

Virtual clubs and activities

Children and Families Commissioning Team

May 2023

Virtual Clubs and Activities Survey

Key Findings Report

May 2023



Introduction

In Winter 2021/22 ECC ran a formal consultation relating solely to the Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities (SBCCA) offer. Some families want to see the learning from the pandemic restrictions, which led to several providers offering online activities, be developed as part of the ongoing Short Breaks offer. Consultation showed that this offers some families a break from the 'mental load' of their additional caring responsibilities rather than a physical one, and that they, and their other children, could enjoy the positive activities. However, in the consultation 53% said they would not use this offer.

We held virtual engagement activities to provide families an opportunity to share their views and feedback on what a new virtual offer could look like. An online MS Forms survey ran from 4th April to 23rd April 2023. The survey was shared via email to our short breaks members (over 5500 recipients) and through our Short Breaks Facebook page.

We held 6 virtual MS teams drop in sessions that took place over 2 weeks on different days and times, including daytime, evenings and a Saturday session to provide as much opportunity for families to attend as possible. There was also the chance for people to email in any feedback they wanted to share regarding a virtual offer.

The online survey had 8 questions and consisted of multiple choice tick boxes with an open ended response option to each question.

ECC are fully committed to developing a virtual offer, which is not intended to replace face to face but will run alongside to enhance our core provision.

Conclusions

While there are many families who do not feel a virtual offer would work for their child, we had some really positive comments from families who feel this would be very beneficial.

Mostly families who would benefit from a virtual offer is where the child is not physically able to attend face to face activities. This could be for a number of reasons such as due to ill-health, anxieties, transport, travel and difficulty coordinating around other family commitments and responsibilities.

Families feel that a virtual offer will provide them with more flexibility with being able to access meaningful activities from their home, and without the need to travel.

It is felt that virtual clubs and activities will provide opportunities for children to build their confidence, grow relationships with peers, engage in fun activities and learn new skills.

A lot of families shared concerns with how a child would keep engaged with a virtual offer and how the use of technology provides an opportunity for them to get distracted. It is key that for a virtual offer to be successful the activity needs to offer interactive opportunities and provide ways for all participants to get involved.

Families felt that smaller group sizes would provide better opportunities for more children to participate and feel included in the activities.

There needs to be considerations made to those children who feel uncomfortable being on camera and interacting virtually.

A variety of activities have been highlighted that could work well, with suggestions of specialist topics being covered. Mindfulness and gaming/coding were voted as the top activities that could work well.

It is evident that there needs to be a broad range of age and need appropriate activities available.

Executive Summary

There were 171 responses to the online MS Forms Survey that was open from 4th April to 23rd April 2023.

We received 5 emails from parents with feedback and we had 2 people attend our drop in sessions.

In response to Question 1 – 60% said a virtual offer is a ‘live group activity hosted online’

In response to Question 2 - 64 % said ‘being able to still take part in clubs and activities when not physically able to attend face to face’ can be achieved with virtual that cannot be achieved with face to face

In response to Question 3 – 63% said a child would value ‘being able to build more confidence’ from a virtual offer

In response to Question 4 - 64% said a parent/ carer would value ‘flexibility to access pre-recorded sessions at a time that suits us’

In response to Question 5 - 65% said mindfulness/ wellbeing activities could work well for virtual

In response to Question 6 - 73% said providing opportunities for all participants to get involved in the activities would ensure the virtual offer is inclusive

In response to Question 7 - 81% said ‘children could become easily distracted’ would be the biggest barrier to virtual.

Q1. What does a virtual offer look like to you?

60% said a live group activity session hosted online

50% said a social platform to interact with peers who have similar interests

46% said an online alternative to face to face activities for when my child is physically unable to attend in person

33% said a database of recorded sessions we can access anytime

8% said other

Other - Comments included;

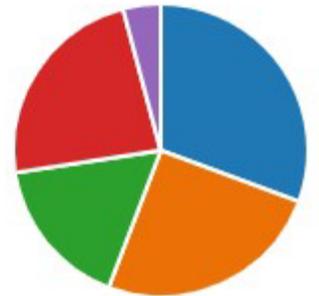
- Online activities in presentation format only
- Parent support group
- Something tailored for when young people are struggling to engage in person
- a stepping stone/ introduction to actual groups

***50% of 'other' comments were from families who did not feel virtual was suitable for their child.**

1. What does a virtual offer look like to you? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

	A live group activity session hos...	104
	A social platform to interact wit...	85
	A database of recorded sessions...	57
	An online alternative to face to f...	79
	Other	14



Q2. What could be achieved with a virtual offer that we can't achieve with face to face?

