

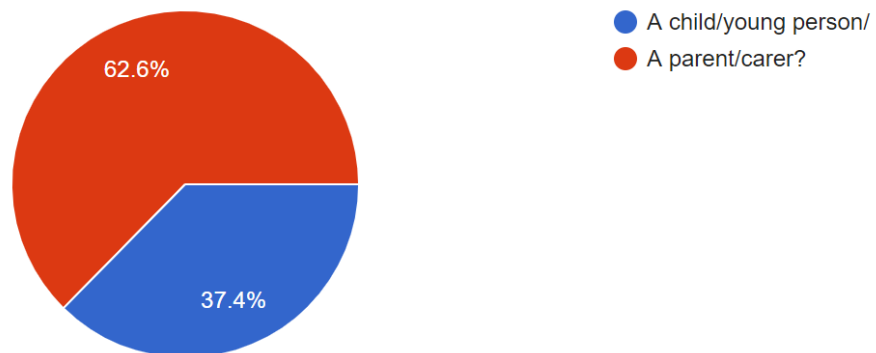
APPENDIX A

Analysis of Summer of Play responses

Children, young people and families were invited to share their views on what a summer of play could comprise by electronic survey in May. The survey was open for one week and a total of 1852 responses were returned over the week.

1160 responses were returned by parents and carers and 692 by children and young people.

1,852 responses



Although the question stems for both groups of stakeholders were similar, parents and carers were also asked to identify groups of children they felt had been most negatively impacted by the pandemic. This branching question was designed to help the service triangulate data held by Health, Children and Family Services and Early Intervention and Community Empowerment in order to ensure that the programme is designed around the groups of children most likely to benefit.

811 parents and carers (around two thirds) who returned the survey did not comment to say that their child had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, these responses almost all referenced that they felt that all children had been impacted by the events of the last 16 months. Particular reference was made to those transitioning from primary to secondary over summer.

Feedback from parents on how their child has been impacted by the pandemic.

A wealth of rich data was gleaned from parents and carers to help shape the Aberdeen Summer of Play.

One parent expressed the feelings of many through this response, 'I feel that young people have missed out on an awful lot with zero activities or opportunities for socialising with friends/other children having been available to them for the best part of a year'. Another parent noted that, 'at a time when teens are reaching out into the world, they've been stuck at home in a smaller and smaller world.'

Some parents noted some potential positive impacts on the togetherness of families noting, 'We have kept things as stable as possible at home and have possibly emerged stronger as a family. But without question, my children missed being with their friends and all that entails'.

Almost all parents and carers referenced the need for their child to be involved in group activity and have the opportunity to socialise over the summer holiday period.

A common theme in responses from parents and carers was an acknowledgement that the restrictions have impacted on their child's general demeanour, 'Isolation has made him quite lonely/quiet and painfully shy'. Another noted, 'My son is now nervous and anxious around people and I feel that the pandemic has impacted his mental health'. One parent described her child as being, 'more needy' and not willing to leave the house without her. Another parent shared that, 'My daughter is a single child and we live in a flat, she hasn't been able to interact with other kids which she loves and I feel she has been quite lonely sometimes'

Many parents expressed concerns that their child was now less likely to seek time away from the family home, 'My daughter has been too used to being at home with me now and I struggle to get her to spend time with anyone else, even leaving her at school in the morning can be an issue'

There were many references to the need for team activities to encourage children to re-engage and learn to work together again.

Feedback from parents and carers – who has been most negatively impacted?

There were a number of common themes evident from the 349 parents and carers who identified their child as being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

It is clear that those impacted by poverty, those with disabilities and those impacted by shielding (either shielding themselves or living with someone who has been shielding) seem to have been most disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Another common theme was a recognition that children in single child households had been more impacted than others. 'My children had no interaction with any other children, I was just grateful they were not an only child as they had their brother/sisters to interact with...simple little things we took for granted.'

There were many comments about how the lack of green space had limited opportunities to leave the family home and frequent reference to families living in flat accommodation facing particular challenges.

Very young children were seen to have been disproportionately impacted with one parent stating that, 'my child has spent more than a third of their life in 'pandemic mode'.

A high number of responses noted the particular challenges faced by children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. 'My child is autistic and found transitioning back to school really difficult.'

'I have five children ranging between 1yr and 18 yrs with two of them having additional needs (Autism/ADHD). We live in a third floor flat which means we don't have a garden for the children to freely use meaning the only time the children get out to play is when I am able to go with them as they are too young to be out alone. We do have green spaces and parks nearby that we were able to use during lockdown but it got quite repetitive. The children have definitely shown stress, behaviour changes and sleep difficulties during the pandemic and have felt very lonely at times being away from their friends and not being able to have the freedom to do the things that they did before.'

Children with disabilities/additional support needs (particularly Autism Spectrum Condition) were frequently noted as most significantly impacted by the pandemic. Families impacted by disability also noted the impact on siblings given the high level of care required by them. Some families noted that their child has continued to have to shield and therefore had no contact with the outside world since March 2020. Young Carers of those shielding were also raised as a group in need of support as well as consideration for those who have been bereaved.

'My eldest son is Autistic and has really struggled with all the changes in everyday life due to restrictions, etc. Consistency is a huge thing for him and not being able to go to school, see his friends, attend clubs that he usually would, has really impacted, not only on him but on his little brother too who has had to deal with his brother meltdowns due to the changes.'

