



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Play and Leisure Short Breaks in Surrey

Consultation December 2025



Consultation on Play and Leisure Short Breaks in Surrey

What is the purpose of this document?

This document explains proposals for changes and commissioning options to Surrey County Council's Play and Leisure Short Breaks offer for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities (AND), and related services.

This consultation is brought in the context of making sure Surrey's short breaks offer is fair and equitable for all families with children with AND across Surrey. This sits alongside needing to identify efficiencies and cost savings as part of the council's drive to achieve a balanced budget. In January 2025 the Surrey County Council Cabinet set out the budget for 2025/26, which includes finding £66 million in efficiencies across the council over the medium term. This includes £800,000 to be saved in 2026/27 from the Short Breaks budget, while still meeting the council's Short Breaks statutory duties.

The council wants to hear from families, service providers, professionals, and other key stakeholders about these proposals. This feedback will help to shape services that are fair, better in line with current and future needs, whilst also remaining affordable and delivering good value for money with the available budget.

Why do local authorities provide Short Breaks?

Under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, local authorities have a legal duty to provide a range of services to support carers of disabled children. These services must, as far as reasonably practicable, help carers continue to provide care or do so more effectively. This includes daytime and overnight care, educational and leisure activities, and support during evenings, weekends, and school holidays.

Short breaks have two main purposes:

- **to give children and young people the chance to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities**
- **to give parent carers break from caring.**

What is the budget for Short Breaks?

Surrey County Council offers a range of activities for children and young people with AND (sometimes referred to as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, or SEND), and their families. The activities run throughout the year during the day, evening and at night, at the weekends and in the school holidays. They may take place in the child's own home, in council facilities or residential settings, or with a commissioned Short Break provider.

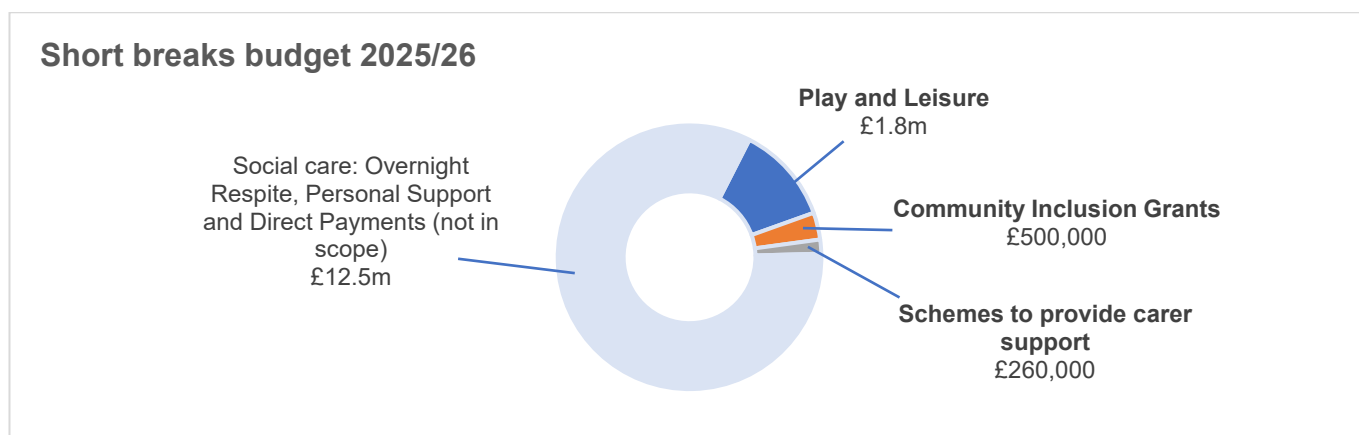
Play and Leisure Short Breaks (and related services like carers' breaks), form one part of this offer, with a budget of £2.56million; other services within the offer include Overnight Respite, Personal Support and Direct Payments to families, with an annual budget of around £12.5million in 2025/26. These other services are only offered to children and families following an assessment of their needs by social workers from the council's Children with Disabilities

(CWD) Service or social care teams from within family safeguarding. It is important to note that these other social care services (Overnight Respite, Personal Support and Direct Payments), are not part of this consultation.

The following graph shows a breakdown of Short Breaks budgets for the 2025/26 financial year. This consultation focuses on the services within:

- **£1.8m Play and Leisure Short Breaks**
- **£500,000 Community Inclusion Grant**
- **£260,000 for carer support schemes**

£2.56m in total.



What are the budget pressures facing Surrey County Council?

The council is facing significant financial challenges. When setting the 2025/26 budget for Council approval, Cabinet included a requirement to deliver £66 million in savings due to rising demand for vital services and increased costs.

Cabinet Decision:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/g9163/Decisions%20Tuesday%2028-Jan-2025%2014.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=2>

The council needs to make difficult decisions in order to balance its budget while meeting its legal duties.

What Play and Leisure services are included in the consultation?

The current offer includes a range of Play and Leisure Short Breaks which are available to children and young people with AND across Surrey. These services provide fun, engaging and safe activities for children and young people and give parent carers a break. They run after school, weekday evenings, weekends and in the holidays¹. They include specialist community-based clubs for children and young people with more complex needs, alongside a range of other schemes.

