

## Evaluation of Breaking the Barrier Summer 2018



**Dr Kevin Burchell**

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## Breaking the Barrier 2018 – word cloud



This word cloud was automatically produced by the evaluation survey software, based on parent responses to the survey statement:

“The young person in our family was able to participate in the surfing at Bigbury-on-Sea.  
Would you like to add any comments on this topic?”

The word cloud encapsulates the key findings in the evaluation very well.

# Author and acknowledgements

Dr Kevin Burchell specialises in research, evaluation and policy engagement in the context of community-based, participatory and action-based projects. Kevin is the author of: Professional science as public culture: final report of the ScoPE project (2009), Working together to save energy: final report of the Smart Communities project (2014), Factors affecting public engagement by researchers (literature review) (2015), Developing the role of community groups in local climate resilience: final report of the Urban Heat project (2017), and Public Attitudes to Science: literature review (2018), as well as numerous academic papers. See more information on Dr Burchell's website: <https://kevinburchell.blogspot.com/>.

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- The Breaking the Barrier team and Lifeworks are grateful to the organisations that support the programme (see next page).

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# Breaking the Barrier supporters 2018



The role of our partner organisations cannot be overstated. It would not be possible to put on Breaking the Barrier without their voluntary support. With their tireless enthusiasm, good nature and expertise, they bring so much to the events.  
(Lifeworks Community Projects Manager)

Breaking the Barrier 2018 was also supported by the Santander Foundation.

# Key findings

## Introduction



Breaking the Barrier (BtB) is a Lifeworks programme with the aim of providing opportunities for children and young people with learning disabilities – and, crucially, their families and carers – to participate in adventure sports. This aim is underpinned by a number of more specific core objectives, for participants: to be *able* to participate; to *enjoy* or

experience the *thrill* of participating; to *feel comfortable* participating; and to have their accessibility and other *needs met*. In addition, the events have the objectives: for participants to learn new or develop existing *skills* and increase the likelihood of *further participation*. Lifeworks delivers BtB in partnership with around twelve local partners who provide voluntary support and specialist equipment.

BtB 2018 consisted of three events: surfing at Saunton, cycling at Torbay Velopark and surfing at Bigbury-on-Sea. Across the three events, BtB 2018 provided adventure sport opportunities for 139 young people, 37 siblings and 30 parents, a total of 206 experiences.

The key objectives of this evaluation are – employing quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data – to understand the extent to which BtB 2018 achieved its objectives and the role of the partners in that. A draft of this report was discussed by the evaluator and the Lifeworks BtB team on 12 November 2018, and feedback from the workshop is provided in the report.

## Key findings<sup>1</sup>

### 1. All three BtB 2018 events achieved their core objectives to a very high degree.

This is the case with respect to young people, and their families and carers. For instance, there was:

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report, we refer to male young people as John and female young people as Jane. We have done this to preserve both the sense of the comments and the anonymity of the young people.

## Parent comments

It's really relaxed. Nothing fazes the team, nothing is too difficult, they really get it, always a smile, really welcoming. Talk about accessibility and inclusion!

Jane was very anxious, wanted to go home. We got the wet suit on, spoke to [co-ordinator] and asked instructors to go to her. Then Jane Broke the Barrier!!

Wonderful to be with a team who get it. Very impressed with the way Lifeworks puts on the events.

No one is judging John and no one is judging me.

Our youngest son rode around with John., he was so moved that he cried!!

- i. 100% agreement that the young people were able to participate and enjoyed themselves, and that their needs were met (90% at Saunton).
- ii. Above 90% agreement at all three events that the young people felt comfortable.
- iii. The overall agreement scores across the core objectives for young people were: Saunton: 95%, Velopark: 99% and Bigbury: 99%.
- iv. In addition, based on more limited data, 100% of siblings were able to participate (92% at Bigbury).

**2. This success is largely due to three key factors:**

- i. **Led by the Lifeworks BtB team, the BtB voluntary event teams have a very special approach.**



Highly relaxed and competent, this approach supports and enables confident and safe participation by all. The approach also creates a safe space within which learning disability becomes the norm.

- ii. **BtB is a family programme.**  
The possibility of participating as a family is highly motivating and rewarding for the young people and their families.
- iii. **Participation is 'easy' and inclusive.**  
At BtB events, all specialist equipment is provided, including surfboards, wet suits, beach wheelchairs and specialist cycles. In addition, the event teams are highly supportive before and after participation.

