

Learning example – short breaks

Provider name	Bi-Borough Short Break Service
Area/Service	<i>London - Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster city Councils</i>

Summary of Short break provision

The **Bi- Borough Short Breaks Service** operates from two in-house dedicated disabled children's centres. Both of these centres were able to stay open throughout the pandemic. They usually operate afterschool, weekends and Holidays but have adapted in lockdown to continue to take children during the daytime instead. Children and Young people were offered 2 slots of 3 hours per week.

The centres also became distribution hubs for any PPE support/kit needed by caring and support staff. The centres also adapted their offer to carry out shopping and medication runs each week

Bi-Borough supports any disabled child aged 5-18yrs across the two boroughs. Families can attend either centre depending on where they live.

What needed to change?

(Please note these examples are based on Government guidelines in place at the time. All providers continue to monitor and update their practice based on current advice)

At the beginning of the pandemic the senior team at Bi-Borough RAG rated 30 children in each Borough who they were the most worried about and adapted their offer to support them. Initially these children and their families received weekly calls to establish how the family were and to check in on the support they needed.

The whole Short breaks team worked as one with 15 team members made up of Occupational Therapists, Admin and Short Break Practitioners making up 200 PPE kits for families who had Direct Payment carers still working and then using the transport team to deliver them to the homes. So as a Service we all pulled together to get what was needed completed.

The team also supported 22 families who were shielding with Shopping runs from the first week of lockdown. This involved many of the Play workers working with the local Waitrose to secure shopping slots and Waitrose keeping back some of the hard to get products for the families. This was very well received by those families as the welfare boxes did not contain the goods that their children would only eat.

If the family were struggling they offered a range of support which included:

- extending their Direct Payment money for carers,
- introducing a menu of alternative things that families could use their Direct Payment money on, such as technology equipment, outdoor play equipment to suit the restrictions of lockdown as well as specific family circumstances.
- Sensory packs and craft packs for families which could be delivered or kept in the Hubs for pick up. This led to lots of photos of the children enjoying them at home.

Where families were willing to come to the centres they continued to offer onsite support.

The centres normally have 20 children per day but the capacity was limited to four per session during lockdown. Children were offered a morning or afternoon slot of three hours. This enabled the centre to take eight children per day.

They used a bubble model with the same workers supporting the same child each week.

All workers were trained and wore PPE kit. Risk assessments were completed and a strict cleaning routine was established after every session.

As the Pandemic developed, Bi-Borough acquired another venue to use which they also opened on Saturdays to accommodate an increase in children needing support.

Families were not given their full care packages as the centres needed to spread their offer across all families. They also had to include children who may usually attend other venues/places but were shut due to lockdown.

What enabled the changes to happen?

Having two centres was a real positive for Bi-Borough. It enabled them to immediately take control of the environment and make changes to the settings in regards to continuing their offer.

Other supportive factors included:

- ✓ Good links within the sector and across Health and Education following their recent SEND inspection which happened just before lockdown. This meant they could swiftly work together to source staff and ensure the most vulnerable children received support.
- ✓ As we had no contracts with providers, we were able to use our money as needed instead of being tied up to a provider who was shut.
- ✓ Effective communication methods meant that families were supportive of the centre and worked with them. They utilised the existing relationships with parent forums to provide regular updates on the offer and what was available.
- ✓ Strong parent links on the forums meant that the centres could continue to have our Social group forums over Zoom. The SLT also attended the Westminster City Council forum monthly over Zoom with a Q and A for families around Short breaks. This kept everyone informed and engaged.

- ✓ PPE kit was vital for the staff to continue delivering services. Initially it was ordered online as they were no local sources but over the weeks that changed and they received supplies from the Borough.
- ✓ Bi-Borough set up two Train the Trainers who then trained and fitted the FFP3 kits for children who were Machine dependent.
- ✓ The SLT found that by taking instant and flexible decisions around using Direct Payments for other things rather than activities only, it enabled families to get sensory equipment for their homes and other outdoor equipment like trampolines.
- ✓ Families were encouraged to use their Direct Payments to purchase iPads or Laptops as needed. This flexing of the way they could be used meant that families were able to find solutions to their children being stuck at home in lockdown without the right support or stimulation.

What next – scaling up and sustainability

(Please note these plans have been developed in response to the new and expected guidance on the wider opening of services)

There are a number of things that Bi-borough Short Break Service are keen to retain moving forwards based on their learning during lockdown. For example:

- Parents Forums over Zoom allowed more parents to attend which was very useful.
- Also as a Bi- Borough Service they were always travelling between the Boroughs which takes up time so by using the new technology moving forward this will help direct capacity more effectively.
- The service have also completed the reviews for care packages over the phone during this time which also worked well for families wanting continuations, as such they will seek to keep to this approach and reduce visits if the families are in agreement.

They are now preparing for the Summer Holidays. Although they are now allowing 5 children to attend a session, they are planning to operate out of 12 sites such as the Youth clubs and some schools over the summer with the hope that every family who want a playscheme will be offered two full days for the four weeks of August. This will be approximately 200 children.

In addition, they are planning to continue to support children with SEN who are not attending school in our daytime slots which is not our usual operational times.