¹ [Statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using Short Breaks](#)

- Around **900 children and young people** use these services each year, with about **61,600 hours of breaks delivered**.
- Over **300 children and young people** are on waiting lists for these services.
- More children are now being assessed by Play and Leisure providers as needing **1:1 support** to access Short Breaks.
- A significant proportion of provision is used by children who attend specialist schools catering to complex needs, and/or who need specialist education and extra social care support.
- This sits in the context of a growing population of children and young people with AND. The number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has grown by **nearly 70% since 2020**.

Currently, there are no published eligibility criteria for access to Surrey's Play and Leisure Short Breaks. All current schemes support children and young people with a wide range of additional needs and disabilities, though a small number focus on children and young people with specific needs like autism, visual impairment or complex health needs. Extra funding from the Department for Education enabled some additional family breaks services to be commissioned. This funding has now ended and there is a small amount of remaining provision which will end in March 2026.

For full details of Short Breaks and related services please visit the Short Breaks webpage: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/support-and-advice/children-with-disabilities/short-breaks>

Also in scope of this consultation are the budgets that deliver:

- £500,000 **Community Inclusion Grants**: in 2024/25 these were awarded as one-off to deliver inclusive play and leisure activities, mostly in mainstream settings, as well as training mainstream providers in developing inclusive provision. This supported 24 schemes, providing 2,894 places for children and young people, at weekends, after school and in the February half-term holiday.
- £200,000 for **carer support** schemes under the Short Breaks duty.

Reshaping the offer in response to what is important

The vision for Play and Leisure Short Breaks is an offer that prioritises inclusive access, community integration, and cost-effective support for those with the greatest need. The aim is to ensure short breaks are used to help eligible children access specialist and mainstream community schemes, offering both social opportunities for children and breaks for their carers.

Surrey County Council is exploring opportunities to reshape the Play and Leisure Short Breaks offer to better reflect what is most important to families, while remaining within available budgets. As part of this process, the council is considering a range of options that could lead to financial efficiencies.

Some of the £800,000 saving will need to come from commissioned provision. This is the maximum possible saving that could be achieved through recommissioning and service redesign. However, the actual amount achieved through reductions in spend on commissioned provision may be less than this, depending on which proposals are prioritised for implementation following consultation feedback.

Some services may continue to receive funding, others may be reshaped or delivered differently, and some may be reduced or ceased. Your views will help inform these decisions and ensure that future provision reflects the priorities of children, young people, and families across Surrey.