64 % said being able to still take part in clubs and activities when not physically able to attend face to face

53% said more flexibility for my family as we could access recorded sessions at a time that suits us

46% said parents/ carers wont need to travel

45% said developing confidence and social skills when the child isn't feeling ready for face to face groups

43% said meeting people from further afield

10% said other

Other - Comments included;

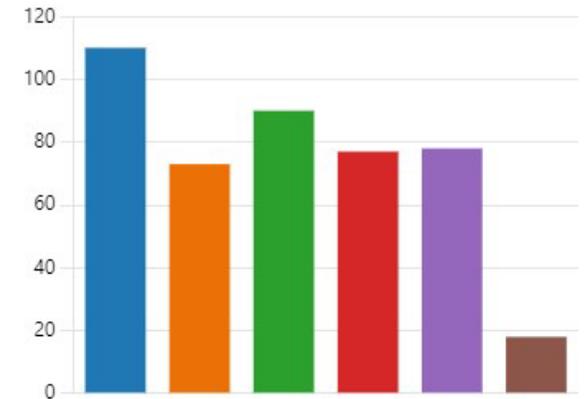
- The opportunity to work as a group online, which would be beneficial to those who may sometimes feel anxious
- Child could access while parent at work
- Child can attend without parent
- A distraction for when not able to provide something to entertain my son at home
- Virtual sessions could offer activities that don't exist face to face, such as mindfulness and Lego club

***67% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

2. What could be achieved with a virtual offer that we can't achieve with face to face? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

Being able to still take part in cl...	110
Meeting people from further afi...	73
More flexibility for my family as ...	90
Developing confidence and soci...	77
Parents/ carers won't need to tr...	78
Other	18



Q3. What would a child/ young person value from a virtual offer?

63% said being able to build more confidence

62% said being able to engage in fun activities

56% said being able to learn new skills

55% said being able to engage with peers

45% said developing their independence

10% said other

Other - Comments included;

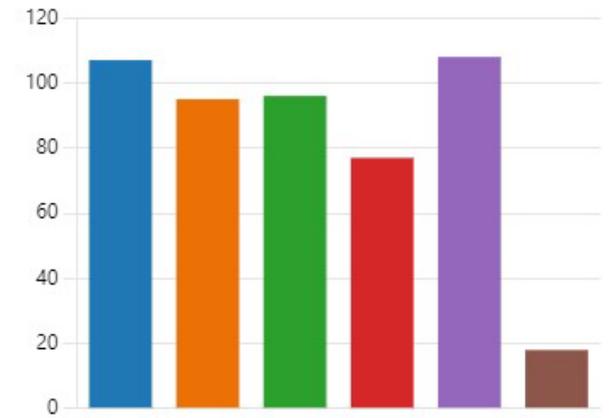
- Not having to be physically present for activities.
- Saving parents time and resources from having to take their child anywhere

***83% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

3. What would a child/ young person value from a virtual offer? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

● Being able to engage in fun acti...	107
● Being able to engage with peers	95
● Being able to learn new skills	96
● Developing their independence	77
● Being able to build confidence	108
● Other	18



Q4. What would a parent/ carer value from a virtual offer?

61% said flexibility to access pre-recorded sessions at a time that suits us

60% said being able to engage in activities with my child without leaving the house

46% said child has opportunity to develop relationships with peers

45% said parent/ carers has opportunity to develop relationships with other parents/ carers

44% said staff have appropriate skills to ensure my child feels included in virtual activities

8% said other

Other - Comments included;

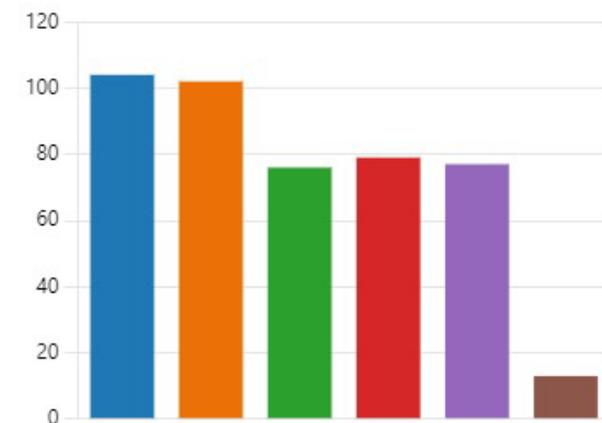
- this would benefit a parent/carer more than the child

***92% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

4. What would a parent/ carer value from a virtual offer? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

Flexibility to access pre-recorde...	104
Being able to engage in activitie...	102
Staff have appropriate skills to e...	76
Child has opportunity to develo...	79
Parent/ carer has opportunity to...	77
Other	13



Q5. What activities could work for the new virtual offer?