**3. Long term participation in BtB has a number of benefits.**

- i. Young people are able to meet and participate with friends.
- ii. Anxiety is reduced by familiarity with the events and the event teams.
- iii. Young people eagerly anticipate and look forward to the events.
- iv. BtB events become a valuable 'family tradition'.
- v. BtB events support ongoing development.

## Parent comments

*A fantastic time, so lovely we could ride together on a side-by-side tandem.*

*Hey, I can surf too! John is encouraged when he sees me participate. We all enjoy it.*

*Great thing about it is the confidence of familiarity, it's a family tradition.*

*It's a family thing, that's the warmth I get from it.*

*Jane can be the beautiful, surfy, funky daughter that I always want her to be, living life on the edge.*

*To have a son who was paranoid about sand and water, always kept his socks on, and couldn't bear the seaweed, now he loves the beach and surfing, and always wants more*

#### 4. Skills development

- i. Across the three events, there was 66% agreement that the young people had learned new skills at the events. The corresponding figure for adults was 50%.
- ii. Given that many participants have participated before, these are strong scores.
- iii. Nonetheless, the BtB team might consider ways in which the acquisition of new skills can be made more explicit in the approach to BtB events.

#### 5. Partner organisations.

- i. The voluntary contributions of partner organisations are invaluable to BtB and this is recognised by the BtB team.
- ii. Partners volunteer because they share the values and objectives of BtB, and also gain a lot from supporting BtB.
- iii. One or two challenges emphasise the importance of ongoing communications with partners.

#### 6. Other aspects of the BtB events.

- i. The entertainment and refreshments at BtB events are appreciated by many. At the same time, as would be expected, it is clear that they are of secondary importance compared to the adventure sports.
- ii. Within the context of the challenges of waiting, parents would appreciate other activities (such as face painting).
- iii. Parents also raised the potential of adding a more explicit socialising element to BtB events.



#### 7. Parent views of the registration system.

There is a strong desire among parents for a one-off on-line registration system (as opposed to the current annual Word document system)

#### 8. Parent ideas for the future of BtB.

- i. Parents are keen to have more opportunities to surf and cycle (ideally with opportunities for more one-to-one instruction).
- ii. Parents also expressed a wish for other sports (water-based sports appear to be very popular) and some parents are keen on an overnight event for a variety of reasons.

#### Evaluator's key recommendations

1. Keep up the good work! Indeed, do more of the same!

#### Partner comments

*BtB fits our ethos: helping others, particularly local people and charities.*

*The kids get so much out of it and the parents seeing children doing something [new] – priceless."*

2. Think about: offering more opportunities for one-to-one instruction; having more activities at BtB events; ways of building in an explicit skills element to BtB events; and, enhancing the social aspects of BtB events.
3. Consider offering new adventure sports; water-based sports appear to be very popular.
4. Although the BtB team obviously has good relationships with its partners, overall, it is essential to constantly consider, refine and improve the ways in which it engages with partners across the year and around the events themselves.
5. It is important that the registration system be taken on-line, and a one-off registration system devised.



### **Responses from the BtB team**

1. The findings of the evaluation were discussed by the evaluator and the BtB team at a workshop on 12 November 2018, and by the BtB team and the Lifeworks Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 22 November 2018. The BtB team and SLT responded to the overall positive nature of this evaluation with great satisfaction.
2. The BtB team reported that it had already been working on a number of developments that pre-empt the findings of the evaluation:
  - i. The team is already developing a new water sport offering for 2019.
  - ii. The team is already developing plans for regular events in 2019 that offer greater one-to-one opportunities. As part of these developments, the team is developing leader training for some of the older BtB participants.
  - iii. The team is already planning a Love Your Volunteer event, designed to celebrate the contributions of the partners, for early 2019. In addition, it was agreed that the team would devise a year-round engagement plan for partner organisations. The team is also now planning an informal training session for volunteers.
3. In addition, the team readily agreed to pursue further evaluation recommendations:
  - i. The BtB team and SLT have agreed that an online registration system will be implemented for BtB 2019.
  - ii. Finally, the team agreed to investigate options for more activities and socialising at BtB events. Plans are underway to involve learning disabled young volunteers with vocational interest in physical activity, art and cooking to help improve this aspect of BtB for 2019.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Lifeworks

Lifeworks is a UK registered charity, based in Dartington in south Devon. The charity was established in 1996 by a group of parents and teachers with the aim of making a difference to the lives of children and young people with learning disabilities, and their families and carers. More than twenty years later, the charity delivers a wide range of programmes and services with this simple objective, including residential and respite care, further education, life skills training, youth clubs, and sport and leisure events. The charity is constantly expanding and enhancing the educational, vocational and recreational opportunities it offers. The Lifeworks 2016-2020 strategy emphasise the importance to its ongoing success of learning and partnerships.