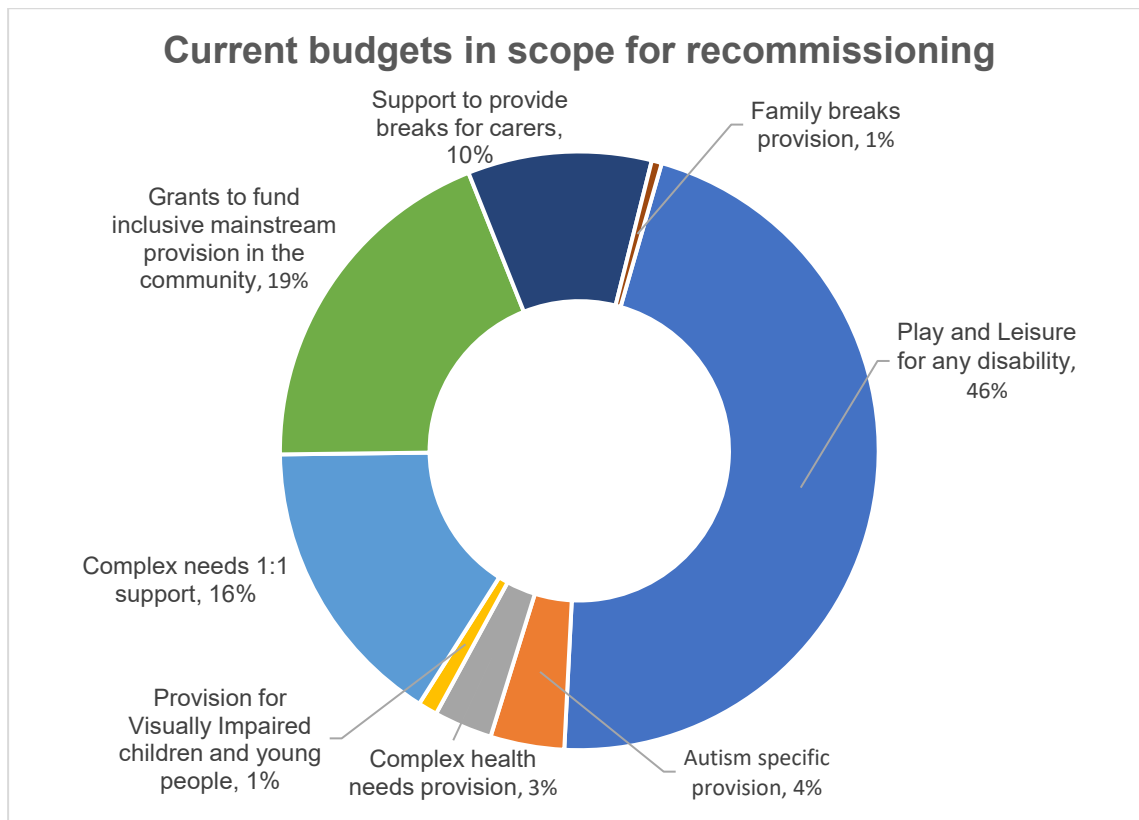
Current services

The current core Play and Leisure service is a specialist provision offering high levels of 1:1 support, however it also faces challenges such as waiting lists and limited opportunities for inclusivity. As well as the core provision, community inclusion grant-funded schemes and a pilot of inclusive provision within the Holiday Activity and Food Programme during the 2025 summer holidays have been delivered.

The core Play and Leisure offer is set out on the council's web pages:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/support-and-advice/children-with-disabilities/short-breaks>

The chart below shows the range of services under review. These services support children and young people with a variety of needs and disabilities and include both specialist and inclusive community-based provision. The chart also shows how funding is currently allocated, which will help to inform discussions about future priorities and potential areas for recommissioning within available budgets.



Informing the Future Commissioning Strategy

To ensure that future Play and Leisure Short Breaks reflect what matters most to children, young people, and families in Surrey, the council is seeking views on a range of service options. These proposals aim to reshape the current offer by consolidating services, improving inclusivity, and achieving best value within available budgets. Feedback gathered through this consultation will shape the commissioning strategy, helping to prioritise services that deliver the greatest impact and meet statutory duties.

The following proposals set out the direction of the service, aiming to bring together what is currently a fragmented offer, reducing the reliance on 1:1 support where appropriate, building on feedback from families and the learning from pilots of inclusive provision within mainstream settings. Understanding what is most important will inform the future commissioning strategy.

What proposals are being consulted on?

The council's strategy for Short Breaks Leisure and Play services is to prioritise funding core provision, particularly schemes that support children with the most complex needs and disabilities, and those focused on the council's statutory responsibilities. At the same time, there has been a commitment to invest in community-based provision that allows more children and young people with AND to access inclusive, mainstream play and leisure opportunities across the county.

There is a need to make sure that services are **fair** and **consistent** meet statutory requirements, as well as deliver £800,000 in savings in 2026/27. The aim is to make clear who can access which Play and Leisure services, prioritise those with the greatest need, and provide value for money for Surrey's residents and communities. This includes considering how parental financial contributions to Play and Leisure Short Breaks can be made more consistent.

It is also an opportunity to **reshape the offer based on local priorities**. By doing this, the council aims to deliver best value through streamlining existing services and delivering a range of inclusive Play and Leisure activities for children and young people with AND, reaching as many families as possible within the available budget.

This consultation sets out 10 proposals for Play and Leisure Short Breaks. Some of the proposals could save money, and a combination of proposals may need to be taken forward to achieve the savings target that has been agreed by the council Cabinet. These proposals have been developed using information from a detailed needs analysis and following engagement with parents, carers and providers.

Summary of proposals:

Proposal 1: Introduce eligibility criteria for Play and Leisure Short Breaks services, which are in line with statutory duty and make sure those who most need the services can access them – up to £141,400 saving

Proposal 2: Introduce a maximum level of Play and Leisure Short Breaks provision that children and young people can access each year – up to £446,400 saving

Proposal 3: Require providers of Play and Leisure Short Breaks to apply consistent parent carer charges and concessionary rates – up to £111,500 saving

Proposal 4: Prioritise breaks for carers over those where the whole family attends - £14,000 saving

Proposal 5: Focus the Play and Leisure offer to provide a break from caring rather than commissioning extra services for the same purpose – up to £260,000 saving

Proposal 6: Deliver inclusive mainstream provision as part of the core Play and Leisure offer

Proposal 7: Create a two-tier offer: one for specialist provision and another for inclusive mainstream

Proposal 8: Commission less specific 1:1 provision – about £50,000 saving

Proposal 9: Provide more sessions in the school holiday periods, rather than at weekends and after school

Proposal 10: Offer flexible session lengths (e.g., 4-hour and 6-hour sessions) during school holidays and at weekends

Each proposal and its reasoning is set out below in more detail. The potential impacts on children and families are explained, as well as any possible savings.

These proposals are designed to meet the strategic priorities as well as deliver the required efficiency savings. This may mean taking forward a combination of proposals and reviewing the strategic priorities, based on the savings required and the feedback from this consultation.

Proposal 1: Introduce eligibility criteria for Play and Leisure Short Breaks services, which are in line with the statutory duty, and make sure those who most need the services can access them

The proposed eligibility criteria that children and young people would need to meet are:

- **Lives in Surrey *and***
- **Are under 18 years old *and***
- **Meet one or more of the following:**
 - **Receive the middle or higher rate of Disability Living Allowance or, for some young people aged 16 and 17, Personal Independence Payments**
 - **Are open to Surrey County Council's Children with Disabilities social care service**
 - **Have a Surrey County Council Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).**

Background and rationale

This proposal aims to introduce clear and consistent eligibility criteria for children, young people and families about who can access which Play and Leisure Short Breaks. This change will bring Surrey County Council in line with standard practice in many other councils that publish eligibility criteria.

