(Base: 189, multi-choice)



Those respondents that were current members of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network were more likely to disagree (72% disagreement) with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded than the overall response (56% disagreement). Those that were not current members of HPCN had a mixed response, of whom 47% disagreed and 33% agreed with the proposal.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the grant awarded to Hampshire Parent Carer Network?
By membership to HPCN (Base: 205, 79, 106)



10 respondents made specific reference to Proposal Four in their comments. Most reflected how the service which HPCN provides is highly valued, offering a helpful resource to parents and carers (six mentions).

Others commented on HPCN's funding in general, with four respondents stating it would be a good idea to implement a reduction in funding.



Hampshire Parent Carer Network is invaluable for us parents who need support with our children. I have used them and they have supported me with school visits, applying for DLA and information on the Gateway Card and the yellow card. Cutting a service for parents, and there aren't many out there to support us, is not right. If you cut what will you do as the council to help parents of children with needs?

We really rely on Hampshire Parent Carer Support Network and their staff in lots of situations as well as Short Breaks.

Personally, I find HPCN unfriendly and underused and I don't generally go to their meetings as I don't see what their purpose actually is.

HPCN - need to be well funded to serve their purpose & savings proposed are preposterous - how can they hold you to account if you cut their funding?



The Hampshire Parent Carer Network also provided a comment about this proposal:

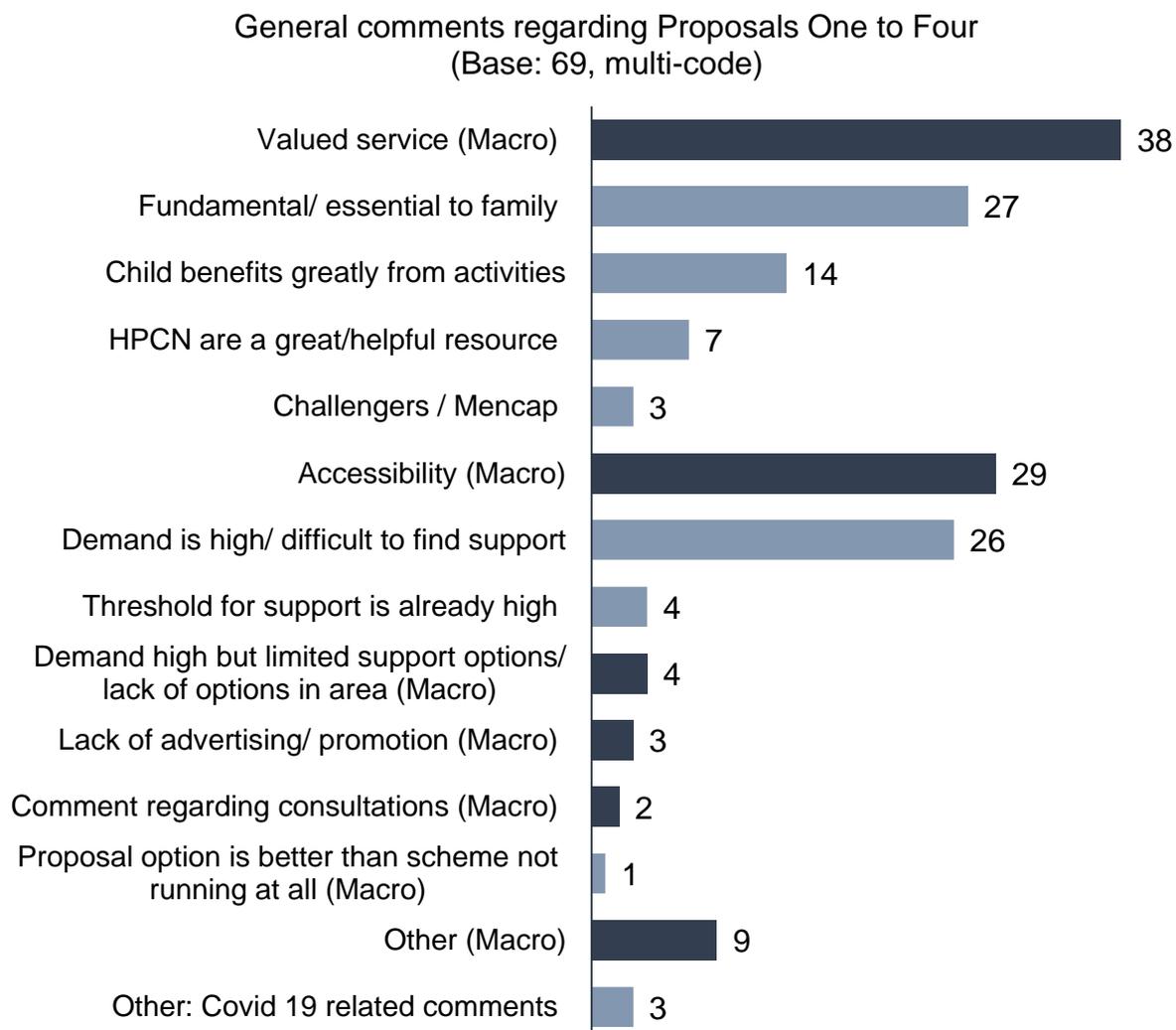
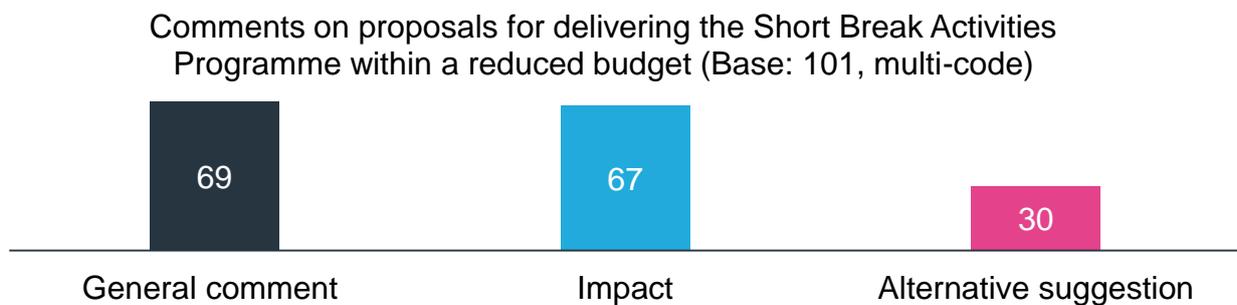


HPCN need the additional funding to work across a larger area. We cannot run the parent carer forum on the contact grant and 17.5k. Our Get Togethers are vital for us to engage with families across the whole of the county as are the staff we employ to run the service. The funding from Health should be organised internally.



Verbatim comments on Proposals One, Two, Three and Four

Respondents were asked to provide a comment on any of the proposals for delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget or to describe the impact that the proposals may have. Respondents mainly provided general comments (69 comments) and comments that reflected the perceived impact of the proposals (67 comments).



General comments about delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget focused on how much the service was valued (38 mentions).

27 respondent comments described how Short Break Activities were fundamental to the wellbeing of families and children with disabilities, with many expressing how important the scheme was to them.



The respite care is invaluable to disabled and special needs already disadvantaged children and parents who get very little respite already and who, like me, are stressed and this is our only chance of a break. Also, these short breaks are a great chance for the special needs children to get to do activities they are unable to normally do.

My son and I rely on these activities. It would be difficult to find anything that would fill the gap to provide creative opportunities for him to improve his social skills and creative skills in a nurturing environment. Please continue with support for this programme for vulnerable young people.

My son goes to one of the short breaks on a Saturday and also goes during school holidays, for us is a lifeline, these short breaks are extremely vital for families and children with disabilities and for them to have funding reduced when they are already struggling will have a massive impact and has already seen some close.

There are barely any activities available for children with disabilities and if the budget is cut, then families like us will lose out on any quality time that we can spend with our other children. These short breaks are vital for our family as that's the only time we get to socialise, shop, spend any time with our other children or do anything else.

The short breaks are a godsend during the school holidays. My son has complex needs and respite during the six-week summer holidays is essential for everyone's wellbeing.



Others mentioned the accessibility of the scheme in its current form (29 mentions), with respondents stressing that services are stretched and the demand for Short Break Activities high (26 mentions). Some also mentioned that there is a lack of support for children with complex needs, the emphasis being that Short Break Activities are perceived to be the only support parents and carers have access to (four mentions).



Families like ours are at breaking point. We have already lost after school provision and now you are proposing further budget cuts! We already fall out of the remit for social care support. This truly is most disappointing!

We as a family have two children with complex needs, we don't qualify for social care support because we can meet our children needs but it's coming at a heavy price to our family and mental health. We desperately need some respite but haven't been able to access any short breaks. You can't cut this service, families need it.

The access in Basingstoke for short breaks is extremely limited and for families who do not drive is near impossible to access others, having sessions limited would be just as bad we really need to look at short breaks and how accessible they actually are and for the ones already running how vital they are to families and young people, I understand money needs to be saved and funded from somewhere but feel that the changes proposed will only have a negative affect rather than a positive.

I do not know of anyone who has been able to access the short breaks scheme since funding was reduced massively last year. Previously it would help with days out. Leaving children with a disability can be extremely challenging and accessing services is impossible. I and others are desperate for respite, but we are told there is none. We don't know how to access the scheme and are exhausted by day to day Caring responsibilities. saying they are not being used is not acceptable.

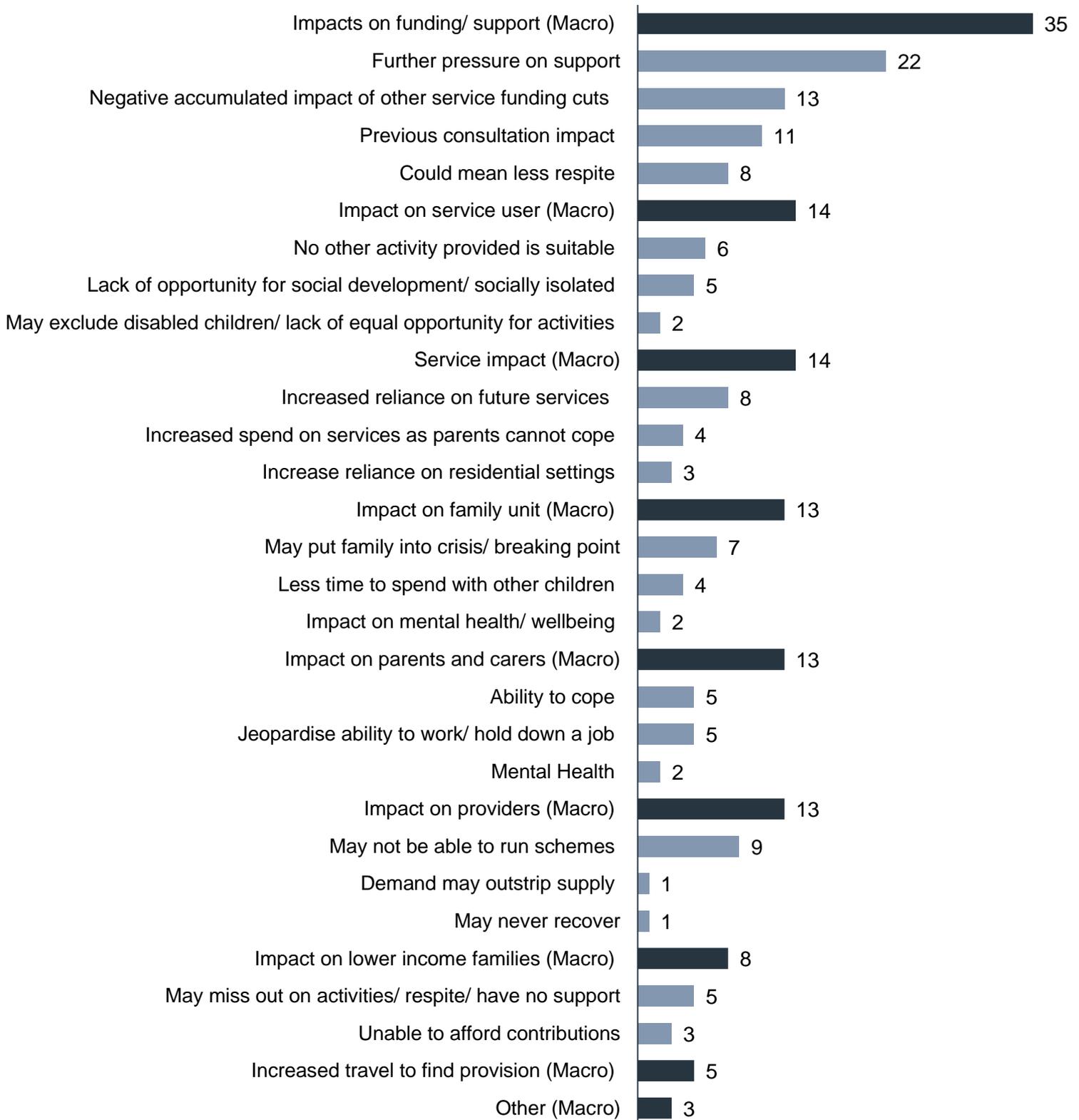
I NEED short break provision for my ASD ADHD son and there is currently nothing to access locally. I have the means to pay but there is no provision. Please look at means testing parents and investing in better provision. I have the money and the need but nowhere to spend it and get the respite the whole family needs.