The feedback from parents and carers is broadly in line with the data held by Health, Children and Family Services and Early Intervention and Community Empowerment. The feedback indicates a need to develop a universal offer in both central locations and in our priority areas. The data suggests that this should be supplemented with a more intensive programme of activity to support some groups including those impacted by poverty, those with disabilities (particularly Autism Spectrum Condition) and those who continue to be impacted by shielding arrangements.

General themes emerging in terms of approach.

A high number of responses from parents and carers highlighted concerns around their child's mental health. An equally large number of parents and carers relayed concerns about the lack of physical activity and a regression in physical skills.

The vast majority of parents and carers noted that they would feel most comfortable with outdoor activities that enable groups of known children to come together to play whilst others would like to use the summer to give children and young people a taster of activities that they may enjoy as we move forward out of the pandemic.

Our children and young people are very clear and request, 'physical activities, outdoor, hands-on things'. They are equally quite clear about what they don't want, 'I don't want to be dependent on screens / or devices. No phones no laptops please'.

Another said, 'No thanks to digital, I have got a lot to do already,' Another, when asked of their interest in a digital offer said, 'No, no, no.'

Feedback from children and young people is very consistent on the use of digital over summer. The only exception to this is a request for on-line Coding Clubs to further digital skills.

Children and young people identified many similar concerns to those identified by parents and carers.

One stated that, 'money and accessibility' were important for the summer programme and that they would prefer activities in, 'open space because of COVID-19'

The cost of activities was a recurring theme in the responses from children and young people. Sadly, many children and young people who raised the issue of affordability also asked for help with food over the summer holiday period.

Children and young people are clearly looking for some routine and one young person made a request for, 'A timetable so I know when to make plans and to know when I'm free.'

The location of activities is seen to be critical however, 'If it is far away from my house then I would have problems because I wouldn't be able to get there on my bike'.

Activities requested by all children and young people.

Children and young people have a clear sense of the activities they would like to engage in. There is incredible commonality in the activities being requested. These requests seem to span all socio-economic groups and suggest that activities could be rotated around the city.

Swimming is most popular with 395 respondents keen to see increased access to swimming pools.

364 children and young people are keen to access opportunities to play football.

52 respondents would like running related activities such as fun runs and running clubs. 39 children requested opportunities to dance.

One child said of camping, 'I'm going camping for the first time and don't have any experience or skills'. Many children referenced camping in their response.

Many requests were a bit more adventurous and seek outdoor park events/treasure hunts/den building/loose parts play/orienteering etc. with reference also made to using our natural resource of the beach. The use of the outdoors is consistent with

some children seeking gardening activities, 'I would like to do some [gardening and planting veggies](#)'.

Art activities (158) and science activities (19) were also a popular request.

Some families seek activities that will bring families and communities together and some suggest offering opportunities for young people to volunteer in their communities.

Barriers to participation in a summer programme

One of the main barriers to participation was noted (by 88 families) as being travel costs and travel arrangements. Several requests were made for free bus travel for children over the holiday period.

A mix of times were requested to enable working families to support their child's attendance.

Several references were also made about the accessibility of activities for wheelchair users and the need for activities to be local where families are more reliant on Public Transport.

Wider support for families over the summer holiday period

122 parents and carers who responded said that they would benefit from on-going support with food or housing with many requests for school meal vouchers to remain in place over the holiday period. A number of references were also made to the need for on-going support from food banks.

190 said that access to food over the holiday period is an issue.

Families impacted by poverty.

Looking at responses from those who note that access to food over the holiday period is an issue has helped gather some further insight. One parent seems to summarise the responses of many with the request for, "[Just some fun clubs so all the children can try and be happy as they were before](#)".

A high number of responses indicate a need for 'free and local' opportunities to be available and some seek opportunities for community activities to help parents and carers reconnect with others too. Days out were identified by some families and many noted that cost would be a barrier to participation.

A higher number of respondents who are parents and carers asked for digital meets to be available. Upon further analysis this seems to indicate that parents and carers are feeling disconnected from their community and seeking an opportunity to

reconnect. Children, with the exception of those requesting access to Coding Clubs, are adamant that they do not want to access a digital offer.

Some parents are concerned about how to balance their remaining annual leave with the 7 weeks of the summer holiday period and request that low-cost childcare be made available locally.

Families impacted by Autism Spectrum Condition or disability

The spectrum of need associated with Autism Spectrum Condition is possibly a factor in the inability to draw many themes from the data. Families note that children have been disproportionately impacted by the restrictions and some seek accessible mainstream activities as the Summer of Play programme is developed. Other families seek more specialist support for children with Autism.

The needs of siblings of those with Autism was highlighted frequently with parents who are acutely aware of how they had been impacted.

[‘Not had as much attention as had to focus more on older brother who needed for help with homeschooling’](#)

Those who have been shielding were noted as being a group who have been unable to leave the home for over 15 months now. Concerns were also raised about Young Carers who have faced increased restrictions in order to protect their family.

The Service continues to engage with some community groups supporting those with Autism Spectrum Condition in order to better understand the supports most helpful to them over the summer holiday period.

Summary

The high number of returns has helped to gain a very clear picture of the needs of our children, young people and families. There is overwhelming evidence for a universal offer (both city wide and in our priority areas) as well as clear evidence that some living in poverty, those impacted by disability (particularly those with Autism Spectrum Condition) and those either shielding or impacted by shielding require a more targeted response.