## 1.2 Breaking the Barrier

Breaking the Barrier (BtB) is an annual Lifeworks programme. BtB was first run in 2007 and has since hosted over 1,339 children and young people with learning disabilities, along with their families. The aim of BtB is to provide opportunities for children and young adults with learning disabilities, and their families and carers to participate in adventure sports. For ten years, BtB focused on surfing. In 2017, in response to feedback from parents and carers, cycling and trampolining were introduced. Parents/carers are asked to make a small deposit to reserve a place, which they are invited to donate. Otherwise, BtB events are offered free of charge.

This aim is underpinned by a number of more specific objectives. Within the overall context of participation in adventurous sports, the objectives are for children and young people with learning disabilities, and their families and carers:

- To be *able* to participate;
- To *enjoy* or experience the *thrill* of participating;
- To *feel comfortable* participating;
- To learn new or develop existing *skills*;
- To have their accessibility and other *needs met*;
- To increase the likelihood of *further participation*.

Alongside a number of other projects, the administration and management of BtB is undertaken by a small and busy Community Projects team, consisting of a manager and an assistant. Fundraising and IT support are provided from within Lifeworks. The BtB events themselves are run by much larger teams of volunteers and a few paid individuals; these teams are discussed in more



detail in Chapter 3. The planning of each BtB programme typically begins in the previous autumn, with fund raising, and intensifies during the spring and early summer preceding each programme.

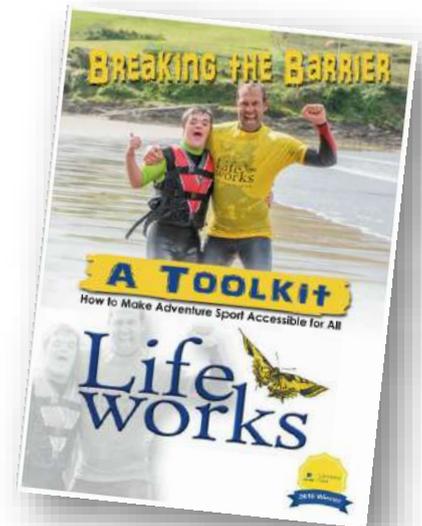
The BtB programme typically consists of three events over the summer period, typically taking place on a Saturday or Sunday. Each participating young person or child – as well as their families – is typically offered

periods of fully-qualified one-to-one instruction and supervision. Participants are also offered services to support preparation and facilitate further supervised participation in the sport, as appropriate (these services too are typically provided by volunteers). The young people remain the responsibility of their parents at all times. BtB events are also enhanced through the provision of entertainment and refreshments. Prior to each BtB programme, participating families register by completing a printed registration form.

BtB is funded via open funding schemes and local ‘corporate’ donations. In 2018, BtB received funding from the Santander Foundation Discovery Grants programme and a generous donation from JLT Group (an insurance company with an office in Exeter). By contrast, in 2017, BtB received funding from the Aviva Community Fund and from JLT Group<sup>2</sup>.

The Aviva Community Fund funding in 2017 was crucial in supporting Lifeworks in three key ways:

- Responding to parent and carer feedback, to develop the Torbay Velopark cycling event as a new BTB offer. Based on the cycling-based partnerships that were developed in 2017, Lifeworks has been able to continue the Velopark cycling event in 2018.
- To develop a BtB toolkit, with the objective of supporting other local charities to set up BtB programmes<sup>3</sup>.
- To put on a celebration event for all BtB 2017 participants and their families. This was attended by 60 children and young people with learning disabilities, 67 parents and carers and 7 siblings.



### 1.3 Breaking the Barrier 2018



The BtB 2018 programme consisted of three events, two surfing events and a cycling event<sup>4</sup>. Table 1 describes the three events and shows the numbers of young people, siblings and parents who participated in each. In total, BTB 2018 provided 206 adventure sport experiences to young people with learning disabilities (139), siblings (37) and parents/carers (30). The volunteer teams that implemented the three events are discussed in Chapter 3.