65% said mindfulness/ wellbeing

61% said gaming/ coding

54% said life skills – cookery/ money/ personal care/ employment

54% said music/ dance/ singing / arts

36% said virtual visits with an activity the child can take part in (zoo, farm, museums)

12% said other

Other - Comments included;

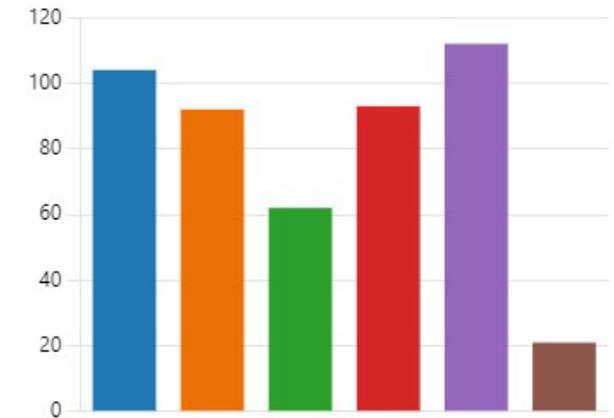
- specific interest groups mentioned; lego club, film club, space club superheros, minecraft, wildlife facts,
- Yoga
- Anything for the home ed community in regards to numeracy and literacy
- Attention autism sessions
- simple social get togethers
- Drop in sessions for talking about problems or different difficulties and /or conditions so parents can exchange ideas and get advice
- Travel skills

***33% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

5. What activities could work for the new virtual offer? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

● Gaming/ coding	104
● Music/ Dance/ Singing/ Arts	92
● Virtual visits with an activity the ...	62
● Life Skills - Cookery/ Money/ Pe...	93
● Mindfulness/ Wellbeing	112
● Other	21



Q6. How do we ensure our virtual offer is inclusive?

73% said providing opportunities for all participants to get involved in the activities

48% said signing such as Makaton/ BSL

46% said subtitles/ captioning

33% said offering different cultural activities relating to the way people live

12% said other

Other - Comments included;

- Allowing time for thinking & responding
- Teaching children how to interact online
- Allow anxious children to have webcam off
- Provide a recorded pack if child cannot attend, printed materials or materials that can be printed at home in easy read language
- A range of times to suit different families
- Groups not too big to facilitate participation from all
- Sessions hosted by people who have a breadth of knowledge and skills that support a range of needs

***60% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

6. How do we ensure our virtual offer is inclusive? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)

● Subtitles/ captioning	78
● Signing such as Makaton/ BSL	82
● Offering different cultural activit...	57
● Providing opportunities for all p...	124
● Other	20



Q7. What barriers could there be to a virtual offer?

81% said children could become easily distracted

54% said online would require adult support to engage

53% said times and days of sessions

47% said nothing suitable for my child's age

41% said access to technology and internet connection

10% said other

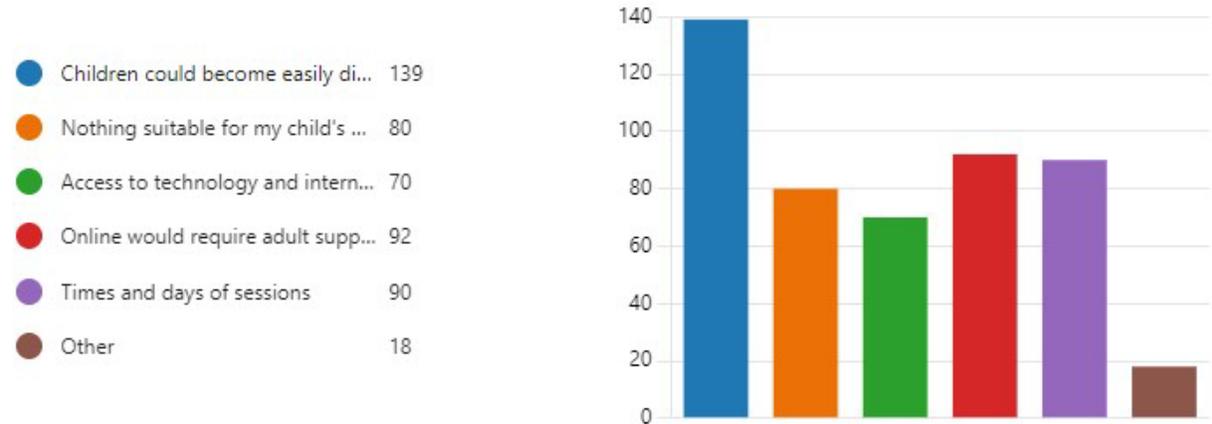
Other - Comments included;

