

# Essex Family Forum

## Family Impact Survey 2024

### Report on Social Care Support and Shortbreaks



**Date of Report: January 2025**

*Survey conducted:*

*1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024*

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Methodology .....	4
Number of Participants.....	5
Disclaimer.....	5
Education Settings .....	6
Identification of Needs .....	7
Social Care Support.....	9
Social Care - continued .....	10
Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities .....	11
Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities (continued) .....	12
Conclusion and Next Steps.....	12

# Introduction

This is our fourth Annual Family Impact Survey. We have expanded the scope of the survey each year by adding additional questions to existing sections and adding new sections. We have based these on the most consistent themes from the feedback we have received from families in all the forms we receive it. (e.g. our Family Champion network, virtual Graffiti Wall, Local Offer Roadshows, coffee mornings).

The aim of our survey is to detail parent/carer experiences in trying to secure the right support at the right time for their children/young people at the time they need it. We are then able to compare the current situation with what families have told us in our previous surveys. We are then able to identify where there has been any improvement in those experiences and where families are still finding it challenging to obtain the right support for their child/young person.

The results of our previous surveys can be found on our [website](#). It has been challenging to obtain a timely response on the findings from our previous surveys from the relevant teams and services across education, health and social care. We have, therefore, decided to separate the findings from this year's survey into specific reports for each section of the survey as follows:

- Education, Health and Care Plans - Statutory Processes including Needs Assessments, Annual Reviews and Appeals and Tribunals
- Neurodevelopment Conditions Assessments - Referrals, Waiting Times, Pre and Post Diagnostic Support and Information
- SEN Support, One Planning, Communication and Support with Education Settings
- Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than at School (EOTAS)
- Home to School SEND Transport
- Therapies
- Mental Health Support
- Social Care and Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Sources of Information and Support

This report focusses on Social Care and Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities.

# Methodology

- Survey period: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey and designed with both qualitative and quantitative questions. Throughout this report, we have included samples of the verbatim comments received from families. We have removed any personal or potentially identifying information from those comments such as individual names, settings and service providers.
- The names of settings and service providers will be available, upon request by Essex County Council (ECC) or the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) but will only be provided in terms of the 'theme' within which they were mentioned. They will not be attributed to any specific comment - in line with the collection of data policy as outlined in the previous bullet point.
- The survey was promoted via Essex Family Forum social media, our Family Champion Network, connected support groups and through Email Octopus to our members. We also circulated to our various contacts at Essex County Council and the Integrated Care Boards for onward circulation via their communication channels. We used separate links this year so we can identify where the survey received the greatest engagement. We are delighted that those sent via our membership and Family Champion Network counted for over half of all the responses, with social media counting for one third of the overall responses. 87 parent/carers received their link via their child/young person's education setting.

# Number of Participants

There were **1240** valid entries for the survey this year, as all participants who started our survey gave consent for their anonymized responses to be used and shared.