2 Funder websites: <http://www.santanderfoundation.org.uk/discovery-grants.aspx>; <http://www.jlt.com/>; <https://community-fund.aviva.co.uk/voting/user/aboutthecompetition>.

3 See the BtB toolkit here: <https://www.lifeworks-uk.org/our-services/community-projects/breaking-the-barrier/>.

4 A fourth event had been planned, but this could not go ahead due to funding not being available.

Table 1: The three BtB 2018 events.

Event, Location Date and timings	Participants			
	Young people	Siblings	Parents/ carers	Total
<b>Surfing, Saunton Sands</b> Saturday 9 June, 2018 10am-2.30pm Get in: 7.30am Event derigged by 4pm	20	10	8	38
<b>Cycling, Torbay Velopark</b> Saturday 16 June, 2018 10am-2.30pm Get in 7.30am Event derigged by 4pm	54	6	14	74
<b>Surfing at Bigbury-on-Sea,</b> Sunday 24 June, 2018 10am-3.30pm Get in 7.30am Event derigged by 4.30pm	65	21	8	94
	<b>139</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>206</b>

#### 1.4 The Breaking the Barrier 2018 evaluation

The BtB 2018 evaluation strategy was co-created by the independent evaluator and the Lifeworks Community Projects Manager in June 2018. Key features in determining the evaluation strategy were: the relatively limited time resources available, and the need to balance the needs for comprehensive feedback from parents and carers, and to avoid overburdening parents and carers given the challenging and busy lives that many of them lead.

The evaluation was carried out by the evaluator, with the support of the Lifeworks Community Projects Manager and the Lifeworks Community Projects Administrative Assistant. The person in this latter post changed at the end of August 2018.

##### 1.4.1 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the evaluation is to provide qualitative and quantitative understanding, insight and information with two purposes:

1. Reflecting Lifeworks' 2016-2020 Strategy, as a source of learning that can be used by Lifeworks to further develop and enhance the Breaking the Barrier programme in terms of its conception, preparation and delivery.
2. For use by Lifeworks in: new funding bids, participant communications and recruitment materials, and relationship-building and networking activities with stakeholders of various kinds.

With this aim in mind, the objectives of the evaluation are to gather understanding, insight and information in five key areas:

1. The extent to which the individual BtB events meet their objectives, as stated earlier.

2. The motivations, experiences and impacts of the various organisations that support BtB through the provision of support and volunteers.
3. The impacts of the 2018 BtB programme on new participants ('newbies') and the longer-term impacts of BtB programmes on long term participants ('veterans') and others.
4. Parents' experiences of BtB registration and communications.
5. The BtB team's understandings of the successes and challenges of BtB 2018.



#### 1.4.2 Methodology

The evaluation consisted of four key elements, addressing the five objectives above, and combining qualitative and quantitative approaches:

##### 1. On-line parent and carer surveys after each of the three BtB 2018 events

Addressing Objective 1, on-line surveys – consistent across the three events – were written in Toluma Quick Surveys, featuring closed questions oriented around the event aims and objectives and opportunities to add comments after each question (see Appendix 1). Links to the survey were emailed to participants, participation was incentivised (with a prize draw associated with each event) and reminders were sent out as appropriate. To further boost response rates, the Administration Assistant telephoned parents and completed the survey with them during a telephone conversation. The response rates are described in Table 2, and can be considered more than adequate within the context of this evaluation<sup>5</sup>.

Table 2: Survey response rates.

	Participating young people	Responses to the survey	Response rate
Saunton surfing	20	10	50%
Velopark cycling	54	23	43%
Bigbury surfing	65	26	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>43%</b>

<sup>5</sup> It is notoriously difficult to judge what is an adequate or good response rate because it depends on so many factors. However, the following observations provide some context for these response rates and suggest that they are more than adequate for the purposes of this evaluation. The average response rate from an online survey is 29% (<https://surveyanyplace.com/average-survey-response-rate/>). Surveys that are distributed to specific people should receive a 30-40% response rate on average (<https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/survey-response-rates/>). Of course, it is possible that there is response bias; this describes the phenomena that particular kinds of people (for instance, people for whom the BtB events were a success) are more likely to respond.



## **2. Interviews with organisations that support BtB**

Addressing Objective 2, telephone interviews – based on a short topic guide – were conducted with five representatives of four organisations that significantly support BtB. In addition, less formal feedback was received from a further partner. Notes were taken as the interviews were conducted. The interviews were carried out under rigorous conditions for consent and confidentiality. Interviews were analysed ‘manually’ (i.e. not using software) drawing on the principles of thematic analysis<sup>6</sup>.