Statutory duties

The council has a statutory duty to provide Short Breaks for children and young people who live in Surrey. Other councils are responsible for children and young people living in their areas. In 2024/25, 26 children and young people who attended Surrey schemes did not live in Surrey and accessed 1.4% of available Play and Leisure Short Breaks costing about £25,100.

Looked After Children placed in Surrey by other councils can access short breaks in Surrey subject to funding by the placing council.

The council also has a statutory duty to provide Short Breaks to children and young people until their 18th birthday, but not beyond this. The current service exceptionally supports some young adults who are 18, as part of managing transitions into adulthood. There were 58 young adults aged 18 and over in 2024/25 who accessed 1.9% of available Play and Leisure Short Breaks, costing about £33,300. Of this, £9,800 of services were accessed by young people who were already 18 or over at the start of the year.

Better targeting of services

Analysis of Short Breaks data from 2024/25 suggests that children with a range of complex needs are in need of support. For example:

- 54% of access was by children and young people who are open to the council's Children with Disability (CWD) Service. The thresholds for the service can be found online here: <https://trixcms.trixonline.co.uk/api/assets/surrey/cs/b8e4dc19-1bf4-4b85-82da-126f66fef6dd/children-with-disabilities-service-eligibility-criteria-dec-24.docx>.
- 70% of access was by children and young people who attend specialist schools or specialist education units.
- 66% of children and young people who attended Play and Leisure Services required 1:1 or higher levels of support. In addition, over 300 children and young people were on waiting lists for Play and Leisure Short Breaks services, of whom around 65% are expected to need 1:1 support.

- 94% of the Play and Leisure scheme activity was accessed by children and young people who have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The council is proposing to establish one or more ways in which evidence can be provided, in order to be eligible to access the Play and Leisure Short Breaks service. By collecting this information, the council can better understand what children need and target the service more effectively.

Clear eligibility criteria will help give families clarity around entitlement and provide a better understanding of need at the point of applying.

What are the potential savings associated with Proposal 1?

Introducing the proposed eligibility criteria for Play and Leisure Short Breaks could save up to £141,400, as set out in the table below.

(NB: The council doesn't have data about levels of DLA or PIP for current service users, so this has not been factored into any calculations of potential savings.)

No longer eligible	Number of children and young people	Savings based on 2024/25 use of service
Those who do not live in Surrey throughout 2024/25	26	Up to £25,100
Those who are 18 or over as at 1/4/24	9	Up to £9,800
Not known to CWD and without EHCP throughout 2024/25	118	Up to £106,500
Total	153	Up to £141,400

This proposal would mean that the council will stop funding Play and Leisure activities for non-eligible children and young people to achieve the saving.

What is the impact of Proposal 1?

As part of this proposal, the council would more closely align its funding with its statutory duties. If Proposal 1 is implemented, then around 26 children and young people who do not live in Surrey and had previously accessed Short Breaks schemes, would no longer be able to do so in Surrey, although they may be able to access the short breaks offer in the local authority where they live.

Young adults aged 18 and over would not be able to access the scheme, which would affect around 58 young people, based on 2024/25 levels of activity. If young adults 18 and over need on-going support they can find services that are local to them at Connect to Support Surrey <https://www.connecttosupportsurrey.org.uk/>. There is also information about services and support for autistic young adults on the council website: [Autistic adults services and support - Surrey County Council](#). For carers, there are 15 'drop-in' Carers Hubs, where Surrey's unpaid carers can visit for information, advice, and support.

Based on the numbers of children who are not open to CWD and also do not have a Surrey County Council EHCP, up to 118 children and young people would be affected, based on

2024/25 data. The actual impact may be lower, with some children meeting other eligibility criteria.

If this proposal is implemented for Play and Leisure Short Breaks, appropriate systems and processes will be put in place to make sure eligibility applications are managed effectively, equitably and efficiently. These processes would allow sufficient time for eligibility to be applied for before booking opens for upcoming schemes.

Proposal 2: Introduce a maximum level of Play and Leisure Short Breaks provision that children and young people can access each year.

What maximum levels of provision are being proposed?