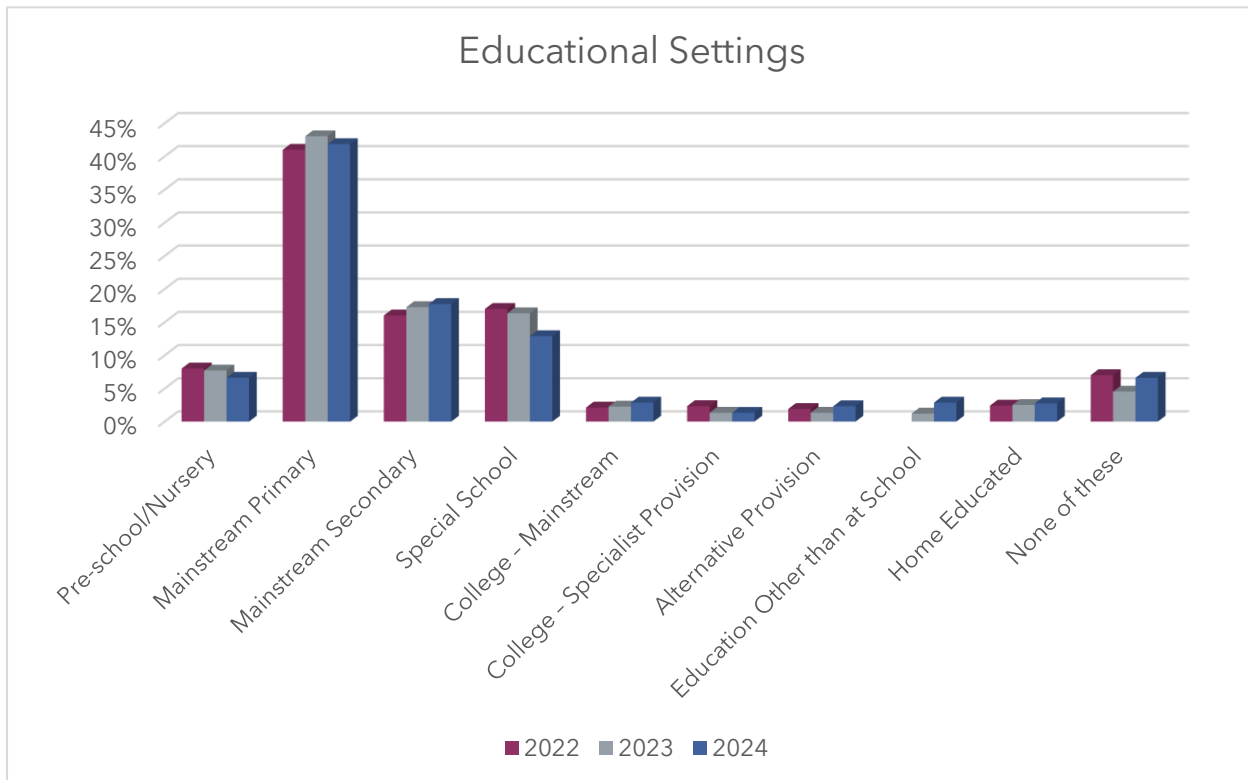
Participants were directed to sections of the survey via “skip logic” based on responses they gave. They were also able to skip certain questions if they did not wish to provide a response. Therefore, participants only completed sections that were relevant to them and did not need to answer every question within the survey. The responses shown are based on the numbers of participants that answered that particular question.

The number of families completing our survey is increasing each year. In 2020 we received 638 valid entries, 517 in 2022 and 923 in 2023.

## Disclaimer

*The information and comments presented in this report and appendices are the views of the survey respondents and in no way, express or implied, should be construed to represent the views of Essex Family Forum CIC. Essex Family Forum's purpose is established under the legal requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014. We therefore have a duty to faithfully relay the views and experiences of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND aged 0 - 25 years with regard to the services they use. Essex Family Forum aims to work co-productively with services to improve the users' experiences and to recognise good practices. Essex Family Forum accepts no legal liability for the personal accounts, views, or opinions that survey respondents shared.*

# Education Settings



- Education Other than At School - 2023 was the first year it was included so there is no corresponding data for 2022.
- The option for Home Education was split further into 2 categories:
  - ◆ Home Education as a lifestyle choice
  - ◆ Home Education through no other option\*

*\*The proportion of parent/carers who home educate through no other option is 4 times higher than those that do so as a lifestyle choice.*