I've never used short breaks as I have never been able to find anything suitable. Reducing the provision too much will only make it less likely for me to find anything I can use.



67 respondents mentioned a perceived impact of delivering the Short Break Activities Programme within a reduced budget. Most often, they highlighted the impact of reduced funding on the support available to parents and carers (22 mentions) – particularly given the potential cumulative effect of this and other service cuts (13 mentions).

Percieved impacts regarding Proposals One to Four (Base: 67, multi-code)





You should be increasing funding for children with disabilities. The short breaks programme has been demolished in the last 5+ years and this has had a significant impact on us as a family- I've found it harder to work, my disabled child has fewer opportunities, which impacts on their siblings.

We have already had finding cuts to many things that we try to access within the short breaks scheme. How can there be more to come? This scheme is fundamental to my family and to cut it even further would have a detrimental effect on my families wellbeing.

We have already lost groups that my children attended due to funding cuts, surely further cuts would impact and put at risk those groups that remain now.



Others mentioned the impact the proposals could have on service users (14 mentions), particularly the concern over a lack of other suitable activities (six mentions) and that if activities were to reduce, this may impact upon the service users social development (five mentions).



If funding is cut young children and teenagers will become more isolated and unable to meet up with friends and peers in a safe environment.

The short break activities programme is essential to my child who is unable to access other resources due to her complex needs. It is a lifeline.

Can't go to places like mainstream children can if funds are going to be cut. Child and his carer feel he may miss out on social time with friends, as he needs an activity provider that can cater for his extra needs and his carer needs to be sure they will make him safe and look out for his needs.

My daughter accesses Junior Club provided by Enable Ability through short breaks. Due to her SEND she requires activities which allow her to access to the things that other children her own age can access independently. There is currently no alternative to junior club.



Some respondents also highlighted the implications that a potential reduction in Short Break Activities may have on other services (14 mentions), such as an increased reliance on other more costly social care interventions (eight mentions), and that Short Break Activities allow parents and carers an essential break from their caring duties (four mentions).



I know a lot of families rely on short breaks services for Respite and also for the child's/ young persons need to access activities/ leisure. Without this support more families will be coming to Children's Services for support, meaning more families open as CIN cases and also without 'early intervention'/ available services there is potential for more families reaching breaking point and substantive care packages then needing to be put in place. So the money will still need to be spent by children's services, just from another budget and likely a lot more!

Short breaks are essential to provide parents with a break that is geared towards their child's needs - with suitable staff and this will help maintain children in their family home thus saving the immense cost of possible residential placements.

Stop cutting funding to these services! They are vital for parents and carers of disabled children. It will cost more in the long-run in terms of health and mental well-being for all concerned.



Others commented on the negative impact the proposals may have on the family unit (13 mentions), with some going on to say how the proposals could put families into crisis (seven mentions).



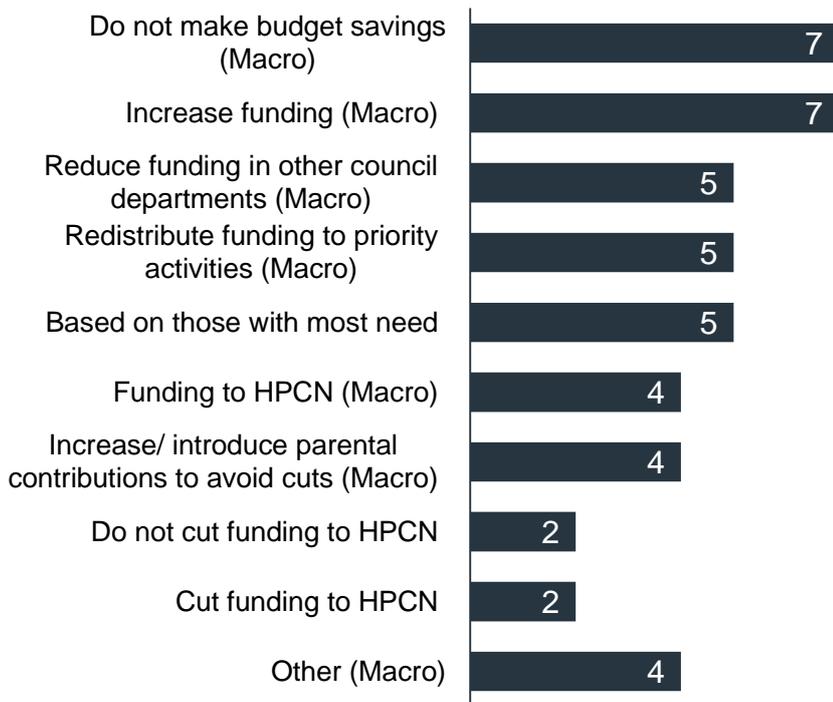
You will force more and more families into crisis and that will cost you a lot more in the future if you continually push these families to the limit!!

Not having access = hospital visits, family breakdowns, more longer-term expense.



A smaller number of respondents mentioned potential alternatives to those proposed (30 mentions), particularly that funding should be increased, not decreased (seven mentions). Others suggested that the required budgetary savings should be taken from other County Council departments (five mentions), whilst some mentioned that funding should be redistributed to priority Short Break Activity areas (five mentions).

Alternative suggestions for Proposal One to Four
(Base: 30, multi-code)



“These are vital services and should be funded well.”

“These services are vital to many families and shouldn't be cut.”

“There must be cuts that can be made in other departments instead of targeting these children.”

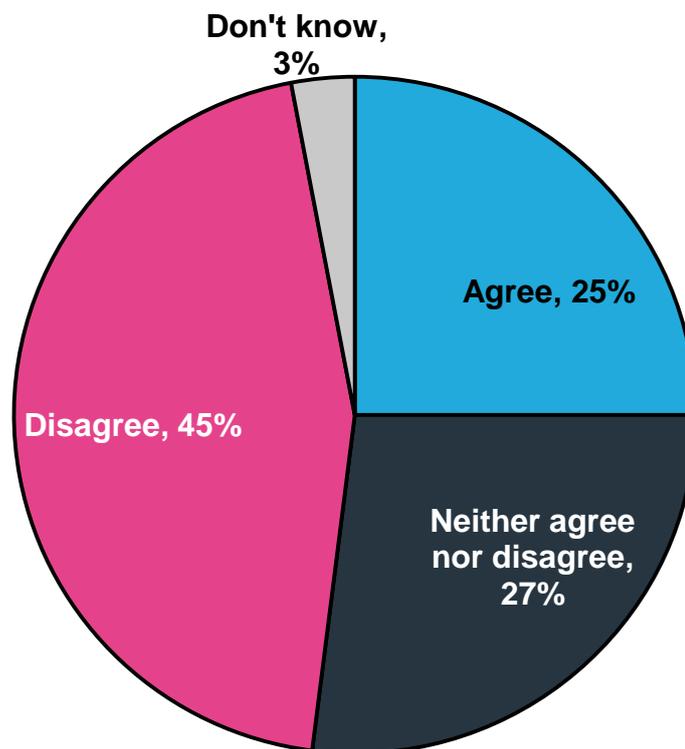
Proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme

Proposal Five: To commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body

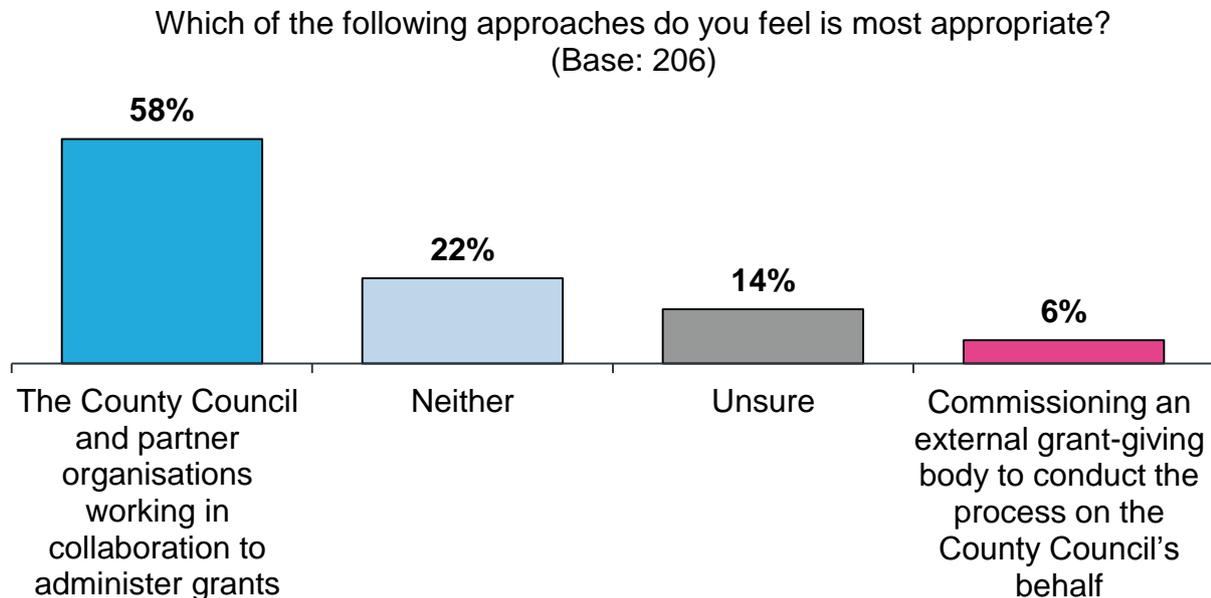
There are other organisations in Hampshire that support vulnerable people in local communities that might be willing to work in partnership with the County Council to direct grant resources to where they are most needed. This proposal seeks to work with an external grant-giving body to conduct the process of awarding grants to deliver Short Break Activities on its behalf or in collaboration.

There was no clear consensus with regards to this proposal. Although respondents were more likely to disagree (45%) than to agree (25%), a further 27% neither agreed nor disagreed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to commission Short Break Activities through an external grant-giving body? (Base: 203)



58% of respondents felt that it would be appropriate for the County Council to work in collaboration with partner organisations in order to administer grants to the Short Break Activities Programme, compared to only 6% who preferred the option of commissioning an external grant-giving body to conduct the process on the County Council's behalf. 22% felt that neither of the proposed ideas was appropriate.



Six respondents referred to Proposal Five in their comments. The primary concern was that an external grant giving body may increase administration costs and may create a lengthier process for providers to obtain funding.



The external grant giving body proposal just seems to be another layer of unnecessary paperwork, possibly costing more and yet unlikely to be more efficient to the current set up. It seems unnecessary and unlikely to help children with disabilities.

I think adding in another grant giving body will add more confusion and administration, red tape and delay. Also will give the council another excuse to blame a third party when no service is available / realistically achievable.

Is this another layer of administration and what is the cost of doing so for the providers - will they have two masters grant authority and Hampshire - the providers have little.