Two options for consideration are:

- **Maximum 144 hours per year per child**
- **Maximum 198 hours per year per child**

The table below shows the effect that these maximum levels of provision might have. Proposed maximum level	Play and Leisure hours each month	Equivalent cost of the maximum level per year per child	Number of children and young people who accessed more than the proposed maximum in 2024/25	Percentage of total Play and Leisure capacity in 2024/25	Equivalent cost - efficiency saving
Maximum 144 hours per year per child	12 hours of activity a month	£4,200	136	25%	£446,400
Maximum 198 hours per year per child	16.5 hours of activity a month	£5,600	88	15%	£266,250

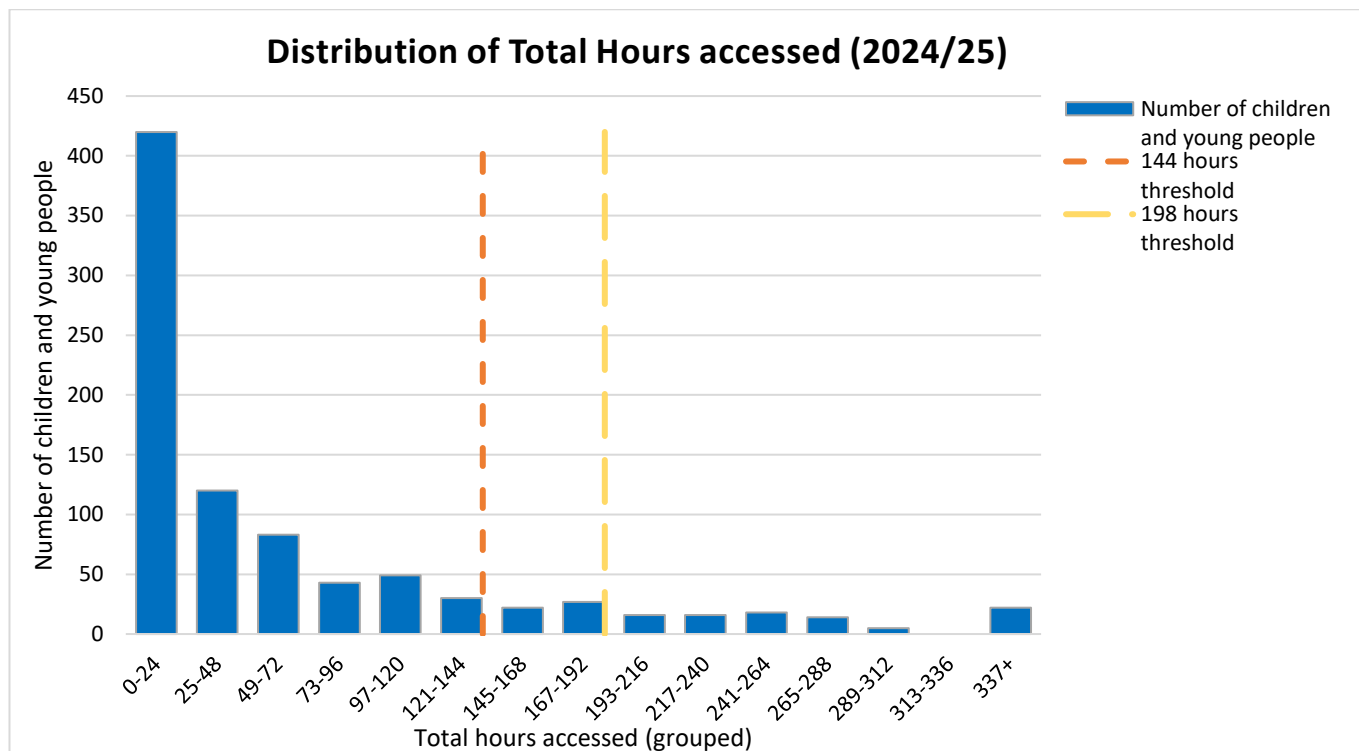
Background and rationale

This proposal considers ways in which more equitable use of resources can be achieved, based on current provision. There are currently big differences in the amounts of provision accessed by different children and young people in Surrey over the course of a year. Some take up high levels of regular support, while others accessing only a few hours over the year.

This proposal also mirrors the approach taken by several other comparable councils who set maximum levels of provision, to ensure that the service can reach a wide range of children and young people within available resources. In 2024/25, the average hours accessed by all children and young people using the Play and Leisure Short Breaks services was 67.3 hours over the year, which is around 5.5 hours a month. 136 children and young people (15%) accessed more than 144 hours of provision, which is more than 12 hours a month, and 120 children and young people (13%) accessed 6 hours or less of provision during the whole year.

This graph below shows the distribution of hours accessed by numbers of children and young people in 2024/25. The dotted lines represent the proposed maximum levels. The chart shows the majority of access to provision is below the proposed maximum levels.

Chart showing number of children and young people accessing more (to the right) or less (to the left) than the proposed maximum hours, in 2024/25



The budget would be reduced by the equivalent cost of sessions previously accessed above the proposed maximum levels as a saving.

Introducing a maximum level of provision would help the council provide quality Play and Leisure Short Breaks that are in line with statutory duties to eligible children, young people and families each year, within a reasonable limit. Views are being sought on what level is considered reasonable.

What are the potential savings associated with Proposal 2?

If a maximum level were to be introduced, then there could be savings of up to £446,400 (144 hour maximum), or up to £266,250 (198 hour maximum).

What is the impact of Proposal 2?

If no other changes are made:

A maximum level of provision of 144 hours per year per child would mean:

- 136 children and young people who had previously accessed more than 144 hours of activities would not be able to use more than this level of provision
- If the released capacity was not reallocated to other children and young people, there could be a saving of up to £446,400.