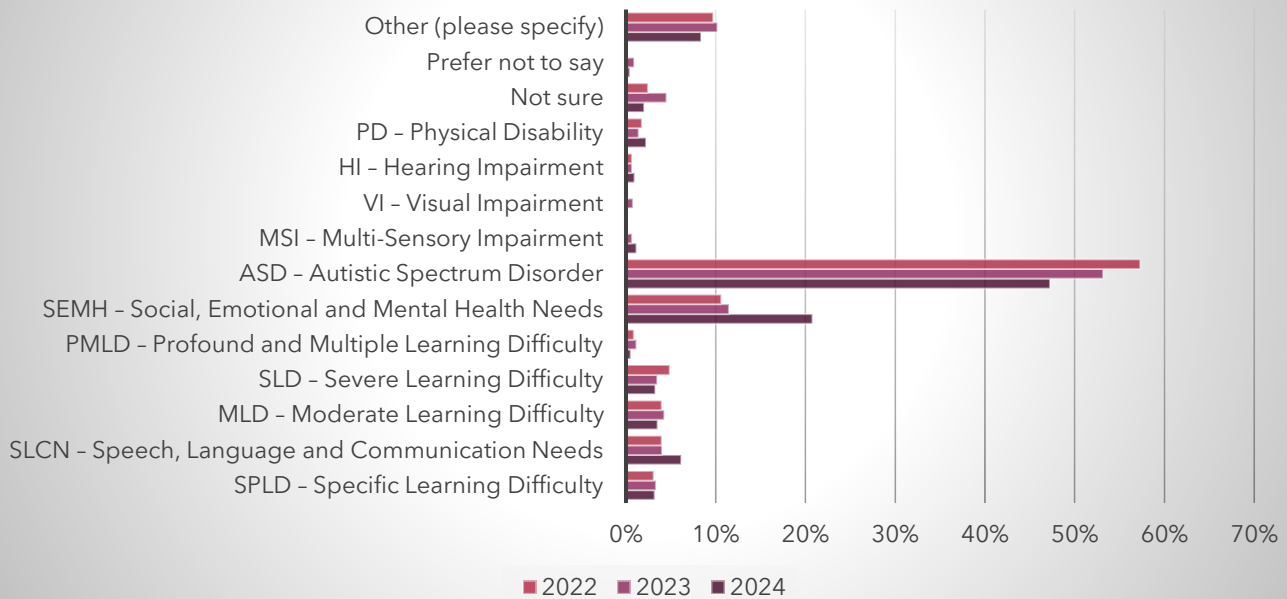
- Settings where the total was under 1% were:
  - ◆ Specialist hub - Primary
  - ◆ Specialist hub - Secondary
  - ◆ Virtual School
  - ◆ University (4 people stated their young person is studying at university)
  - ◆ Apprenticeship/Internship/Work based training
- This year, none of the respondents said their young people were in employment.
- The percentage of participants whose child/young person was not in school, employment or training slightly increased, but they have remained pretty static over the last three years.
  - ◆ As in previous years, the biggest proportion of those are compulsory age children, either on roll at a mainstream school or special school but not able to attend, waiting for a placement or there is no suitable placement.
  - ◆ The next biggest proportion are still young people unable to access Post 16 or Post 19 provision, training or employment.