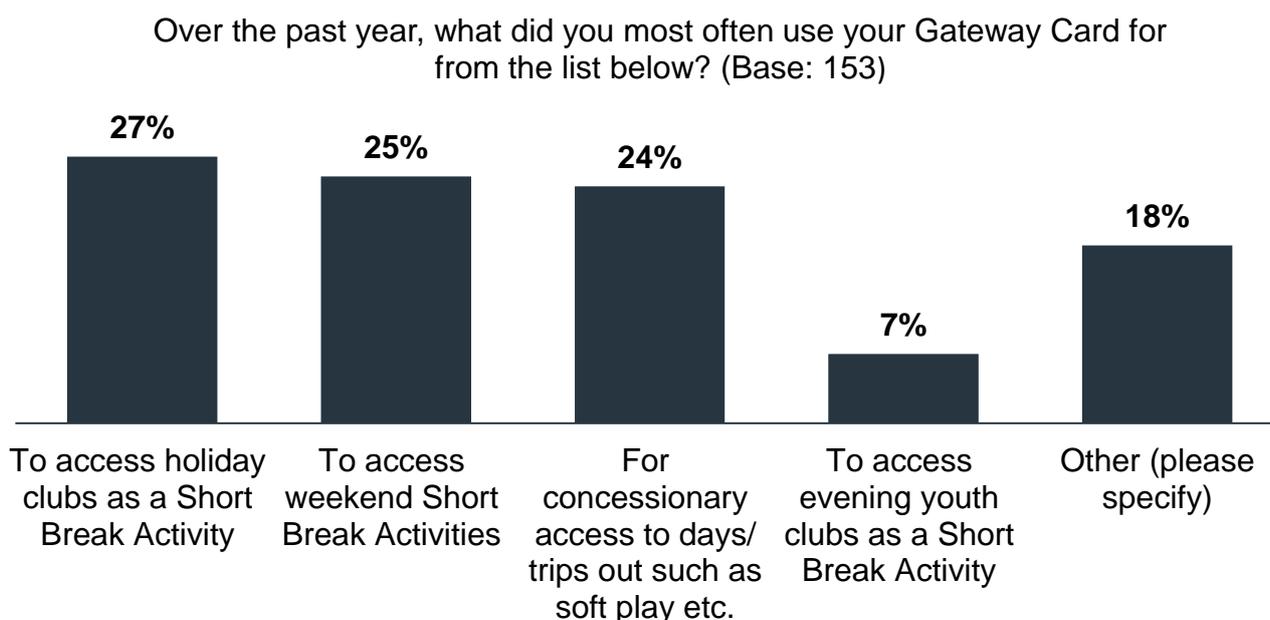


Proposal Six: To introduce a two-tier Gateway Card scheme

This proposal sought to create a two-tier Gateway Card system, to ensure that those families who solely use a Gateway Card to access concessions remain able to do so, whilst also providing the County Council with a better understanding of local need for Short Break Activities in order to plan services and further develop the Gateway Card scheme.

All respondents were asked whether they currently have a Gateway Card. Of those that responded 77% said that they currently hold a Gateway Card. 91% of those that indicated they were a parent or carer of a child with disabilities said that they were a Gateway Card holder.

Gateway Cards were used for a variety of activities such as access to holiday clubs (27%), to access weekend Short Break Activities (25%) and for concessionary access (24%). They were less likely to be used to access evening youth clubs as a Short Break Activity (7%).



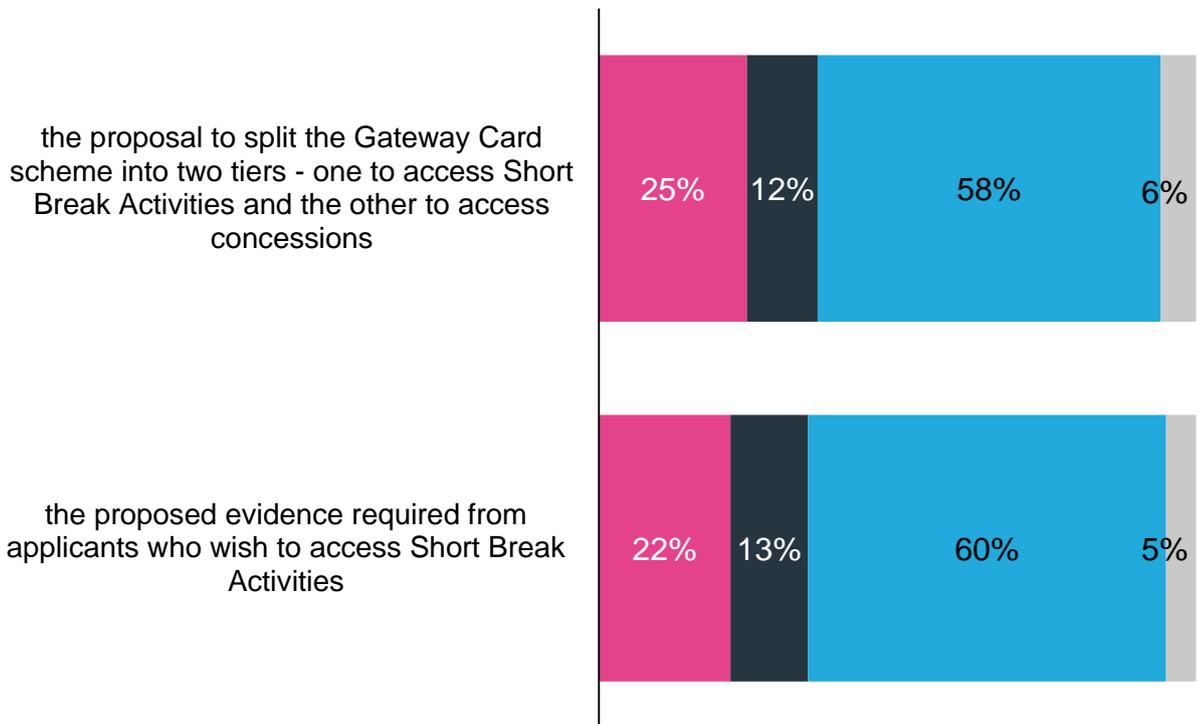
Those that specified what other activities they have accessed using a Gateway Card said that they used it to access the Buddy Scheme (four respondents) and for afterschool care or weekend activities (four mentions).

10 respondents mentioned that there was a lack of appropriate or suitable provision, whilst seven respondents mentioned that they have not had a chance to use their Gateway Card yet.

The majority of respondents (58%) agreed with the proposal to split the Gateway Card scheme into two tiers. 25% disagreed with this proposal.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with:
(Base 206, 201)

■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Don't know



60% of respondents agreed that the proposed forms of evidence required from applicants who wish to access Short Break Activities were appropriate. These included:

- Receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- A Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- An Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- A referral from a social worker.

A small number of respondents provided a comment on Proposal Six (seven mentions). Some felt that the two-tier system would help the Gateway Card system to work more effectively (three mentions) whilst others felt that having to provide evidence may be a barrier to additional support (four mentions).



The two-tier system would be a better way of ensuring the Gateway card system is being utilised effectively.

The two-tier Gateway Card scheme is needed as parents and carers need a concession card to use to prove eligibility for reduced entry due to having a carer

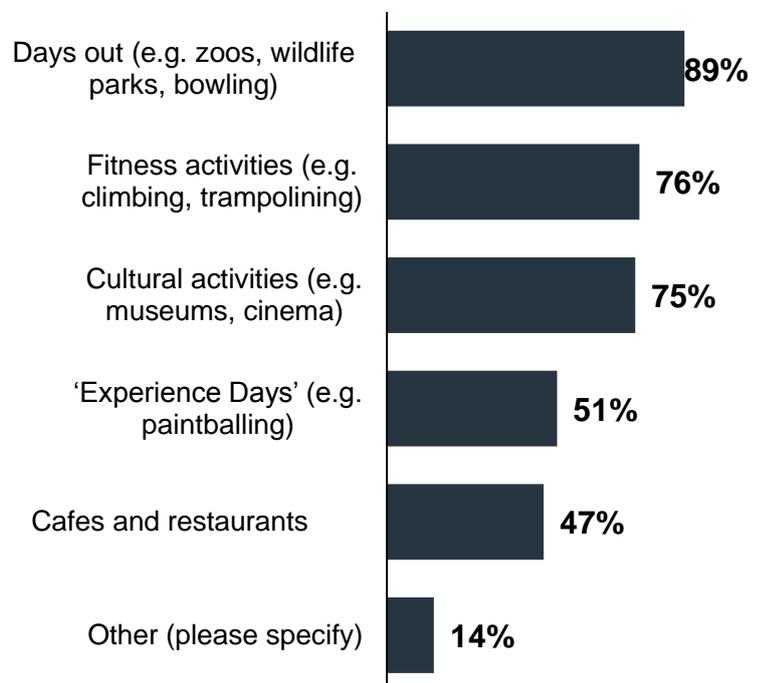
I don't see why having two tiers of Gateway Card will help. I don't use our card for short breaks because I can't find any suitable - not because I don't want to!

Two tier card might be useful if a member does not plan to use the advanced services then opt for a lower cost alternative, but do not make it harder to obtain the full card - should be available to all who need it, they may not necessarily have those criteria mentioned for whatever reason - such as too exhausted to jump through the hoops, language barriers, etc.



In order to inform how the County Council can extend the range of concessions that can be accessed with a Gateway Card, respondents that had a relationship² with the service were asked which concessions they would be interested in. Days out (89%) were most popular, closely followed by fitness activities (76%) and cultural activities (75%). 20 respondents put forward other activities which might be of interest, the majority of which mentioned swimming lessons.

Which of the following may be of interest to you? (Base: 149, multi-choice)



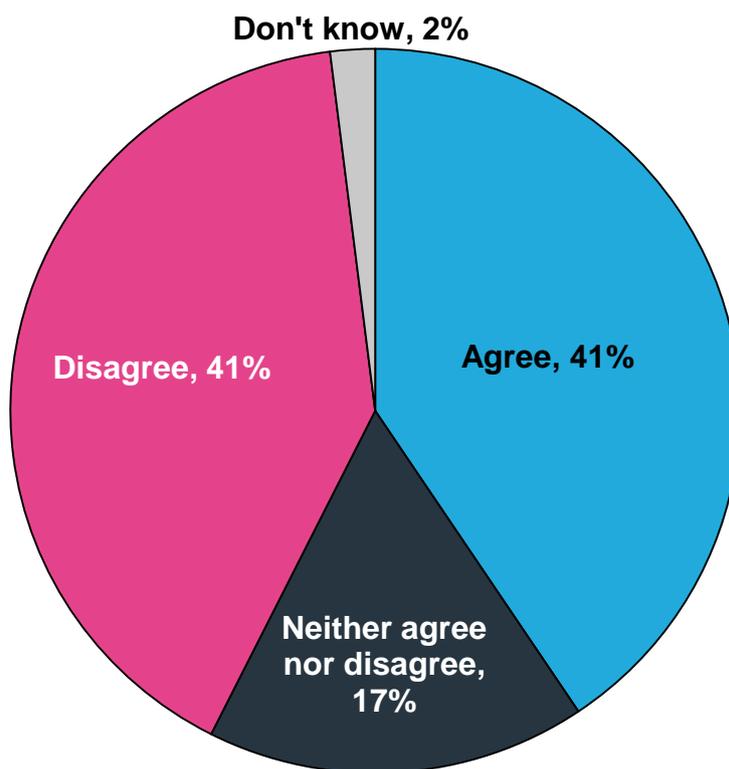
² Respondents who indicated that they were a parent, carer or family member of a child or young person with disabilities, or those who indicated they were a child or young person who used Short Break Activities.

Proposal Seven: To place a limit of 30 session per child, per year on Short Break Activities

Gateway Card holders can book on as many or as few Short Break Activity sessions as they wish (subject to availability). It has been found that this can create discrepancy in the system, which may lead to some families having less opportunity to book a Short Break Activity. This proposal seeks to place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities.

There was a mixed response to this proposal, with an even split between those who agreed (41%) and disagreed (41%) 17% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to place a limit of 30 sessions per child, per year on Short Break Activities?
(Base: 206)



40 respondents provided a comment regarding Proposal Seven specifically. The majority of respondents mentioned how 30 sessions was simply not enough to maintain a caring role (19 mentions), and that the limit could impact on the funding and support that they received (12 mentions). Others suggested a different approach to the allocation of Short Break Activities (11 mentions) such as allocating a set number of sessions based on those with the most need for the service (six mentions).



Restricting sessions to 30 per year per child is just going to put more pressure on Personal Budget funding or break parents. If you have a child who has extreme behaviours you need a lot of respite, maybe every day or you will collapse. If the parents can't cope then the state will have to take over full time and that will be FAR more expensive.

30 sessions a year is not a reasonable amount for us, to cap it like that it's not a good idea at all.

