

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Short Breaks Grant Offer Review 2018-19

Following the recent move of the Short Breaks Grant to Stockton on-Tees Borough Council's Resource Team we advised families of our intent to undertake a full review of the Short Breaks Grant offer.

We are now pleased to advise that following consultation with families through the support of the **Stockton Parent Carer Forum** we are in a position to share the outcomes of the consultation and provide our new offer to families.

Below is some of the feedback and comments we received from individuals and the survey with our response.

You Said...	We Did...
You would like "Greater access to mainstream activities" and "choice"	<p>After listening to you, we have included the option of applying for up to £150 for universal activities to provide this additional choice for those children who would benefit from this option.</p> <p>We have introduced a Decision Making Tool that you have been provided with in response to each application. This is intended to provide transparency in how decisions about the grant awarded has been come to.</p>
"Reduce time waiting for payments, can this be sent by BACS?"	We are happy to pay money via BACS where this requested. We are looking to further improve this and we are exploring a more universal method of electronic payments in the future.
You would want a quicker response and would like us to "Pay money directly to the provisions, quicker service"	<p>We intend from this point forward to pay specialist services directly where we have established an agreement with them to do so. We hope this will speed up the process and reduce the need for families to submit receipts for these services.</p> <p>We will no longer need to have the receipts were we have paid providers directly before we process your new applications. We hope this will speed up the process.</p>

<p>53% of those who responded to the survey said that they would not be happy to have commissioned services as part of the Short Breaks Grant.</p>	<p>We have talked to providers regarding commissioned services and most are happy to consider this if families feel it would benefit them. We have listened to the majority and have not commissioned them. However we recognise the margin of majority is thin and we would like to consult with you further about this. We will do this in the coming months.</p>
<p>100% of those who responded to the survey told us if forms were available online you would use this facility.</p>	<p>This is going to take us a bit longer to achieve, we are aiming to have this facility up and running for 2019 applications.</p>
<p>In the survey you said the greatest benefit of the Grant to families has been to give children the opportunity to learn a new skill, socialise and provide respite.</p>	<p>We have improved the offer to give a wider range of options in the hope to provide families who meet the eligibility criteria further opportunities to learn new things and enjoy wider activities with our new offer.</p>
<p>You told us that “families have had to wait longer this year for decisions to be made”</p>	<p>We accept waiting times have been longer this year. We apologise for any inconvenience this has may have caused. The main reason for this has been a new team taking responsibility for the grant.</p> <p>In the new period we hope to have decisions made within 10 working days (where no further information is required to reach a decision).</p>
<p>40% of those who responded to the survey said they were not clear about how the grant can be used to support them and their family.</p>	<p>We were keen to respond to this as we want as many families as possible to benefit from the Grant. We revised the way the offer looked and have included explanations about what the Grant can be used for, we hope our new offer is much clearer and understandable.</p>
<p>“Having to apply every 6 months is making things more difficult” “A yearly fund is more beneficial for families!”</p>	<p>We never intended for the Grant to operate every 6 months. We advised that this would only be for the year period of 2018 to 2019, whilst we undertook this review.</p>
<p>“More flexibility, individualism and understanding is required”</p>	<p>We hope that we have achieved this through our new offer!</p>