## **3. Interviews with parents and carers**

Addressing Objectives 1, 3 and 4, telephone interviews – based on a short topic guide – were conducted with 7 parents and carers who had participated in BtB 2018. These interviews were carried out and analysed in the same ways as the organisational interviews.

## **4. Evaluation report review workshop with the BtB team**

Addressing Objectives 5, in particular, as well as the other Objectives, the evaluator ran a draft evaluation report review workshop with the BtB team. The workshop allowed open discussion of all aspects of BtB 2018, including a draft of this evaluation report.

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<sup>6</sup> Thematic analysis is a well-established approach to qualitative analysis, which emphasises the importance of using the data to develop themes that are related to the research questions, but also of allowing new theme to emerge from the data (see Braun and Clarke, 2006, [http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735/2/thematic\\_analysis\\_revised](http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735/2/thematic_analysis_revised)).

## 2. The BtB 2018 events

*"A final comment? I just want to thank everyone, they are so good, so dedicated. It does make a massive difference to the families."*

*"Our youngest son rode around with John. Our youngest was so moved that he cried!!"*

### 2.1 Meeting event objectives



In the previous section, we discussed the objectives of the BtB events, which can be summarised as to: enable enjoyable participation through meeting young people's needs, so that they feel comfortable, and in ways that support young people to acquire new skills and

make it more likely that they will participate in the future. In the survey, we designed six statements to understand the extent to which these objectives had been achieved. In addition, with respect to the Saunton and Bigbury-on-Sea surfing events we asked about access to the beach. Survey respondents were invited to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement ('neither' and 'don't know' options were also offered). See Table 3 and the 'Stats highlights' box.

*"That one hour that Jane had in the sea was the first hour that I hadn't felt that I had to have my eye on her all the time. It's about building confidence in the family as much as the young person. You can let go, it's the only thing that does that."*

*"Jane can be the beautiful, surfy, funky daughter that I always want her to be, living life on the edge."*

*"To have a son who was paranoid about sand and water, always kept his socks on, and couldn't bear the seaweed, now he loves the beach and surfing, and always wants more."*

### Evaluator's summary

All three BtB 2018 events achieved their objectives to a very high degree.

This is the case with respect to young people, siblings and parents.

100% agreement that the young people were able to participate and enjoyed themselves, and that their needs were met (90% at Saunton).

This success is largely due to the ways which the BtB event teams support and enable confident and safe participation by all.

Table 3: Key objectives: percentage of parents and carers agreeing with attitudinal statements.

	Saunton surf n=10	Velopark cycle n=23	Bigbury surf n=26	Average
The young person in our family was able to participate in the event.	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>
The young person in our family enjoyed the event.	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>
The young person in our family felt comfortable at the event.	90%	95%	96%	<b>94%</b>
The event met the needs of the young person in our family.	90%	100%	100%	<b>97%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>There were NO beach access issues at Saunton/Bigbury.</b>	100%	n/a	76%	

The most important finding in this evaluation is that – as illustrated by the survey data (see the ‘Stats highlights’ box and Table 3<sup>7</sup>) and the survey/interview quotes (see the ‘Special teams’ box) – all of these objectives were achieved to a very high degree at all three events:

- This is especially the case with respect to four objectives:
  - ‘Participation’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘meeting needs’: these objectives each received 100% agreement across all three events (the only exception to this was ‘meeting needs’ at Saunton, which enjoyed 90% agreement).
  - ‘Feeling comfortable’: more than 90% at each of the three events agreed that the young person in their family felt comfortable at the event.
- Access to the beach and increasing the likelihood of future participation also scored highly (above 80% on average). That said, there were some access challenges at Bigbury-on-Sea due to

<sup>7</sup> In Table 3, as well as other tables later in the report, we report the percentages of respondents who agreed with the statement in question. Obviously, since it does not report the percentages who selected the other options (Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, and Don’t know/no answer), this approach does not tell the whole story. However, we have treated the data in this way in an attempt to provide information that is both immediately meaningful and efficient in terms of its presentation.

## Stats highlights

See Table 3

100% agreement at all three events that the young people were able to participate and enjoyed the event!

100% agreement (90% at Saunton) that needs were met!

Above 90% agreement at all three events that the young people felt comfortable.

