

Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO) Consultation

What is this consultation about?

Hertfordshire County Council is seeking views on the future of the Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO) for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

SBLO provides opportunities for children and young people with SEND to enjoy activities, build independence, develop friendships and support family wellbeing. Current provision includes holiday activities, after-school and weekend clubs, youth groups and buddying support.

We are seeking feedback from children and young people, parents, carers, providers and professionals before any decisions are made.

No changes are proposed to other Short Breaks services, including overnight short breaks, shared care, direct payments, homecare support or other specialist services.

Why are we consulting?

Short Breaks are highly valued by families, but demand for SBLO has grown significantly and now exceeds the resources available.

Key challenges include:

- The number of children accessing SBLO has more than tripled since 2019.
- There is currently a waiting list in operation.
- There is no prioritisation based on need, meaning some children with higher levels of need may miss out.
- Children are often receiving fewer hours than we or families would wish.
- The complexity of need is increasing, reflected in rising numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Provider costs have increased due to staffing and operational pressures.

Despite additional investment, the current model is no longer sustainable or able to meet demand.

We are therefore seeking views on a proposed targeted, needs-led approach and any transitional arrangements or alternative options that could be considered.

Current Arrangements

Most children and young people aged 5 to 19 with SEND who live in Hertfordshire can register for SBLO and access up to 40 hours of support each year if they receive eligible disability benefits or have supporting evidence from a relevant professional. Currently no assessment is made on level of need or support required.

Proposed Targeted, Needs-Led Model

Under the proposed model:

- Access would be based on a Social Care Assessment or Carer's Assessment¹. An assessment is a supportive process that helps us understand what is important to a child and their family, including their strengths, needs and circumstances. We work together with families to identify what support may be helpful and how best to meet the child's and family's individual needs.
- Support would be allocated according to assessed need, with priority given to those with the highest levels of need.
- The amount of support received would vary based on individual circumstances.
- Council funding would continue, but family contributions would increase to a minimum of £5 per hour. All providers will be expected to have a hardship policy to support families in financial disadvantage so cost would never be a barrier to accessing an activity.
- Providers would be expected to support families experiencing financial hardship.

Potential Benefits

- Greater support for children and young people with the highest needs.
- Better targeting of limited resources.
- Reduced waiting times.
- A more sustainable service for the future.

Potential Challenges

- Some families currently receiving SBLO may no longer be eligible.
- Children with lower levels of assessed need may need to rely more on community-based provision.
- Additional assessment processes would be required.

¹ Under the definition of disabled children in the Children Act 1989, all disabled children are 'children in need' and are entitled to an assessment. If an assessment of a child or young person's disability is likely to lead to lifelong support from statutory social care services, early help and social care funding support can be offered. For more information on assessments, please see: [0-25 Together Service Leaflet](#)

Support That Will Continue

Regardless of the outcome of this consultation, Hertfordshire County Council will continue to promote and develop support available through its Community Short Breaks Universal Offer, including:

- [The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Community Activities Directory](#)
- [Herts Card](#) discount scheme.
- [Services for Young People \(SfYP\)](#)
- [Equipment Lending Library](#)
- [HAPpy Camps](#), including SEND-specific provision.

What Happens Next?

No decisions have been made at this stage.

Feedback from this consultation will help us understand the potential impact of the proposals and inform future decisions. If changes are agreed, appropriate transition arrangements, information and support will be provided to families.

Have Your Say

Your feedback will help shape the future of Short Breaks services in Hertfordshire.

Complete the consultation here: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/SBLOconsultation

Consultation closes: 12 noon, Thursday 17th December 2026

Further engagement sessions will be held with the support of HPCI as follows:

- **Thursday 1st October**, 10.30am-12 noon
Virtual session via Microsoft Teams.
Please book here: [1st October virtual session](#)
- **Monday 2nd November**, 6-7.30pm
Virtual session via Microsoft Teams.
Please book here: [2nd November virtual session](#)
- **Thursday 19th November**, 10.15am-12 noon (the session will start promptly at 10.30am)

In person session in Stevenage, further details including a parking permit will be sent upon booking.

Places **must** be booked in advance by Monday 26th October by emailing:

SENDCommissioning@hertfordshire.gov.uk

For a paper copy or an alternative format, please contact:

SENDCommissioning@hertfordshire.gov.uk