# Identification of Needs

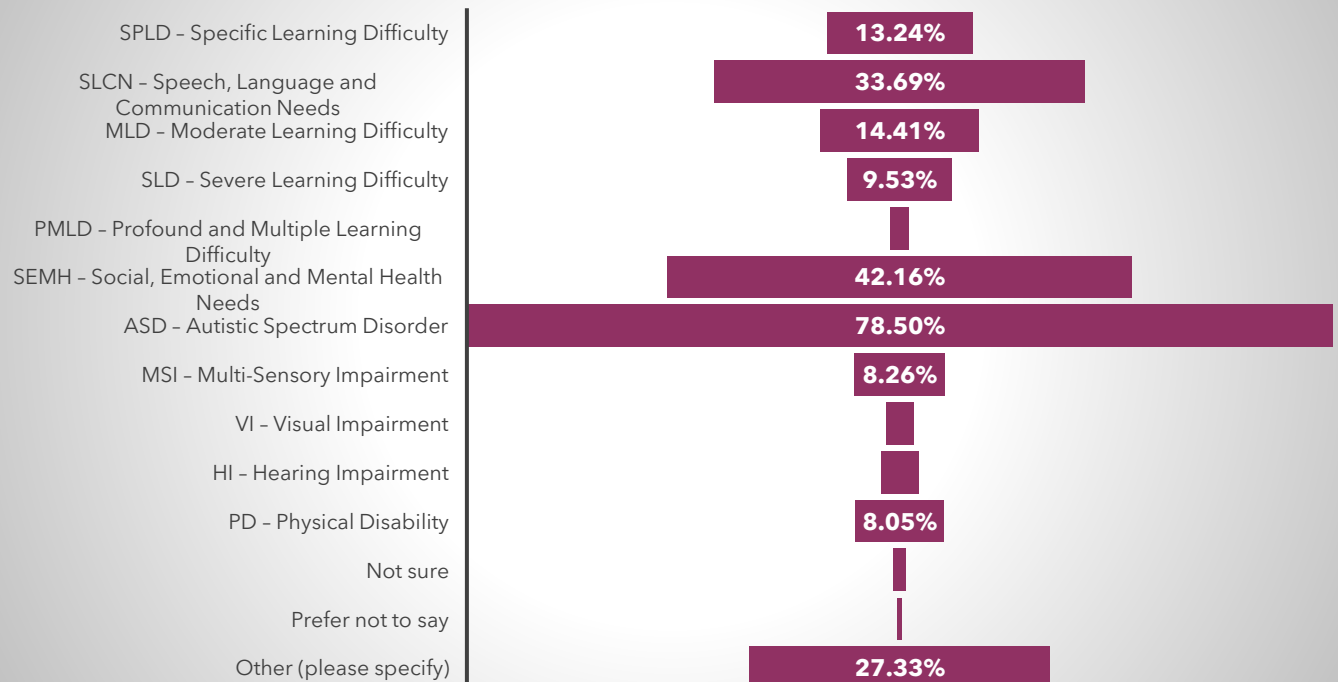
In each of our previous surveys, many parent/carers have indicated that their child/young person's needs are too complex and interlinked to pinpoint which is their primary need. Historically, we have asked this question to ensure there is correlation between parent/carers views and that of the education settings, using the options available in the school census returns.

This year we added an additional question so that parent/carers had the opportunity to provide details of **all** their child/young person's needs. (Therefore, the overall percentages will total more than 100% )

## What would you describe as your child's primary area of need?



## Child/Young Person's Needs (All)



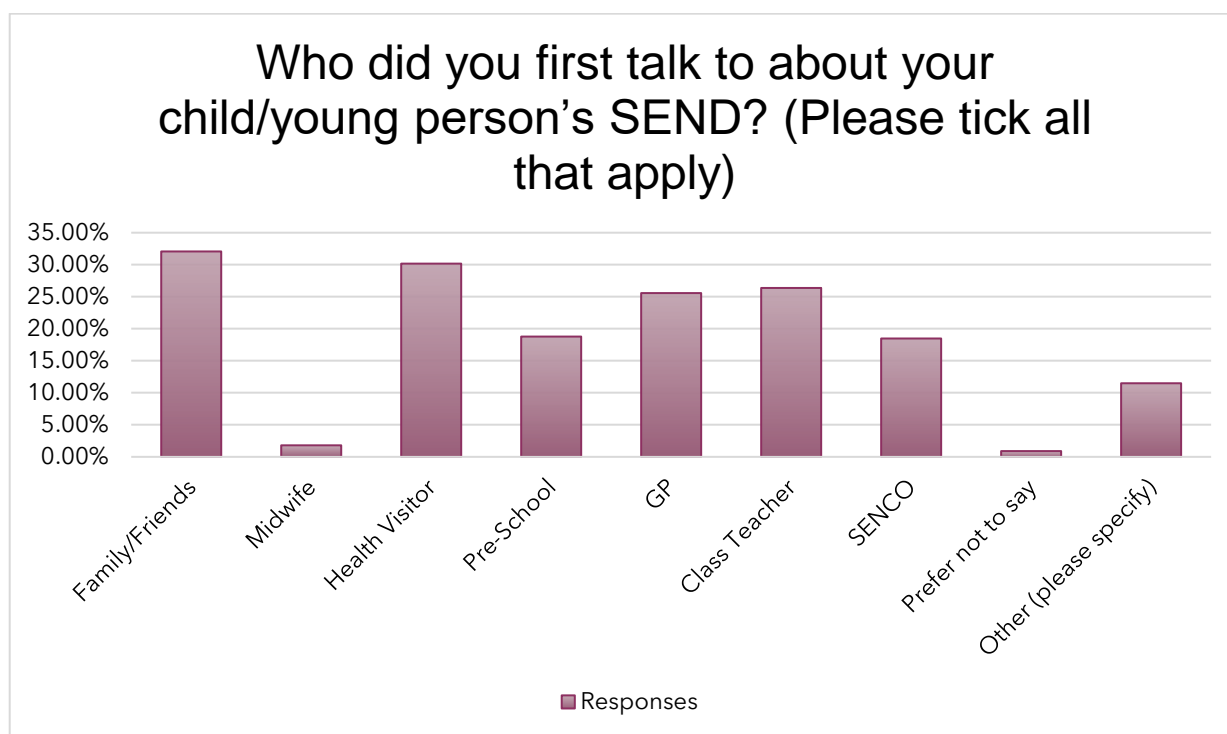
When describing all the needs of their child/young person the percentages categories increased significantly, compared to just the primary need selected. Where parent/carers selected other, the vast majority listed ADHD, either on it's own or with other needs described. This accounted for 16% of the overall total. The second most common need listed in the 'Other' category was sensory processing difficulties - again on it's own or with other needs. Some parent/carers listed needs such dyslexia and dyspraxia within the 'Other' category. It is our understanding that these would fall under the Specific Learning Dfficulty category when completing the school census.