- Anxiety or reluctance around being seen on screen
- Resistance from child to engage virtually
- Too many attendees meaning waiting for too long for interaction!
- Nothing suitable for a child using eyegaze communication
- People running the virtual offer not having the expertise and experience to know how to successfully engage with the children depending on their individual needs
- Virtual sessions being overloaded by volume of participants of varying degrees of ND/NT resulting in either a chaotic mess

***33% of 'other' comments were around negativity to a virtual offer or families stating the virtual offer would not be suitable for their child.**

7. What barriers could there be to a virtual offer? You can select more than one answer

[More Details](#)



Q8. Any other comments...

Positivity around virtual

“This would be good for those children who do not want to leave the house”

“My child is currently accessing a gaming virtual club - this works very well for him to have social interactions that are overseen by the group leader”

“Virtual / online activity etc wouldn't suit my children but I do believe it would be of benefit for those that might struggle in person but may enjoy to learn a new skill or make friends in a safe environment”

“As a child care provider who struggles to offer any more 1-1 sessions for families that really need extra support I think this is a fantastic idea”

“Lock down virtual clubs offered my son the chance to take part in activities that he wouldn't ordinarily be able to do and he misses those”

“I think this is a really valuable idea and was pleased to read the email to see this was a consideration being made!”

“This would be great for my child. I am no longer able to drive because of my own disability, so it means getting him to activities is extremely difficult and very expensive and he misses out as a result”

“Think this is a great idea, in particular for those children who struggle with the demands of leaving the house”

“Virtual activities are a great alternative to face to face and this should be available as many children/parents benefit from it”

“My son used to enjoy taking part (and really did benefit from) the online zoom activity sessions. it was really good for him to have the weekly routine of these sessions and he enjoyed seeing the familiar staff and other service users. it was lovely to see him looking forward to each session and taking part, even talking to other service users which was fantastic to see as he finds talking with adults a lot easier”

“This would be great for our family. We have nothing suitable in our immediate area and are not able to travel easily. My sons love music and dancing but can't successfully access local mainstream offerings”

Q8. Any other comments... (continued)

Barriers to virtual

“It doesn’t help with social interaction and with my daughter having autism she needs to practice social skills even though she hates it. The virtual aspect is good for those who want to hide away”

“I would struggle keeping my daughter interested and staying still in one place”

“I think it's a good idea in theory but struggle to see how it would keep sen children engaged with screen activities especially children with adhd and asd”

“I think this could work for alot of children but equally children like my son would find this quite difficult as he struggles with anything online based as he gets easily distracted”

“It would be interesting to see the balance between online engagement and face to face. Could the option for online potentially isolate some young people? Especially if they are feeling vulnerable and have low self esteem?”

“I myself would love virtual as I dont drive, however it's just not for my son, he doesn't watch tv for longer than 5 minutes and so play just can not sit still”

“My son needs social skills as well as entertaining/enrichment, so I'm not sure how far this would help. I think they are more suited to some activities more than others”

“This was ok during lockdown but I think my child spends enough time Physically on her own and with technology due to her syndrome. As long as this doesn’t distract from actual social meet ups and inclusion. Maybe better for after school instead of holidays etc?”

Q8. Any other comments... (continued)

Activity suggestions

“Something flying, air simulators gaming is so rife now in this day and age so this is completely missing”

“Online pre-recorded song and story time that incorporate aspects of alternative communication e.g makaton and symbols”

“Maybe a group project online that they can work together and produce something over a certain amount of sessions - for my child who currently cannot access education this would be very fulfilling in making him feel positive about working together with his peers”

“Anything for the home ed community in regards to numeracy and literacy”

“Online coding courses and first aid courses for teens would be fantastic”

“Parent or carer specific sessions would be great”

“Covering all age groups would be good. Current clubs are normally age 8 upwards and makes it difficult to access if you have more than one sen child”

“I would like to see a range of clubs on offer with different age group's, size of groups and identified needs really thought about”

“My child loved a virtual workshop with the local theatre during covid”

“We participated in an online choir and this was very much enjoyed by our daughter. Online Yoga/Dance would also work well”

“There needs to be more for teenagers”

“Would be love to have virtual sing and sign sessions”

“During covid my son engaged with online, he took part in baking activities and yoga and found a new interest in origami”

“Activities run by adults with disabilities, where they share their enthusiasms and skills with children like them. Eg neurodiverse adults running a D&D group”

“Highly skilled professionals or celebrities would appeal to make the sessions more special”

“Variety”

“Small group sizes for it to be interactive”

This information is issued by:
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