A maximum level of provision of 198 hours per year per child would mean:

- 88 children and young people who had previously accessed more than 198 hours of activities would not be able to use more than this level of provision
- If the released capacity was not reallocated to other children and young people, there could be a saving of up to £266,250.

Proposal 3: Require providers of Play and Leisure Short Breaks to apply consistent parent carer charges and concessionary rates

This proposal involves standardising the level of financial contribution requested of parent carers so that children and young people can access Play and Leisure Short Breaks, so that all parent carers pay standard charges that are consistent with rates for non-specialist activities.

It also requires providers of Play and Leisure schemes to offer concessions to families who cannot meet the parental contribution, on a consistent and fair basis.

Background and rationale

All Surrey County Council commissioned Play and Leisure schemes require parent carers to contribute to the cost of running the schemes. The rates are set by providers and vary from scheme to scheme, with the average parental contribution for a Play and Leisure session currently £4.96 per hour, compared to an average market rate in Surrey of £6.89 for mainstream holiday and weekend activities, and £7.93 for shorter sessions of less than 4 hours in length. This is based on a review of mainstream activity scheme charges in June 2025.

It is proposed that the council will set out for providers the market rates to be charged for each type of Play and Leisure activity funded by the council. This will make sure that parental charges are consistent and fair for all activities across Surrey. The charging and collection of parental contributions would continue to be a condition of the commissioned service funding agreement. The rates charged by providers would be monitored (via grant or contract monitoring), to make sure that parent carer contributions are fair, and that providers are maximising their income.

Concessionary rates

The council recognises that there will be families who aren't able to meet the parental contribution. Play and Leisure Short Breaks providers are already required to offer concessions to families where this is the case, but the approach currently varies – some schemes reduce parental contributions, usually by 50%; others completely waive them. The circumstances which are currently considered may range from families with specific characteristics, such as those receiving free school meals or certain welfare benefits, to more discretionary measures such as changes in the family's circumstances or the parent carers' health and wellbeing.

To make this fair and consistent, under this proposal the council will introduce a single clear policy and rates for concessionary parental contributions. This would mean providers offering a 50% reduction where that family meets the relevant conditions for benefits-related free school meals. Free school meal eligibility is set out on the government website: [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK](#)

Implementation

If this proposal is taken forward, the full policy and charging rates will be published in advance of implementation, and charges will be reviewed and updated annually to take account of inflation and any other changes to market rates. Charges will be published on the council's website.

What are the potential savings associated with Proposal 3?

Implementing Proposal 3 would create savings of **up to £111,500** in 2026/27.

If current rates of parental contribution were increased, this could provide a way of sustaining capacity within Play and Leisure services while delivering savings, putting provision on a more sustainable footing. It is estimated that an increase in parental contributions in line with market rates towards the cost of running the schemes would generate up to £111,500 each year towards the budget.

What is the impact of Proposal 3?

An indication of what mainstream market rates are currently, and what the potential increase might be is shown in the table below, based on a review of 61 holiday, weekend and evening clubs operating in Surrey in June 2025.

Type of scheme	Range of rates	Average rate	Potential % increase from average of £4.96/hour
After school	£5-10 per hour	£7.25 per hour	46%
Holiday and weekend	£5-15 per hour £20-80 per six-hour session	£6.89 per hour £41.34 per six-hour session	39%
Sessions less than 4 hours	£5-15 per hour	£7.93 per hour	60%

Based on current market rates, parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities who access Play and Leisure short breaks are likely to experience increased costs of accessing Play and Leisure provision, which could be a challenge financially.

Charging rates would be standardised across Surrey, ensuring transparency, consistency and fairness for parent carers, and for providers.

Parents who may struggle to afford the set rates will receive a consistent approach to concessionary rates if they meet the criteria for benefits-related free school meals.

Proposal 4: Prioritise breaks for carers over those where the whole family attends

The council has a statutory duty to provide “breaks from caring” to parent carers. This proposal seeks to unify the existing offer by stopping the small level of current provision where families attend together and instead focus on schemes where parent carers do not attend. Provision to enable a break from caring for eligible families would be available within the remaining offer.

If implemented, Proposal 4 would achieve financial savings of **£14,000** each year.

Proposal 5: Focus on the Play and Leisure offer to provide a break from caring rather than commissioning extra services for the same purpose

In 2025/26, the council allocated £86,000 to provide grants of up to £300 to around 285 families of children and young people with disabilities across Surrey, who were not open to the CWD service. These grants provided small benefits to children, young people and families, such as contributing to family holidays, training for parents and contributions towards days out. The remainder of the budget for breaks for carers is in respect of contracted provision that has now ended. The effectiveness and impact of these services have not been measured.

The council's statutory duty to provide a 'break from caring' can be met via the Play and Leisure short breaks offer and schemes that promote community inclusion, alongside services that can be accessed from the CWD service, where appropriate. This proposal would end provision from the separate breaks for carers budget, prioritising instead the funding of specialist Play and Leisure, and schemes that promote community inclusion.

Given the challenging financial context, it is proposed to no longer retain the separate budget and schemes, rather than having to find an equivalent amount of savings from the Play and Leisure Short Breaks schemes. This would create a financial saving of up to **£260,000**.

