

New Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities Offer

FAQ

1. Why is the offer changing?

The contracts for Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities (SBCCA) end on 31st March 2023. The Council are legally required to run an application process for organisations to apply to deliver the service from April 2023.

Through several engagement opportunities, families told us that the SBCCA offer could be improved by making it more locally accessible, age appropriate and to offer an improved range of choice. Families said that transition planning should be better and there should be more and better access to clubs and activities in mainstream settings.

2. How did the application process work?

The application process was designed to so that organisations applying could demonstrate how well they could deliver the improvements families had identified.

Organisations were invited to apply to deliver Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities and the opportunity was widely publicised. The application process ran for three months to 18th September 2022.

The evaluation of the applications was undertaken by a group of ECC commissioners and procurement officers, and an Essex Family Forum representative. In addition, a panel of 24 parent carers scored videos that were provided by the applying organisations.

Each application was evaluated on its own merits against published evaluation criteria.

3. I currently access a particular provider and they are not listed in the new offer. Why aren't you not funding them?

Not all current providers chose to apply, and some did apply but were not successful in demonstrating how they would deliver the service.

Applications must, by law, be evaluated on their own merit. This means that the application is scored based on what is written in the application only. This is to ensure the process remains fair to all who apply.

Organisations who applied but were unsuccessful have been offered feedback to help them with future funding applications.

4. Will the offer meet the needs of my child?

The successful organisations have demonstrated in their applications their capability and experience in delivering Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities to children and young people with a range of SEND needs.

This includes having staffing structures with appropriate safer recruitment approaches, specialist training and experience to provide appropriate clubs and activities for children and young people with SEND. They will be delivering from wide range of venues, and we will be sharing these at the end of January.

All children and young people are different and have different likes and aspirations as well as differing needs. Whilst a great deal of care has been taken to ensure that the offer can respond to as many needs as possible, there may be some individual cases where additional training is required. This will be monitored with the service providers on a regular basis.

5. My child has specialist healthcare requirements

We will be working closely with Provide nurses, who deliver training to Short Breaks providers and sign off staff competencies for caring for children with specialist healthcare needs.

If your child or young person has specialist healthcare requirements, the providers delivering the new offer may need to be trained and signed off. If you have any concerns, please let us know so we can flag this with Provide and the organisations delivering the new offer.

6. My child requires specialist equipment (such as use of a hoist)

Some children and young people require specialist equipment to take part in activities. Wherever possible this will be catered to but not all premises are able to offer all equipment required. However, several providers will be working from accessible venues and have access to accessible transport too to young people can take part in visits and trips. This will be monitored with the service providers on a regular basis.

7. My child has high levels of need.

The successful organisations have demonstrated in their applications their capability and experience in delivering Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities to children and young people with a range of SEND needs.

Providers will be offering a range of staff ratios, and a range of activities. They have also demonstrated in their applications how they will support children and young people with SEND to transition to the new offer.

Providers have offered visits and pre-meets with families to help familiarise them with the new offer. Engagement events to invite families to meet with the providers will also be promoted with families directly by email and on Facebook.

8. Will there be something in my local area?

Yes. The new offer has been commissioned so there will be provision in every quadrant from when the offer is implemented on 01st April 2023. The contracts also stipulate every district in each quadrant, but in some areas, this may take some time to develop in terms of appropriate sites and venues.

The providers are confirming the venues and the levels of accessibility for different activities by the end of January 2023. Scheduling will also be confirmed by the February half term to enable families to start booking spaces ready for April.

9. I have looked at the list and the providers don't meet my needs

The offer is new, so although you may have approached a provider previously, and not found their offer a good fit for you at that point in time, they will be delivering a new offer in line with the improvements families identified. You are likely to find that what didn't feel like a good fit previously is now an exciting new opportunity for your child or young person.

ECC do recognise that change can be daunting though, and that it can take time to develop trust in services you have not accessed before. We would encourage you to speak with the providers of the new offer, set up visits and chat through your concerns with them.

The offer has been commissioned so that it responds to the ongoing needs of families over the next three years. ECC will be monitoring the contracts regularly and will be seeking regular feedback from families. We will work in partnership with providers so that if any gaps in provision form, they can be responded to quickly by the providers.

10. How much will it cost?

As with the current offer, the providers receive funding to deliver activity hours with dedicated staff trained to respond to children and young people with SEND needs. However, families are still expected to pay for the activities themselves, just as any parent of a child without SEND needs would do.

In the current contracts however, ECC have not stipulated the costs per hour but over the annual price of the contract. This means that providers have more autonomy over how they collect parental contributions and are better able to respond to the interests of children and young people. For example, a visit to a national theme park will likely cost more than a visit to the local park.

11. I tried something before, and I or my child didn't like it

Please read question 9. This is a new offer, so although you may recognise some providers, what they are delivering may look and feel different to what they have previously delivered.

12. Will there be swimming/boxing/specific activities?

There will be a range of activities delivered by all providers. The contracts stipulate a range and all providers demonstrated in their applications they could respond to a range of interests. The contract sets out that the range of activities can include

- Sports & Movement
- Drama & Theatre
- Music & Dance
- Arts & Crafts
- Nature and Outdoor
- Coding/Apps & Gaming
- General Leisure Social Activities
- Specific Skills
- Specific Hobbies
- Coastal Activities
- Other informal education activities

All providers have set out how they will coproduce their range of activities with families.

13. Will any more charities be considered in the future?

The application process to deliver the core Short Breaks Community Clubs and activities offer is closed. The new offer will run from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.

However, in addition to the new offer, we will be launching an annual inclusion fund, that will seek to improve access to clubs and activities in mainstream settings.

We will be encouraging a wide range of clubs and activities providers to improve training, equipment and facilities through the fund, in an effort to ensure children and young people with SEND are able to take part in inclusive activities in venues that suit them.

The first year this will run is the financial year 2023/24 and this will be widely promoted through our Facebook page, website and through collaborative partnerships such as Active Essex.

14. What does mobilisation mean?

When an organisation is awarded a contract, there is a mobilisation period before the contract is implemented i.e., a period before the service starts, for the organisation to become ready to deliver the contract.

In this case it means that the organisations who will be delivering the new offer will be preparing their staff, booking systems, scheduling, premises and so on so that they are ready for the 1st of April 2023 when the contracts begin.

15. How can I book and when will clubs, and activities dates be available?

The new offer is preparing, and details on how to be booked will be shared as soon as possible. The providers are aiming to have their scheduling updated by February half term to enable booking for April.

16. I tried the SEN inclusive Activate holiday activities and it did not meet my needs.

The Active Essex funded Essex Activate clubs are different to Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities although sometimes the same providers may receive funding to deliver them.

Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities are specifically for children and young people with SEND and is delivered by organisations with specialisms in supporting children and young people with SEND needs.

Essex Activate clubs are only for those young people eligible for benefits based free school meals or from low income working families and are delivered during the school holidays.

Active Essex has worked to include SEND inclusive provision as part of their Essex Activate offer. The Essex Activate SEND inclusive clubs may be delivered by specialist organisations or by mainstream organisations who have staff trained to respond to the needs of children with SEND.

You can learn more here: <https://www.activeessex.org/children-young-people/essex-activate/send/>

Active Essex are always open to feedback and are supporting their SEND Clubs to be as inclusive as possible. You can contact them here: haf@activeessex.org

17. What about virtual/online activities?

Several of the providers can deliver virtual activities, and some have committed to this in their applications.

ECC will also be running a separate, smaller application process specifically for three-year virtual activities offer following learning from virtual delivery during pandemic restrictions.

We will promote this opportunity online and invite local providers to apply.