be able to give more effective care if breaks were given to allow them to, for example, undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity, meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or carry out day-to-day tasks, which they must perform in order to run the household.

3. What we know about families’ needs in relation to short breaks

3.1 Consultation we have undertaken with families
In each year of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme, families were fully consulted about short break services in the borough. The aim was to understand the needs of parents, carers and young people in relation to short breaks and to actively engage families in shaping the services available to them in the local area.

At the start of the programme in 2008 a wide range of consultative activity with parents and carers was undertaken including workshop events, discussions at existing forums, specific focus groups and dissemination of questionnaires. A representative group of children and young people from across the age and ability range also participated in the consultation process.

As a result of this consultation, we established the following provision:
- Regular information about short breaks distributed to families through the Short Breaks Co-ordinator supported by an LDD Service website and quarterly newsletter.
- Keyworker scheme within the LDD Service to co-ordinate the package of care for families with complex needs
- Teen Flying High for 12-17 year olds running alongside the Flying High playscheme during the holidays with a wide range of age appropriate activities and off site trips.
- The “Masters” group at Saturday Club for 12-17 year olds who are able to decide their own activities separate from the main Saturday Club and attend a mainstream Youth Club once a month.
- Buddy groups facilitated by support workers to enable 12-17 year olds to access a wide range of social activities during term time including bowling, swimming, cinema, meals out and water sports.
- A range of one to one support to enable children and young people to access mainstream clubs and groups.
- Holiday provision at mainstream leisure centres and support to access activities such as trampolining and swimming.
- Specialist holiday provision at Thames Valley Adventure Playground, KIDS, CATs at Camp Mohawk and Activenture.
- Adaptations to disabled changing facilities at a local mainstream leisure centre.
- Healthcare training for a range of providers to enable children and young people with complex health needs to access short break activities.
Quotes from families

Teen Flying High

"It was a great success, X enjoyed it immensely. Interacting with children around the same age in a much smaller group, X felt as though she was more of an adult."

"It’s good! I like to go out on the trips with the older ones. Teen Flying High gives me things to do in the holidays."

"I think this scheme has definitely filled a gap in the service...thank you!"

Buddy Groups

"Buddy groups allow young disabled people to act like teenagers and get out and about like anyone else!"

I like buddy groups because....

"they are time away from your parents"

"I found them interesting and fun"

"Everyone is friendly"

"I see my friends and have fun"

In the final year of the Aiming High programme we undertook a consultation with parents and carers about their satisfaction in relation to the short break services they had received (November 2010). In addition, the LDD Family Feedback Form was sent to all families known to the LDD Service in June 2011, which has provided us with additional information about families’ views about short break services and any gaps in service provision.

Key findings from these consultations showed that:

- Parents and carers were most satisfied with: holiday activity centres/day trips such as CAMP Mohawk and TVAP, one to one support, leisure centre activities and specialist holiday playschemes.
- Flying High, Teen Flying High and Buddy Groups were rated highly by families.
- Areas for improvement were cited as the timing of short break activities, weekend activities and after school activities.
- Costs of activities can sometimes be prohibitive for some families.
- There is a continuing need for age appropriate activities based across the different localities in the borough.
- There is a need for reliable and consistent support workers who are well matched to the needs of children and young people.
- Parents and carers aren’t always clear about the eligibility for short breaks and what they are entitled to and think clearer information is needed.
- The majority of those who responded to the short break consultation (68%) feel that we gather more feedback from families to help improve our services.
- There is an ongoing need for information and training sessions for parents to help them to learn more about their child’s disability/learning difficulty and to support their development.
Parents and carers also expressed how much they valued short breaks:

"This was the first time our son had ever been on a leisure activity without a family member... it was such a breakthrough."
"(Short Breaks) gives my child a chance to interact with other children of her own age and to build friendships."
"It has been invaluable and has made a huge difference to our lives... and has enabled me to spend time with my other child."

The main findings from these consultations have directly informed the programme and commissioning of short break activities for 2011/12 including the following:

- **Specialist holiday activities** at TVAP, KIDS and Cats at Camp Mohawk have been recommissioned together with a range of activities at local leisure centres.
- The LDD Service’s specialist holiday playscheme, *Flying High, and the Teen Flying High programme* for 12-17 year olds will be offered as part of the short breaks menu.
- The **buddy group programme** for 12-17 year olds to access short break activities during term time is also being expanded to take place every fortnight. A permanent base at a mainstream youth club is also being established to extend opportunities for the young people to practise key skills to develop their independence such as cooking and using IT.
- The LDD Service is commissioning more **age appropriate short breaks after school** at local leisure centres (e.g. gym and swimming sessions) and at the weekends (e.g. trampolining).
- There will be the opportunity at the **weekends and during the holidays** to access a variety of activities as a family, with parents and carers and siblings also being able to attend and participate.
- A **bank of staff** is also being established within the LDD Service to provide families with consistent, reliable and appropriately trained support workers.
- A comprehensive programme of **parent information sessions** for 2011-12 will run on a termly basis in partnership with Manor Green School and the Teaching and Support Service enabling parents and carers the opportunity to learn more about their child’s disability/learning difficulty.

We are committed to continuing to formally consult with parents and children and young people on a regular basis to ensure the short break services provided to them are meeting their needs and aspirations. In addition, evaluations of individual activities such as the Flying High Playscheme, Teen Flying High and Buddy Groups will continue to regularly take place with young people and their families to directly shape the provision.