This would potentially impact families that might have benefitted from receiving a £300 grant towards a break from caring.

Proposal 6: Deliver inclusive mainstream provision as part of the core Play and Leisure offer

Governance International carried out a co-production exercise as part of Department for Education innovation funded activity in 2023 and 2024. One of the conclusions was that there is clearly a need for some alternative approaches which mean that families do not suffer the emotional strain and practical challenges associated with low access to services or extended waiting periods.

In 2024/25, £468,000 was awarded through Community Inclusion Grants to 27 projects. These delivered short term pilot projects after school, at weekends and during school holidays for children and young people with SEND, in mainstream community settings. The projects reached 2,162 children and delivered 6,590 hours of inclusive activities with provision targeted in geographical areas of Surrey where there is a shortage of Play and Leisure provision.

The initial pilot schemes in 2024/25 were provided at a cost of £181 per child, compared to £2,012 per child for specialist provision. The cost of specialist provision for 9 children and young people will support 99 children and young people within inclusive mainstream settings.

The Government has funded local authorities across England to run fully funded Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) camps for children who receive benefit-related free school meals. More details on the Surrey offer can be found on the website: [Club4 camps](#). The co-production exercise found that Short Breaks services could be more joined-up with other systems of support, including working better alongside the HAF programme. In the 2025 summer school holidays, £45,000 was awarded from the Community Inclusion Grant fund to providers of the HAF programme, to deliver additional provision for children and young people with SEND and their families who were on Play and Leisure waiting lists. 368 children attended this provision. The average cost per child of this provision was £122.

This proposal is seeking feedback on delivering inclusive mainstream provision on an on-going basis, building on the pilot activities carried out in 2024/25.

There is no specific savings target associated with this proposal, but if taken forward it may mean that less bespoke specialist provision is commissioned, so that more children can access provision with the same budget. The table below sets out a comparison of how much provision could be provided within a £10,000 budget based on recent delivery.

Type of provision	Number of children who could be funded, on average with £10,000 budget?
Specialist Play and Leisure	5
Inclusive community provision	55
Additional Holiday Activity and Food provision	82

Proposal 7: Create a two-tier offer: one for specialist provision and another for inclusive mainstream

To better prioritise resource and manage demand for Play and Leisure activities, the council is proposing a two-tier Play and Leisure Short Breaks offer.

This model builds on Proposals 1: to Introduce eligibility criteria for Play and Leisure Short Breaks services, and 6: to deliver inclusive mainstream provision as part of the core Play and Leisure offer and less bespoke specialist provision. The two-tier offer would be **Tier 1: Inclusive Mainstream Provision** for children who can access activities with some additional support, and **Tier 2: Specialist Provision** for those with more complex needs requiring tailored support. The reasoning behind this approach is to make sure that resources are used effectively to reach as many families as possible, while still meeting statutory duties and providing high-quality support for those who need it most.

Inclusive mainstream provision promotes social integration and is typically more cost-effective, meaning that more children can access it. Specialist provision ensures safety and meaningful engagement for children with higher needs. By clearly distinguishing between these tiers, the council can balance inclusivity with targeted support, improve clarity around eligibility, and commission services to meet needs.

A **two-tier offer** would be structured as follows:

Inclusive Mainstream Provision

- **Who it's for:** Children and young people with disabilities who can access activities with some additional support.
- **What it includes:** Access to mainstream community-based play and leisure schemes that are adapted to be inclusive (e.g. staff trained in SEND, accessible environments).
- **Benefits:**
 - Promotes social integration and belonging.
 - Offers a wider range of activities within community settings.
 - Typically more cost-effective, allowing broader reach.

Specialist Provision

- **Who it's for:** Children and young people with more complex needs who require tailored support, such as access to sensory-adapted environments or specialist equipment.
- **What it includes:** Dedicated services designed specifically for children with high support needs.
- **Benefits:**
 - Ensures safety and meaningful engagement for children with higher needs.
 - Provides respite for families who require more intensive support.

This model would allow the council to **balance inclusivity with targeted support**, ensuring that resources are used effectively while still meeting statutory duties. If implemented, the eligibility criteria to access services as set out in Proposal 1, would need to reflect the different levels of need:

- **Tier 1 for those who meet the criteria of DLA/EHCP**
- **Tier 2 for those open to Children with Disabilities teams.** The thresholds for that service can be found online here:
<https://trixcms.trixonline.co.uk/api/assets/surreycs/b8e4dc19-1bf4-4b85-82da-126f66fef6dd/children-with-disabilities-serviceeligibility-criteria-dec-24.docx>

In order to ensure resources are used effectively and to manage demand, eligible children and young people would only be able to access services from one tier.