**62% of parents are unaware of the school census entry for their child/young person.**

**Who raises the initial concerns and who families talk to:**

As in previous years, parent/carers are raising the initial concerns about their child's development/progress in the vast majority of cases (85%). Pre-Schools, Health visitors, Class Teachers as well as Family and Friends most commonly also raise initial concerns.

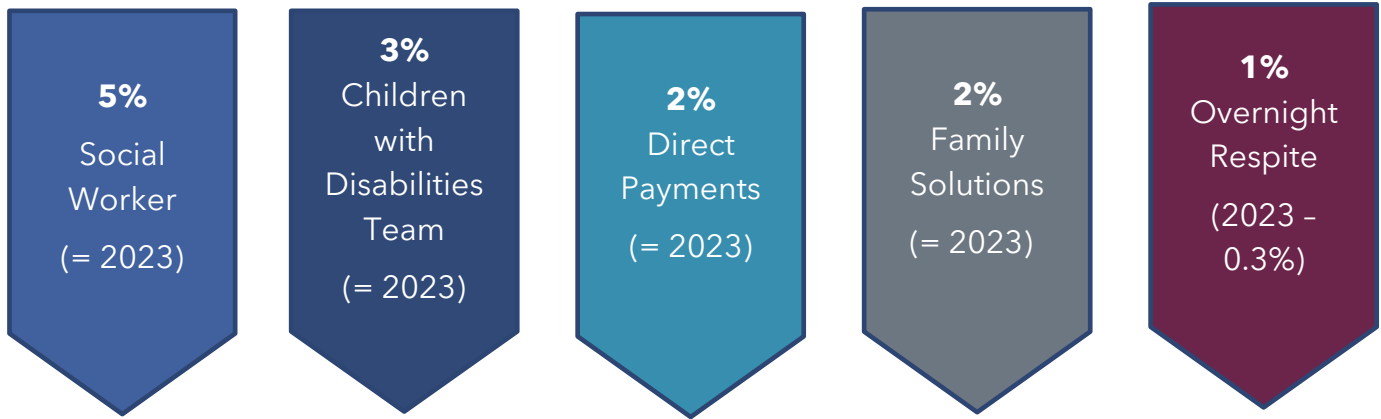
There is little change from previous years when it comes to who parent/carers first approach with their concern, (respondents could select more than one choice):



There were a wide range of practitioners specified under the 'Other' option, the largest being speech and language therapists (including private therapists), paediatricians and school staff (such as Headteachers and Pastoral Support).