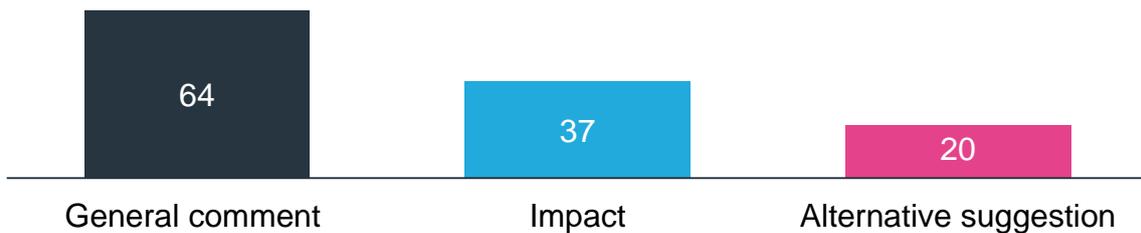
Some families are more in need of short breaks than others, depending on their particular circumstances at the time. A limit of 30 seems arbitrary. This would limit my ability to work in school holidays particularly.



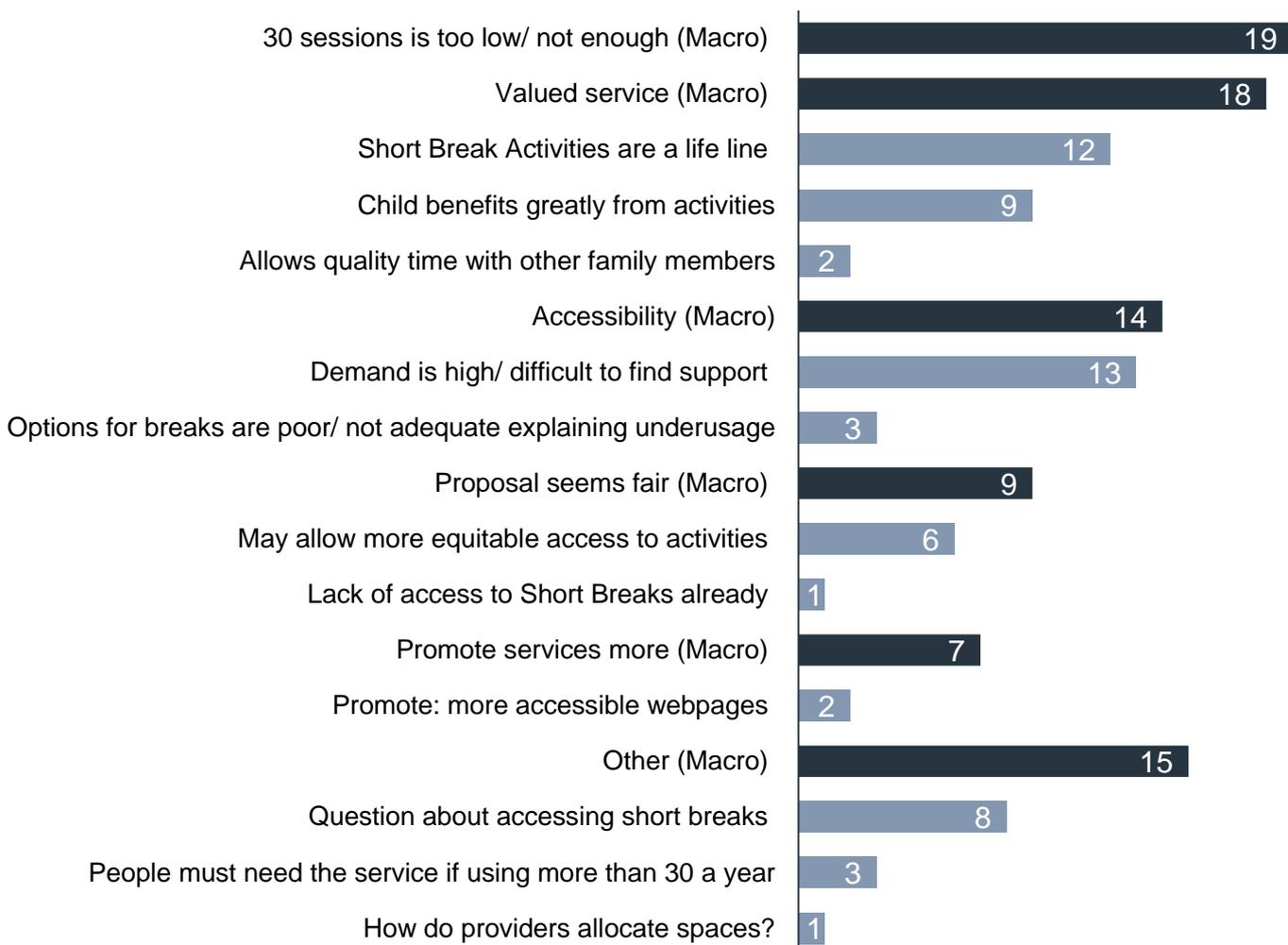
Verbatim comments on Proposals Five, Six and Seven

Respondents were asked to provide a comment on any of the proposals for improving the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme, or to describe the impact that the proposals may have. Respondents mainly provided general comments (54 comments) and comments that reflected the perceived impact the proposals may have (30 comments). 15 respondents suggested an alternative approach to the proposals.

Comments on proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme (Base: 81, multi-code)



General comments about Proposals Five to Seven (Base: 64, multi-code)



The main point raised within the general comments was that 30 sessions per year per child would not adequately meet parents and carers needs (19 comments).



If you limit it to 30 days you limit when and where. For some of our families where 2:1 funding is needed you are reducing their respite by half!

30 is too low. Many families will need to come ask you for more support via social care assessments when they would prefer not to have to. Greater cost for staff to go out administer care packages, review etc. And likely greater risk of family breakdown and expensive overnight respite or permanent placements.

Limiting sessions, especially those that cover holiday playschemes, will have a huge effect on working parents. Childcare is almost impossible to find for SEN.

Limiting the number of short breaks per person would make it difficult for us to have breaks ourselves on weekends as that's the only time we get to recharge and have a break from the caring duties.



Respondents again expressed how the Short Break Activities service was highly valued (18 comments) and that it provides a lifeline to parents and carers. With this in mind, respondents were also concerned that access to Short Break Activities was already difficult to obtain (14 comments) and felt that a reduction in the number of sessions on offer would exacerbate this.



The reason that I haven't made more use of the Short Breaks activities programme is that there are not many services available to us in Andover. Since funding was withdrawn for such things like the after-school care at the Wellington Centre, we are limited in what support we can get for my child who has Autism.

Short Breaks is a lifeline for some families, accessing evening and weekend clubs during term time, and also holiday clubs during school holidays. Without these, many families would not be able to cope. I know I would be looking at alternative living arrangements for my 17-year old if Short Breaks didn't exist.

There needs to be a clear website detailing exactly what is available, e.g. who has the funding so families know where to turn when all other doors are being slammed in their face. It's an unfair system to new applicants who don't know where to go for a break.

Short break activities are a lifeline and families depend on our activities in order to get a regular break and also for their children to step away from young carer duties despite having disabilities themselves.

Please continue to support this vital programme for young people.



Nine respondents gave a positive perspective, mentioning how they felt the proposals may improve accessibility, and allow for a more equitable distribution of breaks for parents and carers.

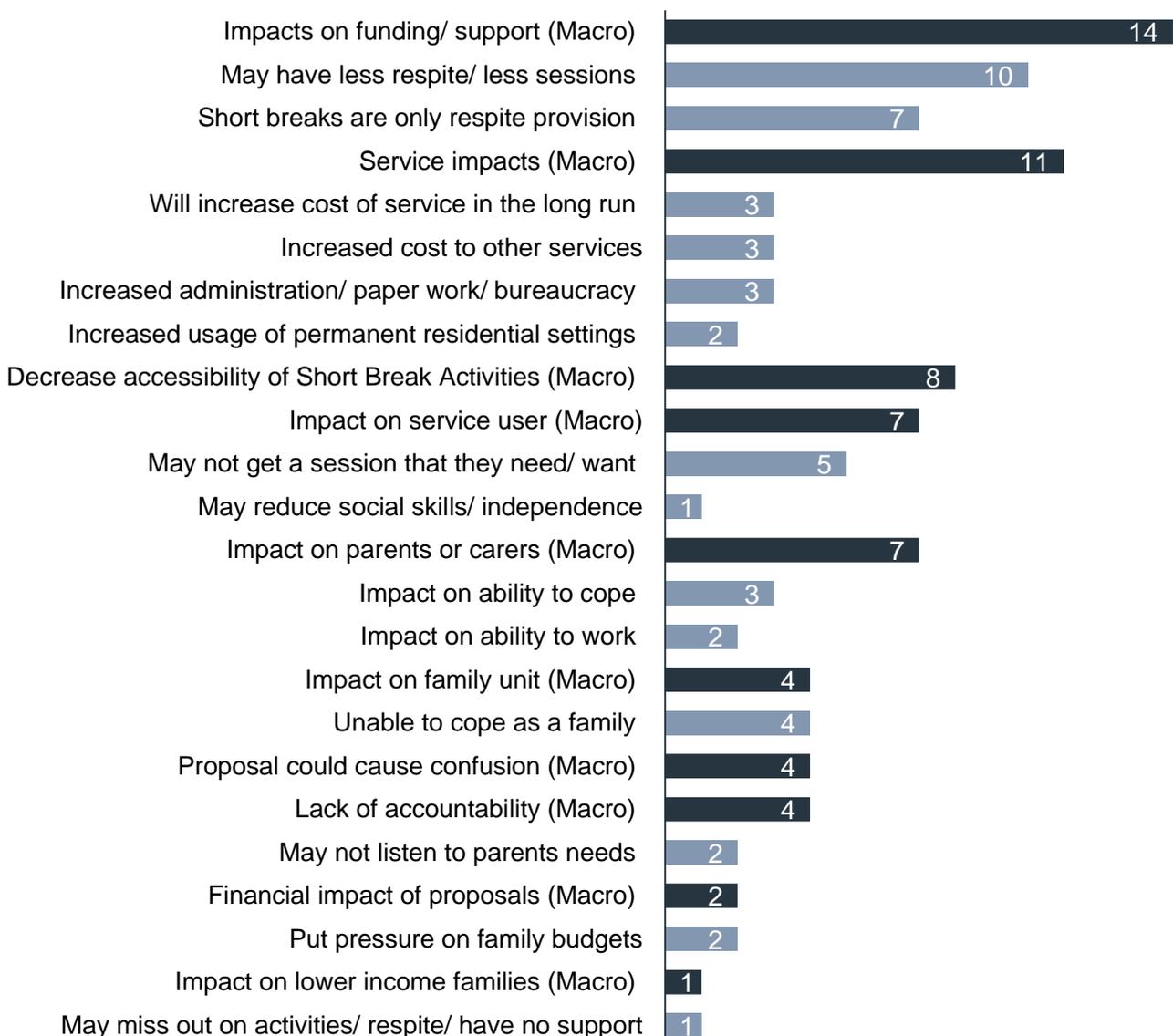
It seems fair to cap how many activities etc can be booked to ensure a fair chance for everyone to access, although your report implied this usually wasn't the case, no waiting lists, etc. But if others aren't using the 30 given, then it seems a shame if others miss out who could of used it.

I feel that a reduction to two a month is adequate and, with good administration, would enable a regular routine to be established.

I believe that this way everyone gets a chance to take part and it becomes equal accessibility to all.

37 respondents also outlined potential impacts that could arise from the proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Short Break Activities Programme.

Perceived impacts of Proposals Five to Seven (Base: 37, multi-code)



14 respondent comments mentioned that there could be an impact on the funding and support that parents and carers receive for children with disabilities, some commenting how they could receive less respite and that Short Break Activities is the only form of support that is currently available to them.



For some families 30 sessions would be more than they currently get and would be beneficial however they may also have lots of support in place but for another family having one session a weekend maybe their only respite and some of these children need the structure of knowing the frequency of when they are going!

This is the only access to support we have been able to find that is suitable for our child. Please do not proceed with these proposals, our family faces daily struggles.

With the lack of alternative clubs for disabled children, I would be very concerned if children lost opportunities to take part in these. Activity providers wouldn't have enough children to run activities which would then be cancelled. It would be far more sensible to try to encourage those who don't join activities (also look at why they don't) to join some and if this increases demand then consider limiting. It would be very short-sighted to limit activities first as I don't think it would suddenly mean those who don't join would.



11 respondent comments reflected on the wider service impact the proposals could have, with some suggesting that there could be additional long term cost implications (three mentions) such as a reliance on other social, medical and health services if adequate respite was not provided (three mentions).



