

Graffiti Wall Theme 1:

- Families reported mixed views regarding the newly commissioned short breaks offer, and the providers who were awarded the contracts.

Response:

The whole Essex Short Breaks offer comprises a suite of provision which is targeted to meet a spectrum of need. The early help offer can be directly accessed without requiring a social care assessment and includes:

- Autism & Nature Publications
- Subsidised holidays in caravans adapted for wheelchair access, with profile beds and sensory equipment
- Beach hut days along the Essex Coast with access to adapted beach wheelchairs
- Tickets to local attractions
- Max cards to improve access to national attractions
- Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities

Specifically, the Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities offer was recommissioned in April 2023 to respond to improvements identified by families through a wide range of engagements.

The Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities providers have demonstrated their capability and experience of delivering clubs and activities to children and young people with a range of SEND needs. The provider's staff teams include trained specialist staff, and many of their staff from play worker through to directors have lived experience as parent carers of children and young people with SEND themselves. You can find more detail on how to contact each of the providers here: [Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities in Essex](#)

The Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities offer is commissioned to be as inclusive as possible and includes 1:1 child:staff ratio when required. ECC also fund provision for Short Breaks providers to be able to access specialist training enabling them to offer appropriate specialist healthcare to children and young people with complex healthcare needs.

Where a child or young person with SEND, or their parent carers need a higher level of support or specialist support they can request a social care assessment as a 'child in need.' The assessment enables ECC to understand the level of social care support required or whether the support needed can be provided by directly accessible services such as Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities. If a need for different support is identified then other provision, such as a direct payment, care hours or overnight short breaks may be offered.

All Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities providers plan to continually improve the landscape of community clubs and activities for children and young people with SEND. This means that parent carer feedback is most welcomed.

Every Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities provider runs co-production opportunities in their areas and that means the offer can develop and flex to the needs and wants of families over time.

The Graffiti Wall for the Summer Term specifically mentions Mid and South Essex. SEND Sensation lead delivery in Mid Essex, and Butterflies Clubs CIC lead delivery in South Essex. Each have offered a response below:

“At Butterflies Club we review our clubs and activities offer continually and update it every half term, often adding activities suggested by families, children and young people. The forthcoming January term will see the introduction of the Supported Fun Swim Sessions for children and young people who require a higher ratio to participate in fun swim sessions and those who prefer an environment with fewer people as requested by a family of a child who will benefit from this.

Throughout the year we hold parent/ carer coffee mornings/ coffee afternoons where families are welcome to pop along to meet with us to discuss their child’s needs and interests, then to help us create their child’s personalised activity plan. We are always eager to meet with families and to discuss the activities on offer, where required to then create more small groups of children and young people with similar interests and/or preferences and create an activity plan for them.” - **Jen Cormack, Founder, Butterflies Clubs CIC**

“SEND Sensation is working in partnership with Columbus School to initially deliver clubs for 8-14 years and 15-18 years for after school and school holiday activities. SEND Sensation is currently in discussions with the school and other venues about provision for under 8s too in Chelmsford and other districts in Mid and North Essex. SEND Sensation has already adapted our original provisions based on local demand to offer an equitable service with a range of clubs and activities. Our wide range of independent partners are working closely together to offer a high standard and fun offer for Essex Short Breaks children and young people.

SEND Sensation are working with Essex Family Forum as part of our co-production model to recruit parents and young people to become an integrated advisory board as part of our 'Parent Voices' and 'Peer Navigator' programmes. We are looking forward to meeting a number of potential recruits at our Festival Fun Day with Essex Family Forum and developing our Essex Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities.” - **Yomi Abolarin, Programme Manager, Send Sensation**

Families can keep up to date with provision in their areas by visiting the Essex Short Breaks [website](#), following our [Facebook page](#) or emailing us at shortbreaks@essex.gov.uk

Graffiti Wall Theme 2:

- Accessibility “There are no playgrounds local to us with accessible equipment for wheelchair users – I would like to be able to visit a playground with my daughter.” – Epping Forest

Over the last several years ECC have invested capital funding into local parish and borough councils to improve access to inclusive play facilities and changing places. Although ECC has invested the capital expenditure the day-to-day management of facilities remains the responsibility of the local district council.

The opening of Ninefields Playground was announced on the 1st June 2023, by Epping Forest District Council and may be of interest to the parent carer who raised this specific area. For clarity, this is not funded by ECC, but this link provides more information: [Grand opening of Ninefields Playground - Epping Forest District Council \(eppingforestdc.gov.uk\)](https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/news/2023/06/01/grand-opening-of-ninefields-playground)

Essex Short Breaks continue to work closely with parish, borough and districts to identify opportunities for partnership.