# Social Care Support

Parents/carers were asked about the support they receive from social care for their child/young person. They were able to select all support that applies to them:



**87%** parent/carers responding do not receive any support from social care

**14%** have made a referral for support

**84%** of those did not meet criteria for support

**16%** are still awaiting an assessment

Of those who did not qualify for social care support:

**28%** were informed of the reason they did not qualify for support

**37%** were signposted to other sources of support

## Social Care - continued

The most frequently mentioned type of support that those families who are awaiting assessment or who did not meet the threshold told us they hoped for were:

- Advice / guidance for education settings to support the needs of their child/young person
- Respite
- Strategies to support their child/young person's dysregulation

Some families just said they wanted any support that was available. A small number of families indicated that they had made more than one request for support or had been discharged from a social care team but needed more support.

For those receiving support from social care, it is clear from the comments that many families value the support and guidance they receive from their social worker and for the support they are able to access through Direct Payment arrangements.

However, some families reported poor communication with social care teams and that the support received is inconsistent or does not meet the needs of their child/young person.

Families told us what they thought some things could be improved such as:

- Delays in accessing support
- Understanding the referral process and criteria for support from social care teams
- Listening to families, more empathy and better communication

There were a number of comments that related to the impact that a lack of capacity and resources in other services had on their ability to find the right support, including difficulty in finding suitable PA support for the child/young person.

..... My son has severe and complex needs and needs constant supervision and support due to unpredictable behaviours I've been raising concerns that I can't meet all of these needs alone for a year and a half now. We urgently need practical support and are past breaking point.

..... Social care have been great for us. They, out of everybody, seem to understand the most.

Our social worker is supportive, helpful, and always willing to discuss concerns and options with us.

Difficult to recruit a pa to access respite hours granted

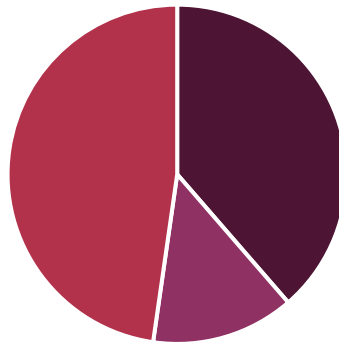
# Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities

This was the first year we asked specific questions about Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities. Unfortunately, due to an error in our survey structure, the questions in this section were only seen by a small number of respondents (79 in total). However, as these parent/carers took the time to respond to the questions, we will still report their experiences.

**56%** are registered with Shortbreaks

**18%** had no knowledge of Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities

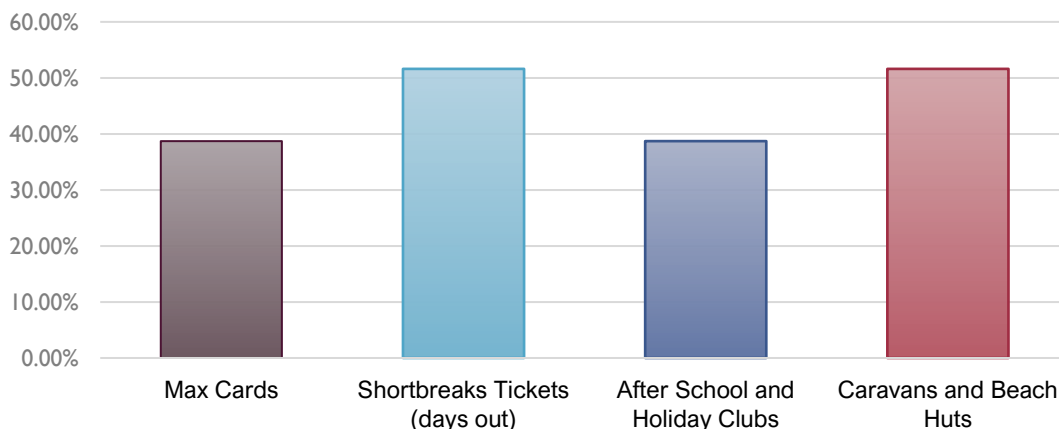
How easy did you find the registration process? (1 = very difficult / 5 = very easy)