If you reduce the short breaks or access to or however you've already chosen to then will you fund more in Children's services itself as there'll be a lot more need from the parents and children who have lost out because of your funding reduction and get to breaking point.

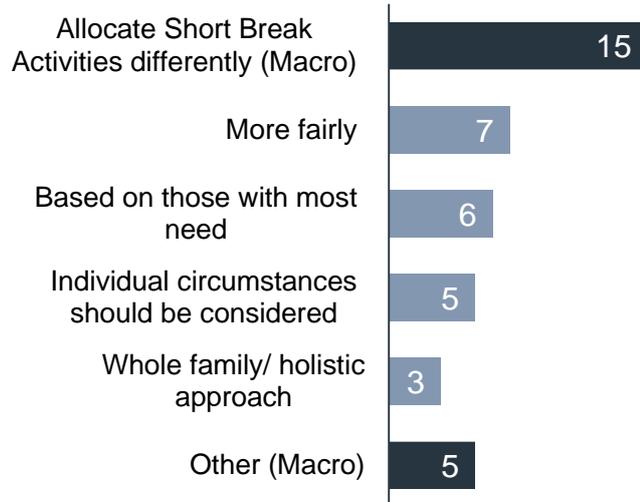
Please don't cut funding I cannot work without short breaks and this would mean I would need to stay at home and claim carers allowance which would be detrimental to my mental health and affect the country as I will be taking out of the country instead of putting in. This is the case with lots of parents.

Families must have access to short breaks in order to cope. Any reduction will have a negative affect and cost implication on other services e.g. social services, medical services and mental health services. If you cut short breaks you will just be having to increase the money spent on other services that pick up the problems caused by the lack of short breaks.



20 respondents gave suggestions as to how Short Break Activities could be allocated differently, specifically that there should be a fairer (seven mentions), holistic (three mentions) and needs based approach (six mentions).

Alternative suggestions for Proposals Five to Seven (Base: 20, multi-code)



All breaks should be allocated on a needs-based approach, those children / families with the higher need should get preference. Support should be given when it is first asked for, families should not have to reach crisis point before they are considered girls short breaks. Families should be looked at holistically and the benefit that short breaks provides for siblings of SEND children.

Access needs to be fairly allocated to families rather than first come first serve.

Would focus more on getting other Gateway card holders to use more sessions and investigate why they cannot access more - it is most likely due to there being insufficient accessible options available.

Look at the needs of the individual? Not a lot available for young people like my 17-year-old, who is severely disabled. Maybe worth assessing each individual case.

It seems fair to cap how many activities etc can be booked to ensure a fair chance for everyone to access, although your report implied this usually wasn't the case, no waiting lists, etc. But if others aren't using the 30 given, then it seems a shame if others miss out who could of used it.



Proposals to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme

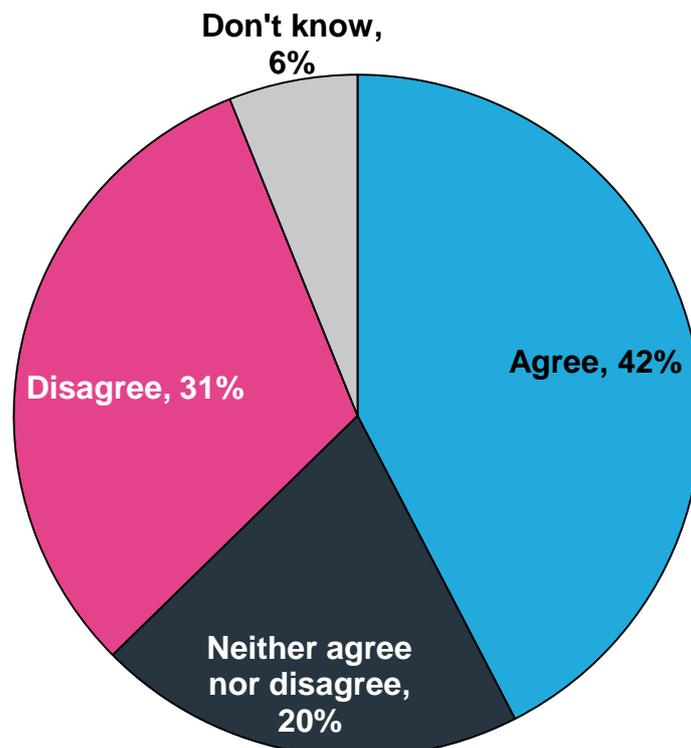
Proposal Eight: to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme and changes to parental contributions

This proposal sought to make the Community Buddy Scheme more effective, whilst also identifying some specific savings. Potential service changes could involve having one organisation responsible for recruiting and co-ordinating buddies. It could also mean introducing a different buddy 'offer' that provides alternative options for support (such as group mentoring, joint buddy support, or one to one support where this is required to promote independence) - recognising that particular groups of children and young people may have different needs.

This proposal also targeted specific savings by aligning the scheme with the rest of the Short Breaks Offer, ensuring the service is within the statutory remit of Children's Services, and suggested an increase in parental contributions towards the Community Buddy Scheme.

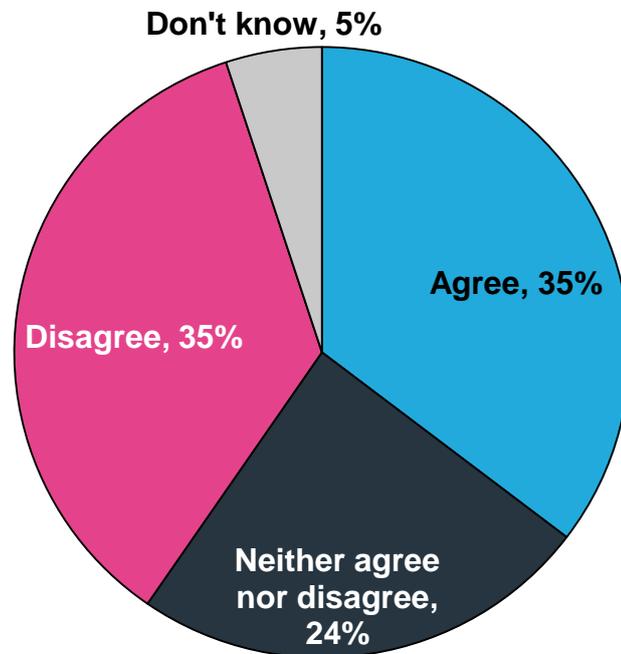
There was a mixed response regarding a potential increase in parental contributions to the Community Buddy Scheme, although overall more respondents agreed (42%) than disagreed (31%) with this proposal.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase parental contributions to account for inflation since the scheme was introduced, and review this in line with inflation each financial year? (Base: 205)



Opinion was even more divided with regards to the proposal to increase parental contributions for mileage, with exactly the same proportion of respondents disagreeing (35%) as those who agreed (35%). A quarter (24%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

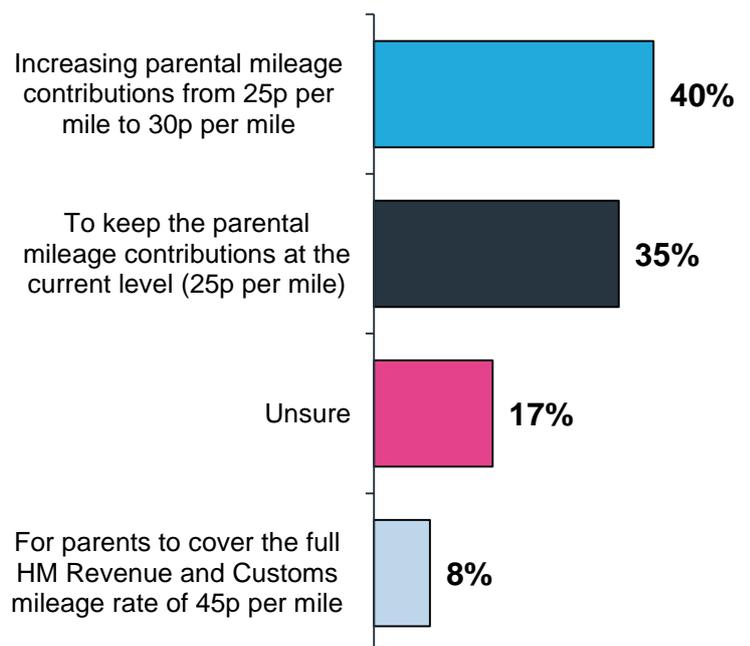
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase parental contributions for mileage from April 2021? (Base: 206)



When asked what level of contribution parents and carers should make with regards to mileage, 40% preferred to increase parent mileage from 25p per mile to 30p per mile, whilst 35% preferred to keep the mileage contribution at the current level of 25p per mile.

Very few respondents (8%) supported an increase to the full HM Revenue and Customs mileage rate of 45p.

Which of the below options do you prefer? (Base: 204)



14 respondents gave a specific comment about increasing parental contributions for mileage and to account for inflation. Most of these respondents mentioned how some families may struggle to afford additional costs, with this becoming a barrier to accessing the Buddy Scheme (six mentions).



As someone who currently works as a private carer similar to the buddy system, the buddy system is a great name for this work but some families can barely afford to top pay up as it is and I don't feel it is fair to expect them to pay more when some are unable to! Also I am aware of how hard it is to get a carer for the home, so having one company may be beneficial!

Parental contributions if increased should be means tested.

The contributions are already a barrier for some, we have found too many hurdles, too long to get to a point to use a buddy only to find they are not suitable.

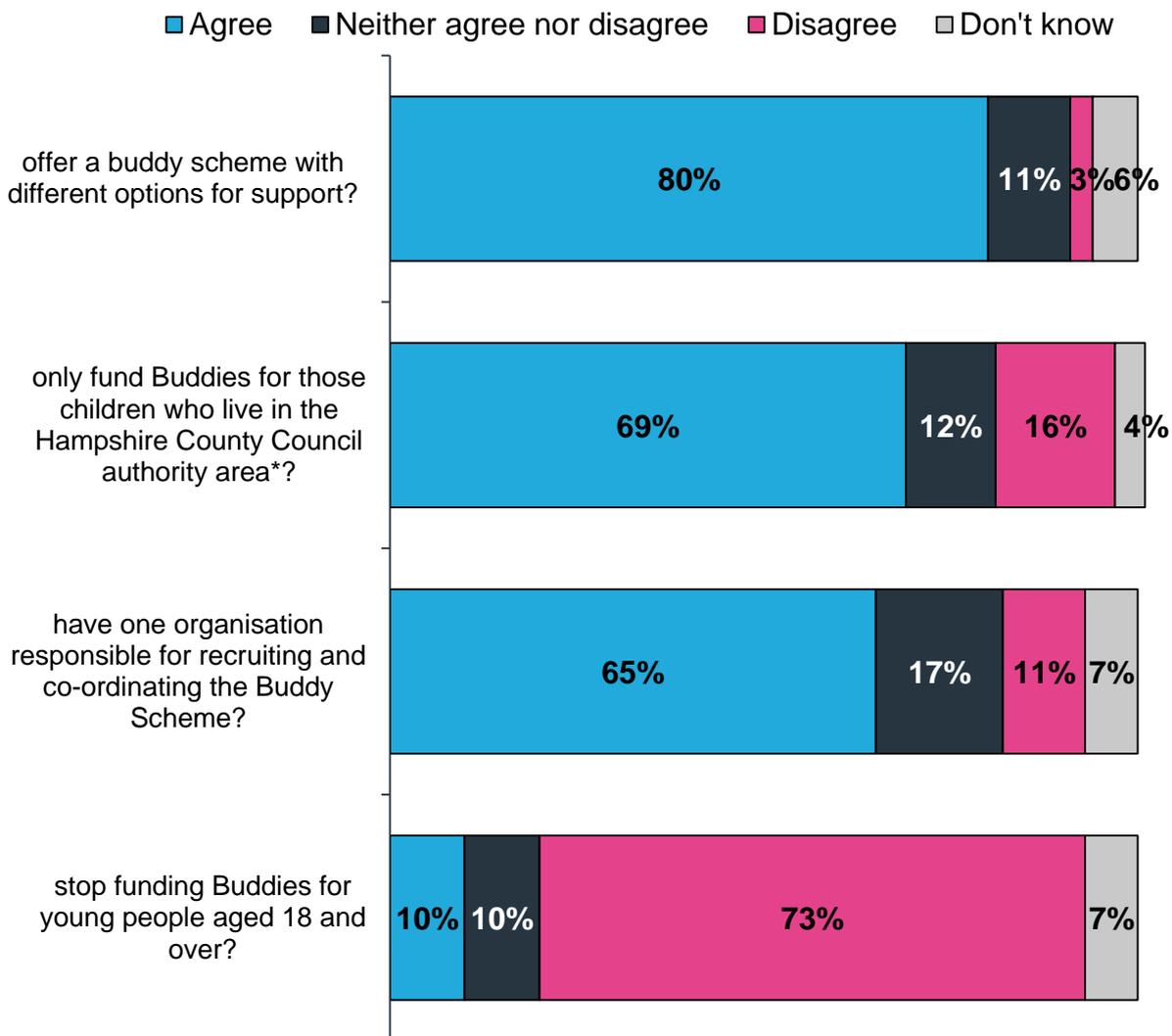
The buddy scheme is already too expensive for most parents that are unable to work and support disabled children due to the total lack of support from children's services and social care. 20 hours per month x £6.50 = £130 cost to parents plus travel. Same goes for fuel. This makes it even more inaccessible.