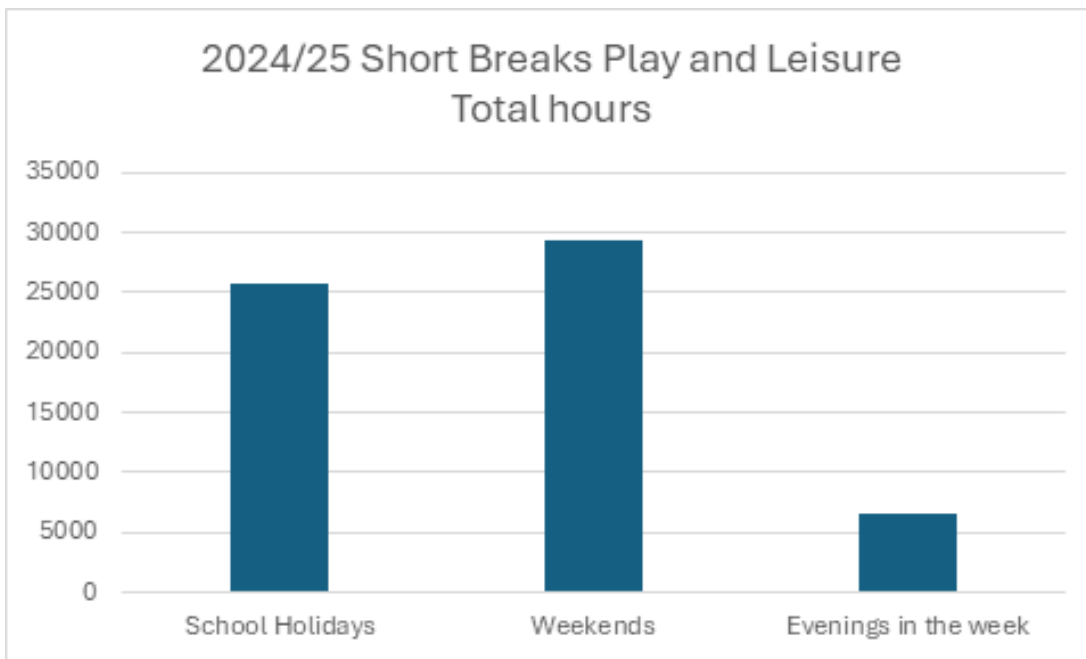
Proposal 8: Commission less provision for 1:1 or higher levels of support - about £50,000 saving

Over 61% of children and young people who accessed Play and Leisure provision in 2024/25 were assessed as requiring individual 1:1 or higher levels of support from a playworker to access schemes. This is an increase from 55% in 2022/23 and far higher than the level of 1:1 support allocated to children with AND in school settings. This position means more staff are supporting fewer children and young people, with one staff member working with one child, rather than potentially two, three or four in different circumstances. Given the need to deliver a service that is more inclusive and reaches as many children as possible, the current model is not financially sustainable.

This proposal seeks to achieve savings by reducing the amount of provision for 1:1 or higher levels of support that is commissioned, and by working with providers to develop alternative models that reduce the need for 1:1 support over time.

Proposal 9: Provide more sessions in the school holiday periods, rather than at weekends and after school

In 2024/25, 48% of sessions took place at weekends, 42% during school holidays and 11% in afternoons or evenings in the week during term time, as can be seen in the graph below. In commissioning services in future, it may be possible to review when sessions are held.



This proposal responds to feedback from parent carers that identifies school holidays, and particularly the summer holidays, as key periods when families can face increased pressure. The council is proposing to rebalance provision to increase availability of Play and Leisure capacity during the school holidays and reducing after school and/or weekend hours.

There is no savings target associated with this proposal.

Proposal 10: Offer different session lengths (e.g., 4-hour and 6-hour sessions) during school holidays and at weekends

The council is proposing to introduce shorter sessions (for example, up to 4 hours) alongside the current full-day sessions (around 6 hours) during school holidays and weekends. This change aims to provide families with greater choice and flexibility, recognising that different families have different needs. Shorter sessions may make it easier for some children to participate, particularly those who find longer activities challenging, and could help reduce waiting lists by enabling more children to access provision within the overall available budget.

This approach could also allow providers to offer a wider range of activities and make better use of resources. However, shorter sessions may provide less respite time for parent carers compared to full-day sessions, and providers may need to adapt their staffing and scheduling to accommodate mixed session lengths. The council is seeking views on whether this flexibility would improve access and meet the needs of families while maintaining quality and sustainability of the service.

There is no specific saving associated with this proposal.

How can I respond to this consultation?

Surrey County Council is committed to working collaboratively with families, service providers, and stakeholders to design a Play and Leisure Short Breaks offer that is fair, inclusive, and financially sustainable. Responses are welcomed from parents, carers, practitioners, providers, and other stakeholders to help shape a service that meets the needs of children, young people and families, while remaining viable within available resources.

To respond to this consultation, please complete the **online consultation survey** which can be found in the **Have Your Say** section here: [Surrey County Council, UK: Play and Leisure Short Breaks Consultation](#).

We are also holding a range of in-person and online events if you would like to ask questions about the consultation. You can find details of these events on the consultation page on the Surrey County Council website here: [Surrey County Council, UK: Play and Leisure Short Breaks Consultation](#).

We look forward to hearing from you.

If you would like this information as a hard copy, in large print, Braille, or in another language please contact us on:

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