■ Very Easy/Easy ■ Ok ■ Difficult/Very Difficult

33% of those registering with Shortbreaks opted to include their child/young person's details on the disability

Please tell us what aspects of Shortbreaks C&A you use (tick all that apply):

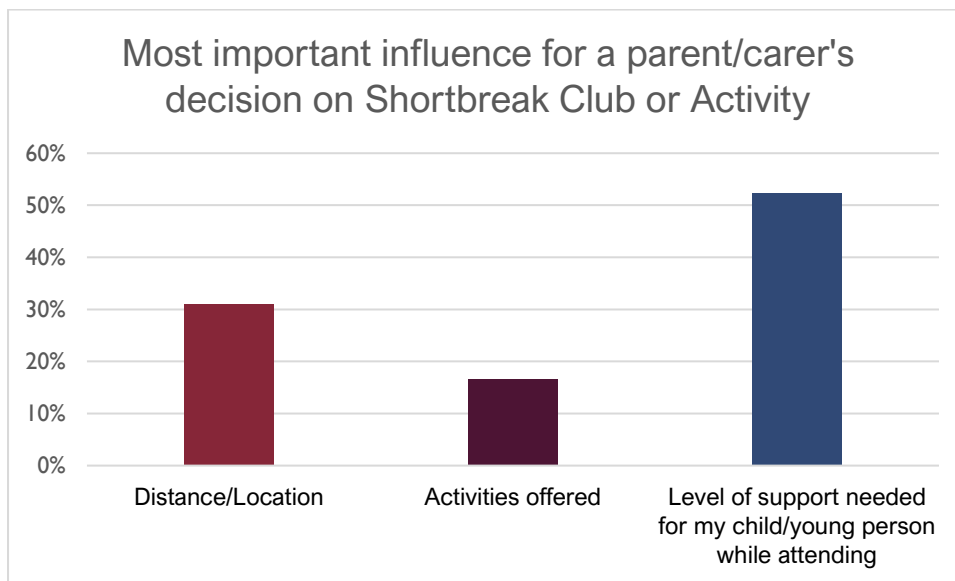


## Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities (continued)

10% of respondents said they use more than one Clubs and Activities provider.

75% say their child/young person only attends Clubs and Activities during the school holidays.

83% say the current offer does not meet the needs of their family. This level response was fairly equal across all quadrants in Essex. We asked families to qualify the main factors that would influence their response.



Half of respondents to this section reported that level of communication with their Shortbreaks provider is excellent or good. Families in West Essex reported they are the least satisfied with the communication from their Shortbreaks provider.

There was one very clear theme arising from the comments we received. Families of children/young people with high needs feel there is a lack of choice in the activities and are concerned at the level of support that is offered.

InterAct have been very welcoming and understanding since they began providing evening and holiday clubs as part of the service.

My older son attends independence project and it is the best thing to ever happen to him

We haven't been able to access any so far as none meet my child's level of need

## Conclusion and Next Steps

## **Social Care**

The proportion of families of children and young people with SEND that are supported by the social care teams in Essex have remained at a similar level to 2023. Overall the support received by those families is valued and they report positive relationships with the people that support them.

However, families who do not meet the criteria threshold for support are still reporting inconsistencies in effective signposting to other services. From the comments we received, these families clearly feel frustrated that they do not understand how decisions are made as to why they are not eligible for support, or what their next steps should be.

### Next Steps

We would like to work with ECC's social care team on clearer information for families on the referral and decision-making process for social care support.

## **Shortbreaks**

Although the sample size for the Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities section was smaller than we would have preferred, there were some very clear messages from the responses we did receive. We are also aware that the Shortbreaks offer has continued to evolve since the responses were collected for this survey. .

### Next Steps

During 2025 we would like to work with the Shortbreaks team at Essex County Council to undertake a wider parent/carer engagement (which may include a further survey) to understand their experiences with the current services offered under the Shortbreaks programme.