The majority of respondents agreed with three out of the four proposed ideas to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme.

However, most (73%) disagreed with the proposal to stop funding buddies for young people aged 18 or over. In the comments, three respondents shared their concern that young people may not have any follow-on care during a time where other significant changes to care are likely to occur.

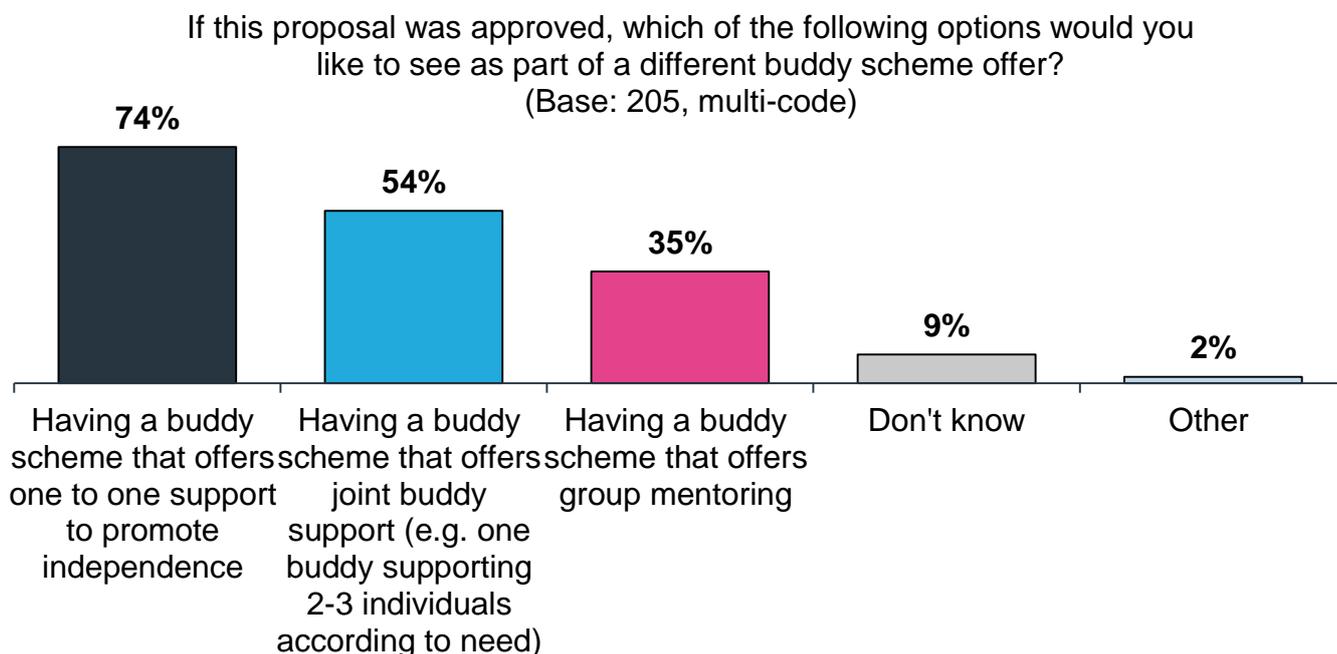
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to...
(Base: 202-205)



“ People over 18 that use this scheme need to use it, otherwise why would they? Cutting this would just shift the responsibility elsewhere or leave them without.

I do agree that local funding should go to local children. And cutting funding at 18 is a terrible mistake - in the same way that EHCPs continue to 25, support services should continue during and beyond the transition to adult services. This is a time when young disabled people are already extra vulnerable and subject to a lot of other changes.

Respondents would like to retain a buddy scheme that offers one to one support to promote independence (74%) but were also open to options for joint buddy support (54%) and group mentoring (35%).



Overall, 54% of respondents³ would like a combination of the proposed options, with the most popular combination being one to one and joint buddy support.

Only 56 respondents (27%) felt that the scheme should solely provide one to one support going forwards.

In their comments, respondents reflected that the type of support should be linked to the needs of the individual.



I think this depends on the needs of the individual. Some people will need a one to one buddy others wouldn't.

Buddy scheme needs to be appropriate to the end client (child in need). Some will require 1 to 1, while others would be fine as part of a group or joint support. Seems wasteful to give 1 to 1 when that's not what everyone wants and needs.

Our son does not thrive in group environments so prefer promoting independent 1 to 1 so to promote independence and life skills.



³ Excluding don't know's

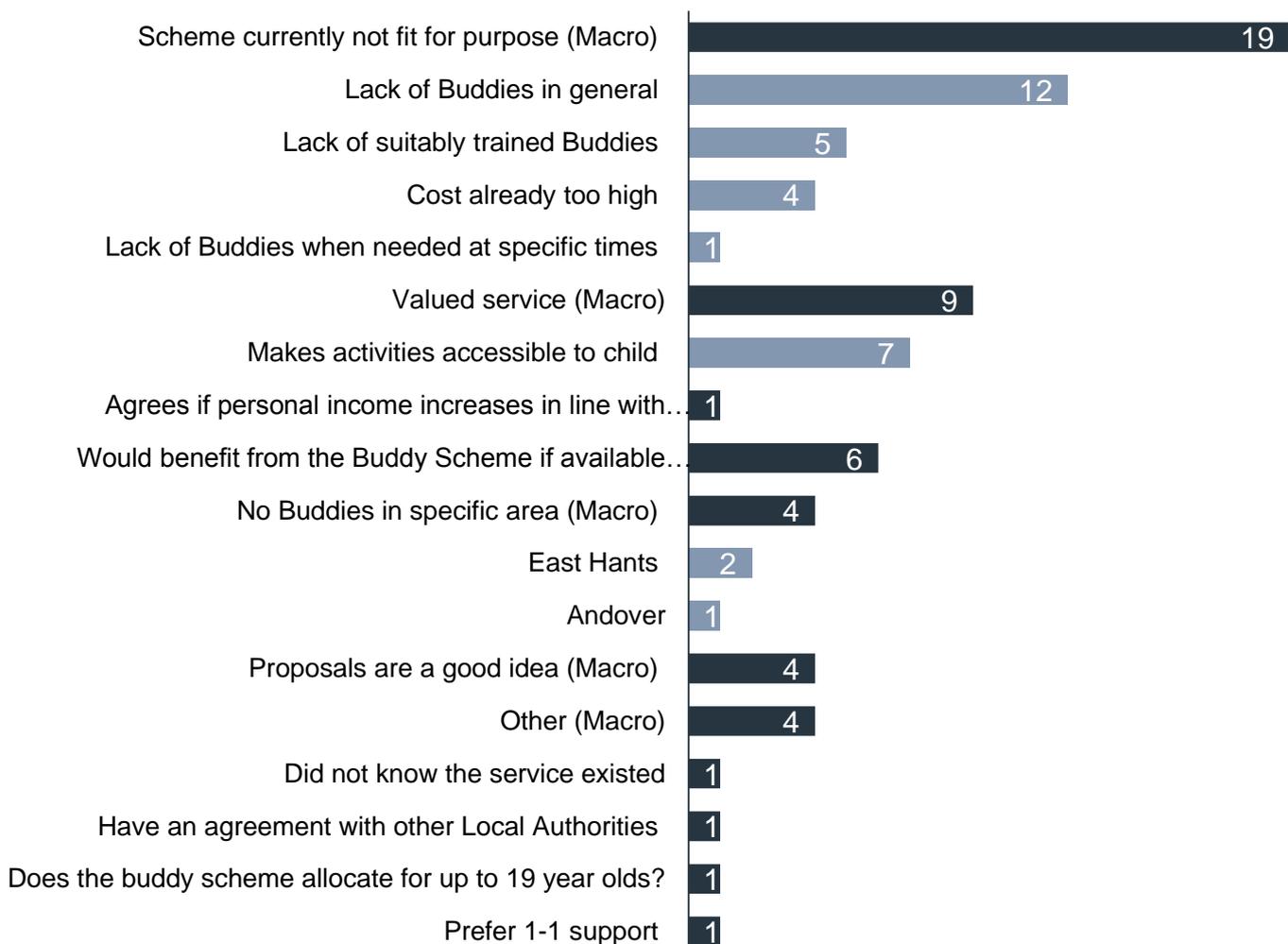
Verbatim comments about redesigning the Community Buddy Scheme

Respondents were asked to provide a comment on the proposals for redesigning the Community Buddy Scheme, or to describe the impact that the proposals may have. 51 comments were received in total, with most providing general comments (36 comments) but some also provided comments that outlined alternatives (13 comments) and the potential impact of the proposals (13 comments).

Comments regarding proposals to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme
(Base: 51, multi-code)



General comments regarding proposals to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme
(Base: 36, multi-code)



The majority of general comments focused on the concern that the scheme is currently not fit for purpose (19 mentions), specifically that there is a perceived lack of Buddies (12 mentions).

“ I have tried to access this scheme for my disabled child but was unable to do so because there were no Buddies available. It would have been a good source of respite for him and me as his carer and given me time to spend with his older brother one to one, so I was disappointed.

The Buddy system needs a complete overhaul. There are not enough consistent sources of where parents can go to look for Buddies.

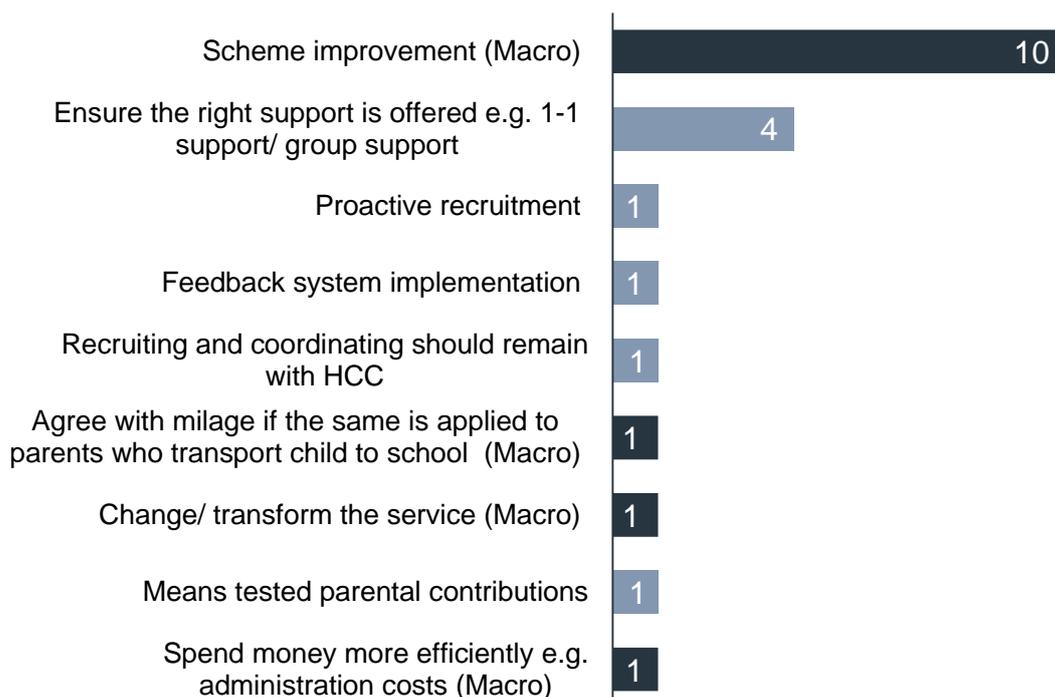
The most important thing is finding more buddies. Advertise better. recruit better. Organise better.

I have tried three times in three years to get a Buddy for my son for an hour a week. I have never been successful, not in three years and despite having compelling reasons for needing one. I think it's a poor scheme at the moment.

I would welcome a change, especially if it's going to streamline the processes and make the Buddy Scheme more user friendly and accessible for families. ”

There were 13 mentions of alternative approaches that the County Council could take. Most of these comments mentioned that the scheme needs improvements (10 mentions), primarily to ensure that the right support is offered (four mentions).

Alternative suggestions for proposals to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme. (Base: 13, multi-code)





It needs to be fit for purpose, if a child needs 1:1 then they should have 1:1 and maybe have 2-3 Buddy's supporting 2-3 children. Our children can change their minds and need flexibility to leave if they want to. All families who apply for a buddy should have access to one, if one isn't available then offer the family a direct payment. Not all families have social workers, many are not eligible.

Having a buddy scheme that is actually available to users would be a start. This needs more funding to attract the right skilled people to want to be Buddies at the unsocial times (like weekends or to cover an evening at guides for an hour or so for example).



Others provided a comment about the impact the proposals may have, namely that they may have a negative financial impact on parents and carers, with the concern that some families may not be able to afford additional contributions (eight mentions).

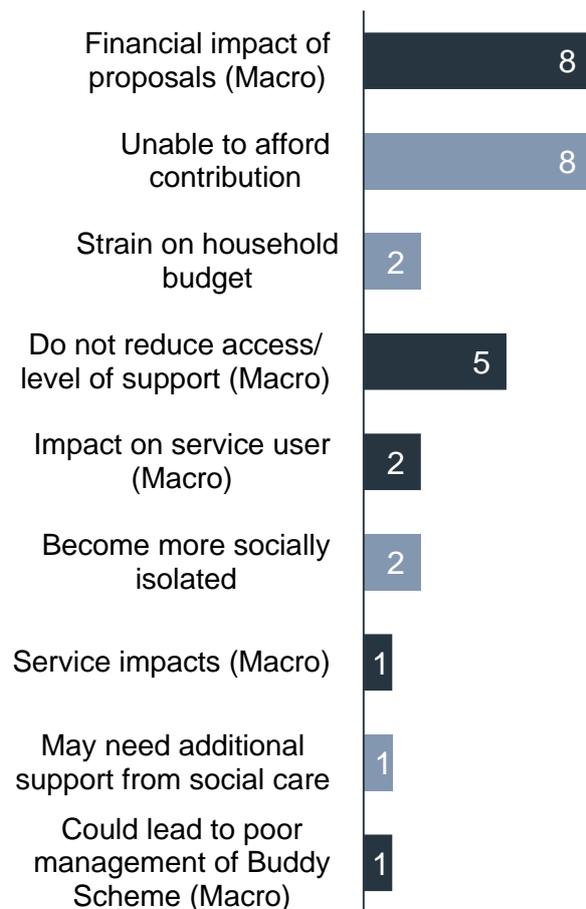


There is nothing in here about families with no or low incomes. What about the hardship fund? So many who need this service and it might be the only short break they use, but the current rate is even hard to meet.

Note that changes are required to make the buddy scheme workable, however adding financial pressure to families is not the answer.

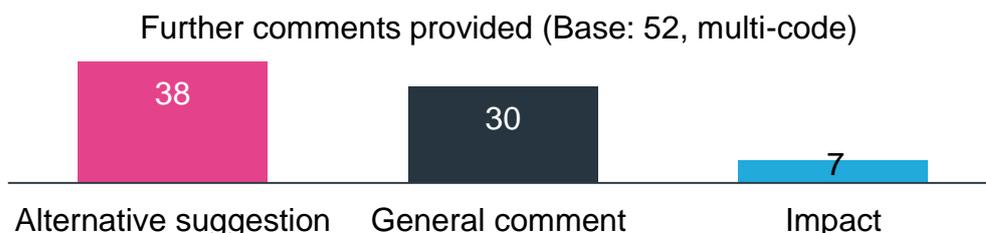


Percieved impacts for proposals to redesign the Community Buddy Scheme (Base: 13, multi-code)

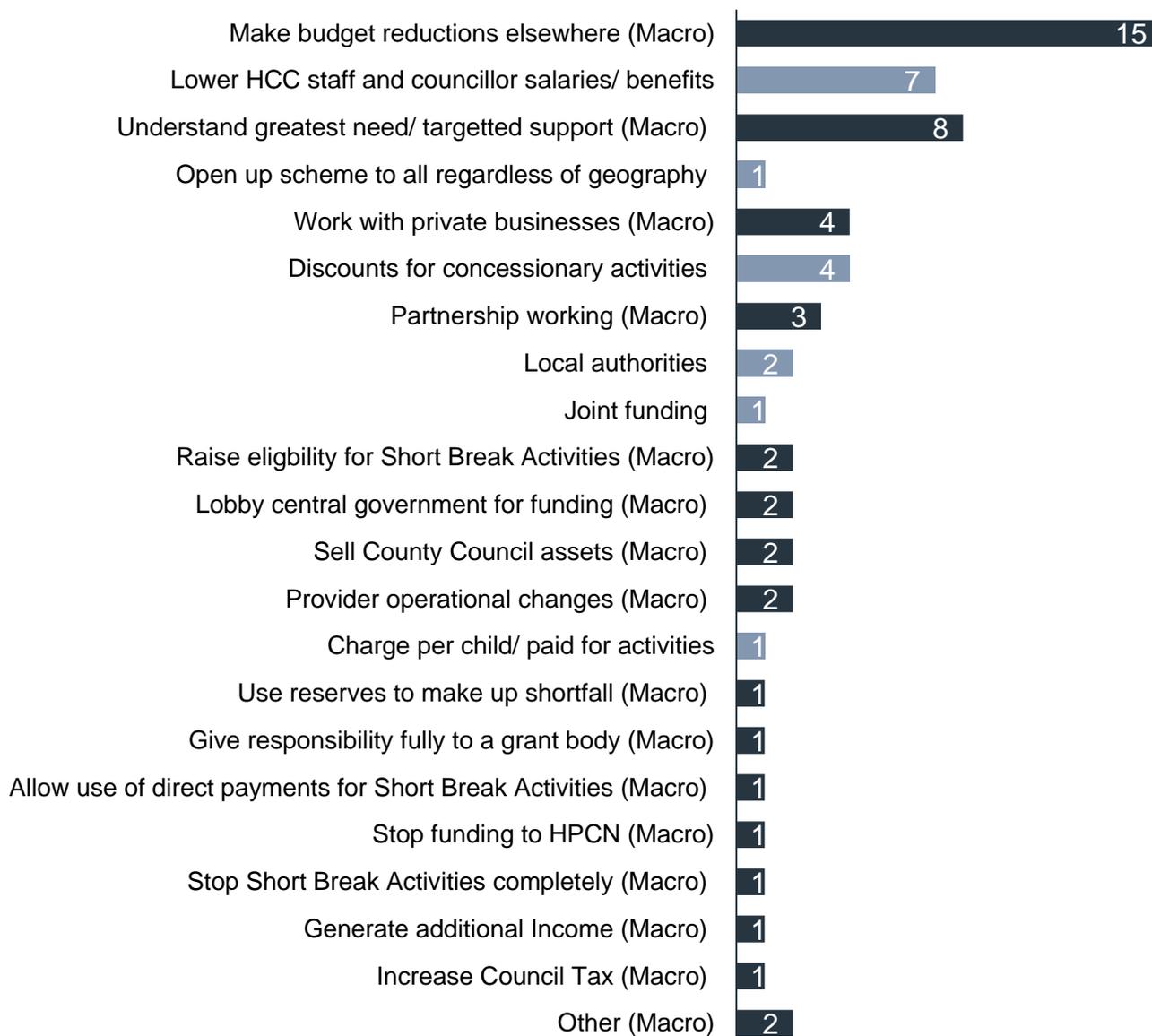


Further comments

Respondents were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposals for how the County Council could make anticipated annual savings of up to £696,000 from the Short Break Activities Programme budget, or to outline any other comments they might have regarding the consultation. Respondents provided both alternative suggests (38 mentions) and general comments (30 comments), whilst a few focussed on the impacts the proposals might have (seven mentions).



Alternative suggestions (Base: 38, multi-code)



Respondents provided a mixture of alternative suggestions, the most mentioned option being to make budgetary savings elsewhere (15 mentions), specifically through staff salaries (seven mentions).

“

Make cuts elsewhere cutting these services are suffocating families.	Less management pay, less admin costs, less overheads, given the pandemic has shown how so much can be worked remotely, cutting costs.
Continue to fund Short Breaks at the current funded level and make the savings elsewhere within the local authority budget so it does not impact on vulnerable people.	Target other areas outside of services for disabled children to make the required savings.

”

Others commented that it would be essential to understand where there is greatest need (eight mentions), in order to provide more targeted support to parents, carers and service users.

“

Allocate it more evenly across families. How many families do you aim to help with this money? How much does this work out to per child?	Have you ever considered introducing a tier system for funding, with levels set for each group that require funding vs the level of support they need? Not all short breaks offer the same service and same level of support with some activities requiring parents to say during the activity and others are more a respite.
Review existing social care packages - there are some families receiving regular breaks and also then buy short breaks, so taking up places that families who are deemed ineligible for social care support cannot then access.	

”

A handful of respondents felt that efforts should be made to instigate more joint working with both the public and private sector in order to help deliver Short Break Activities, such as encouraging the private sector to offer up discounted activities for children with disabilities.

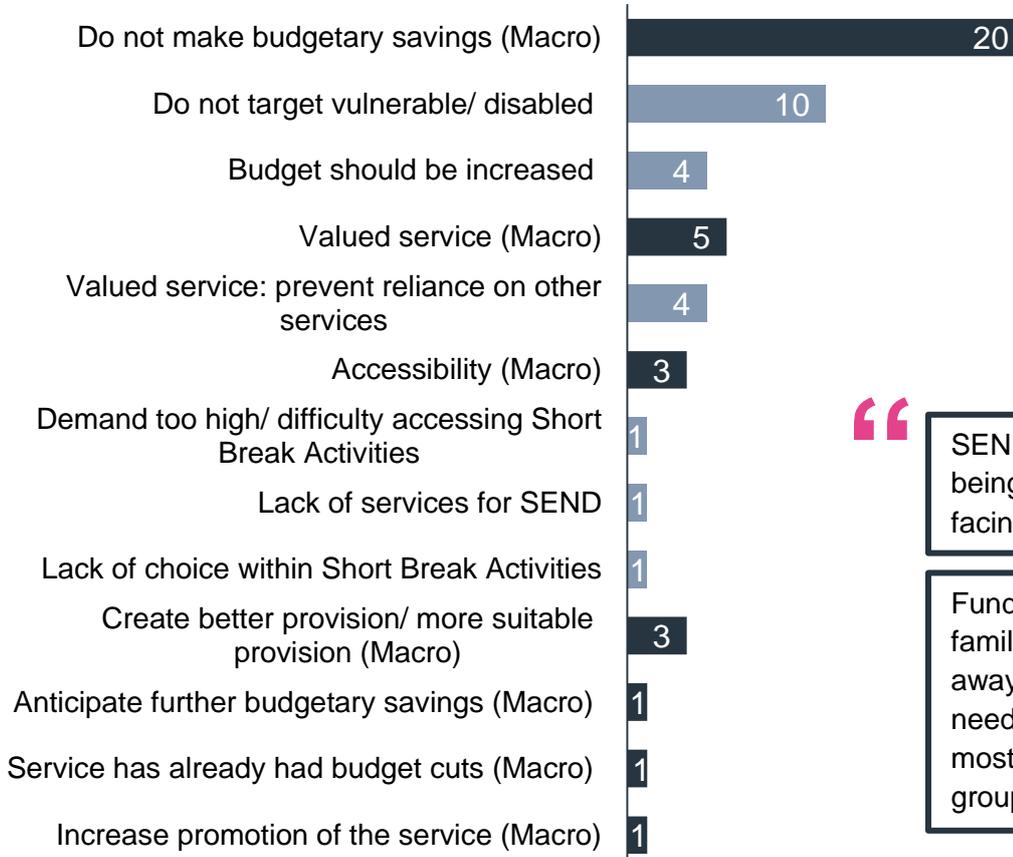
“

Perhaps get companies involved more heavily, especially as will have no business rates to pay they can show good community spirit in offering free places etc.	You could have the opportunity of pooling resources with and partnership working with neighbouring Local Authorities, I think this should be explored.
Advertisement/partnerships for companies who would be willing to sponsor the initiatives as they can claim potential tax relief.	Look for venues which are free of cost. Ask for voluntary contributions for supplies being used in the short break activity.

”

30 respondents gave general comments, the most notable was that respondents felt the budgetary savings should not be made through the Short Break Activities Programme, which mirrors the alternative suggestion to find budgetary savings elsewhere.

General comments (Base: 30, multi-code)



“

SEN and disabilities should be being given more budget, not facing further cuts.
Fund disabled people and their families adequately. Stop taking away funding that is vitally needed. Disabled people are the most vulnerable and needy group in society.

”

Seven respondents reflected on the potential impact of the proposals – most of these reiterated that there could be an impact upon the family unit (four mentions) and how the proposals may have unintended impacts upon other services such as the NHS (one mention) or Mental Health Services (two mentions) due to the perceived lack of respite resulting from the proposals.

Although not specifically asked, some respondents commented on the impacts that the current COVID-19 pandemic could have on Short Break Activities. From all responses received via the Consultation Response Form, there were four comments received about COVID-19.

These respondents raised concerns about the impact on parents and carers and their need for respite during these unprecedented times; that there could be a knock-on impact for providers, potentially resulting in the need to scale down what is currently offered; and that lockdown measures had already had an impact on the mental health of children, so a reduction in funding was seen to add to these current concerns.



I think it's very important that breaks are safeguarded. Especially with the pressure of lockdown and the real need for respite.

In the current COVID-19 climate families of children with disabilities are more isolated than ever. The thought of services my family rely on and that enhance my child's quality of life not being available in the future is both terrifying and heart breaking. Please consider the impact that lockdown is having on children's mental health when you make your decisions about cutting vital services further.

The coronavirus has already had such a big impact on short break activities and services, most of these needed respite services will have to scale down what they offer in line with their funding/fundraising, restricting their funding further will mean that a lot of families who need the service won't have the opportunity to access it.

Can't believe you intend to continue reducing funding during a pandemic.



Unstructured responses

Responses from young people

The consultation received 28 'unstructured' responses' from two separate organisations that represent children and young people. These responses were made within the consultation period but were not submitted using the consultation Response Form.

18 responses were sent from Play at Maple, in which young Gateway Card users filled in an adapted version of the consultation Response Form which explained some of the proposals more visually. Below shows the total number of responses per question.

What activities do you like to do at the weekend?	Total
Stay home	8
Go to a play club	8
Subject activity	2
Should your activities have more money or less?	
More	9
Less	8
Should your activities all have the same money amount or different?	
Same	6
Different	11
Should your activities be the same or different?	
Same	5
Different	12
Would you rather have money off or a special card to attend your activities?	
Money off	4
Special card	12
Would you like to have a limit on how many times you could do your activity?	
Yes	8
No	10

10 responses were collated by The Kings Arms where young people were asked an adapted version of the Young Persons Response Form. The table below shows a summary of their responses:

Q3 - Idea 1: Fund Short Break Activities the same way, with less money	Total
Agree	0
Not sure	2
Disagree	8
Don't know	0
Q4 - when you go on a Short Break Activity, what is most important to you?	
At a youth club	10
A break at the weekend	0
A break during school holidays	0
Not applicable	0
Q5 - Idea 2: Only fund certain short break activities	
This was too hard to answer as they didn't know what the other activities were	
Idea 6 – Change the Gateway Card offer, so it has 2 parts	
Q10 - Do you agree or disagree that the Gateway Card offer could have 2 parts?	
Agree	0
Not Sure	2
Disagree	8
Don't Know	0
Q11- Do you agree or disagree that people who want a Gateway Card for Short Break Activities should show they have ONE of the following: Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Education Health and Care Plan, a social worker referral?	
Agree	2
Not Sure	6
Disagree	2
Don't know	0
Q12 - are you a Gateway Card holder?	
Yes	10
No	0
Q13- Over the past year, how did you use your Gateway Card?	
Days out	6
Holiday Clubs	6
To go to clubs at the weekend	4
To go to youth clubs	10
Other things	Discounts/ respite
Q14 - Are there other activities you would like to save money on?	
Trips to museum, cinema or art gallery	0
Activities to keep fit	10 - they all said swimming
Trips to a café or restaurant	0
Days out such as play schemes or bowling	6

Exciting days out	10
Not applicable	0
Q15- Idea 7: Young people can take no more than 30 short break activities every year	
Agree	0
Not sure	1
Disagree	9
Don't know	0
Idea 8: Change the Community Buddy Scheme	
Q17- Do you agree or disagree that there should be one organisation that runs the Community Buddy Scheme?	
Agree	6
Not sure	4
Disagree	0
Don't know	0
Q18- Do you agree or disagree that there should be another Community Buddy Scheme with other types of support?	
Agree	0
Not Sure	4
Disagree	6
Don't know	0
Q19- Do you agree or disagree that the Community Buddy Scheme should not funded for young people over 18 years old?	
Agree	0
Not Sure	0
Disagree	10
Don't know	0
Q20- Do you agree or disagree that the Community Buddy Scheme should only be for young people living in the County Council area, so not Portsmouth, Southampton or the Isle of Wight.	
Not sure why this question being asked and too hard for kids to answer	
Q21 - what would be the most important thing in a new Community Buddy Scheme?	
All agreed that it was important, but if you take away the Buddy scheme then one – one has to be most important for opportunity and independence	
We thought that 'group mentoring' is linked to 'support for a group' anyway	
Q22 - comments on the possible changes to the Community Buddy Scheme	
We think changes to the buddy scheme could have a massive impact on our future and restrict our opportunities and independence.	

Unstructured response from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

One response unstructured response was received from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Below is a summary of the main points raised.

- There could be an adverse impact upon children and young people with disabilities, parents, carers and providers of Short Break Activities if the proposals went ahead.
- There could be a disproportionate impact upon lower income families who rely on Short Break Activities for respite. Particularly that there could be a negative cumulative affect of other changes to services, such as Universal Credit which may impact disadvantaged families.
- The proposal to secure a minimum level of funding from other sources for providers, could prove problematic as resources are depleting and reducing having been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Borough Council wished to emphasise the fact that Short Break Activities provide a fundamental role to children and young people with disabilities within the borough.
- The Borough Council also emphasised that the County Council should seek other available alternatives, before making budgetary savings.

Engagement session feedback

Children's Services ran a series of 13 face to face and online drop-in engagement sessions⁴ - providing an alternative to written responses to further enable the views of parents, carers, organisations and providers to be heard. 47 people attended, and a total of 134 comments were collected.

Feedback was recorded and coded into themes which can be found in the below table.

Overall, participants provided a mixture of comments relating to the proposals presented in the consultation. The accessibility of the Short Break Activities Programme was most frequently mentioned by participants (18 mentions), specifically, they spoke of the lack of choice within Short Break Activities (five mentions), and that the options for breaks was currently inadequate (three mentions). There were 17 mentions of how valued the service was and many also shared the concern that the proposals could impact upon service users specifically (10 mentions).

Others talked about the Short Break Activities available within their local areas (seven mentions), with some suggesting they could not find what they needed within their locality or that it was particularly hard to access (five mentions).

Accessibility (Macro)	18
Accessibility: lack of choice within Short Break Activities	5
Accessibility: options for breaks are poor/ not adequate explaining underusage	3
Accessibility: demand too high/ difficulty accessing Short Break Activities	2
Accessibility: lack of services for SEND	1
Accessibility: demand is high/ difficult to find support	1
Valued Service (Macro)	17
Valued service: fundamental/ essential to family	3
Valued service: HPCN are a great/helpful resource	2
Valued service: child benefits greatly from activities	1
Valued Service: specific provider: Challengers	2
Valued Service: specific provider: Making Space	1
Valued Service: specific provider: Scarf	1
Impact on service user (Macro)	10
Service user: may not get a session that they need/ want	3
Service user: may not get a session that they need/ want	3
Service user: no other activity provided is suitable	1
Impact on providers (Macro)	8
Local Offer (Macro)	7
Local offer: cannot find what I need / hard to use	5
Local offer: information quality poor	3
Create better provision/ more suitable provision (Macro)	6
Comment about autism spectrum conditions (Macro)	6

⁴ One face-to-face engagement session was held prior to 23 March 2021, then moved entirely online following discussions with Hampshire Parent Carer Network and in accordance with Government Guidance relating to COVID-19.

Proposal seems fair (Macro)	5
Fair: may allow more equitable access to activities	1
Social care threshold and assessment (Macro)	5
COVID-19 may impact consultation (Macro)	5
Small providers disadvantaged (Macro)	5
Increase promotion of the service (Macro)	4
Increase promotion of the service (Macro)	4
Parental need for some evidence of disability (Macro)	4
Young people over age 18 still need support (Macro)	4
30 sessions is too low/ not enough (Macro)	3
Impacts on funding/ support (Macro)	3
Funding: negative accumulated impact of other service funding cuts	1
Post-COVID-19 economy will make fundraising much harder (Macro)	3
Lack of options for short breaks which explains underusage	3
Impact on parents and carers (Macro)	3
Parents and carers: ability to cope	1
Comment about email communications (Macro)	3
Buddy Scheme improvement (Macro)	3
Scheme improvement: ensure the right support is offered e.g. 1-1 support/ group support	1
Need for more oversight of provision (Macro)	3
Comment about grant application process (Macro)	3
Parents don't want more paperwork (Macro)	3
Allocate Short Break Activities differently (Macro)	4
Allocate: individual circumstances should be considered	1
Lack of advertising/ promotion (Macro)	2
Impact on family unit (Macro)	2
Family unit: may put family into crisis/ breaking point	1
Buddy Scheme currently not fit for purpose (Macro)	2
Fit for purpose: lack of buddies in general	1
Fit for purpose: lack of buddies when needed at specific times	1
No buddies in specific area (Macro)	2
Do not make budget cuts (Macro)	2
Financial impact of proposals (Macro)	2
Financial impact: strain on household budget	1
Financial impact: unable to afford contribution	1
Lack of accountability (Macro)	2
Accountability: may not listen to parents needs	1
Partnership working (Macro)	2
Some parents don't know how to use Gateway Card (Macro)	2
Proposals are a good idea (Macro)	2
Comment about mainstream providers (Macro)	2
Funding for HPCN (Macro)	1
Do not cut funding to HPCN	1
Service impact (Macro)	1
Service impact: increased spend on services as parents cannot cope	1
Demand high but limited support options/ lack of options in area (Macro)	1
Stop Short Break Activities completely (Macro)	1

Make budget reductions elsewhere (Macro)	1
Offer more group activities (Macro)	1
Service has already had budget cuts (Macro)	1
Impact on other services (Macro)	1
Impact on low income families (Macro)	1
Work with private businesses (Macro)	1
Alternative suggestions (Macro)	1
Lobby central government for funding (Macro)	1
Proposal to change Gateway Card could cause confusion (Macro)	1
Comment about council decision making processes (Macro)	1
Distribute fund to parents and carers directly (Macro)	1
Rename the Short Break Activities Programme (Macro)	1
Volunteers may be unreliable (Macro)	1
Suggestion of potential future provider (Macro)	1
Easy Reads helpful for parents short of time (Macro)	1
Evening sessions are good for consultations (Macro)	1
HPCN receives more funding than comparable organisations (Macro)	1
Problematic to rely on charitable money to meet statutory obligations (Macro)	1
More info needed about management fee in Proposal Five (Macro)	1
Comment about buddy scheme waiting lists (Macro)	1
Don't duplicate yellow card with Gateway Card (Macro)	1
Some parents not comfortable joining HPCN (Macro)	1
Potential additional funding source (Macro)	1
Fewer buddy providers each time grant is reduced (Macro)	1
Don't know what HPCN is	1
Providers should pool resources more (Macro)	1
Proposal Five wouldn't work in practice (Macro)	1
Ensure providers understand Proposal 6 (Macro)	1
Enforcing the cap would be complex (Macro)	1
2:1 staff ratios expensive for providers (Macro)	1
Decrease accessibility of Short Break Activities (Macro)	1
Other (Macro)	2
Other: People must need the service if using more than 30 activities	1
Other: COVID-19 related comments	1