Overall scores:  
Saunton: 95%  
Velopark: 99%  
Bigbury: 99%

the stairs and slopes to the beach. For instance, one parent commented, 'all fine, but wheelchair users may have experienced more difficulties'.

## 2.2 Reasons for success

Analysis of the comments from the surveys and parent interviews highlight four key reasons for the high levels of success that were achieved at the BtB 2018 events:

- The very special approach of the teams that implement the BtB events.
- The provision of specialist equipment (such as, in particular, specialist cycles)
- The way in which learning disability is 'the norm' at BtB events.
- Crucially, the whole family ethos of BtB events.

### 2.2.1 Very special teams

*"It's really relaxed. Nothing fazes the team, nothing is too difficult, they really get it, always a smile, really welcoming. Talk about accessibility and inclusion!"*

Analysis of the comments that parents provided in response to these questions, and in the interviews, indicates that – without doubt – the central reason for the success of the BtB 2018 events is the very special teams that planned and implemented the events. As illustrated by the comments in the 'Very special teams' box, and wholly unprompted, almost all of these comments mention the event teams in highly positive terms. Within the context of an astonishing body of positive comments, the only negative comment was an informal comment to the evaluator that a parent heard a team member at a particularly pressured moment at one of the surfing events telling a young person to 'hurry up'. We return to this issue in the next Chapter, which focuses on the experiences of the volunteer teams, as well as in the section that focuses on the ways in which the BtB team is responding.

Taken together, these comments suggest that the teams that implement the BtB events 'get it', as one parent put it, in terms of an ethos and approach of unconditional support, patience, calmness, flexibility, confidence, understanding, matter-of-factness, listening and careful communication. It would appear that this approach creates a highly enabling atmosphere and virtuous circle of positive confidence among both the young people and their parents. This, in turn, creates opportunities for participation and enjoyment, even in the most challenging of situations.

Recalling the range of organisations that are involved at BtB events, the success of the event teams draws attention to the

## Very special teams: parent comments

*Everything relaxed, no pressure, staff helping, brilliant!*

*Two staff encouraged him to enjoy the water, starting gradually, and taking care to communicate well.*

*This is the safest Jane has been. I had confidence she would not get hurt as a professional was helping.*

*Jane was very anxious, wanted to go home. We got the wet suit on, spoke to [co-ordinator] and asked instructors to go to her. Then Jane Broke the Barrier!!*

*Wonderful to be with a team who get it. Very impressed with the way Lifeworks puts on the events.*

*John was able to participate using the recumbent bike*

*Someone's always there to help, John feels safe, it's well-manned, everything is set up for you.*

importance of the highly-networked partnerships and collaborations that the Lifeworks Community Projects Manager has built and is building on an ongoing basis. We discuss these partnerships in more detail in the next Chapter.

### 2.2.2 Specialist equipment

Although this was not mentioned in comments or interviews, it goes without saying that the provision of surf boards and wet suits is crucial to the success of the surfing events. In addition, beach wheelchairs and a beach jeep were available.

Meanwhile, as illustrated in the comments on this and the previous page, the importance of the



provision of *specialised cycles* as a crucial route to participation and meeting needs was mentioned. For instance, the value of the side-by-side tandems, the adult trikes and the recumbent cycles is highlighted in a number of comments.

### 2.2.3 Learning disability as 'the norm'

The interviews with parents also reveal the value to them of being in a space or at an event at which learning disability is 'the norm'. As indicated in the comments below, BtB events are a place where

young people with learning disabilities can be themselves, and where no one is judging, staring or laughing.

This is a powerful message that speaks not only to the impressive work of Lifeworks and the events teams, but also to the challenges that the parents of young people with learning disabilities can face in everyday social situations.

*"Jane can just be Jane."*

*"No one is judging John  
and no one is judging me."*

*"No one is staring or laughing,  
it's hard when people are staring all the time."*

## 2.3 Family events

*"Our youngest son rode around with John. Our youngest was so moved that he cried!!"*

An unusual or perhaps unique feature of BtB is its core objective to provide adventure sports experiences for parents and siblings, as well as young people with learning disabilities. In this context, participation and enjoyment are key, as is the provision of new skills or information to parents that will help the young person to continue participation. With this in mind, the surveys contained questions about the attendance, participation and enjoyment of siblings, and the enjoyment of parents and carers (again with the opportunity to add comments in all cases), and this issue was also explored in the



interviews. As illustrated in Table 4 and the ‘Family events’ box, the objectives with respect to family members were achieved in all or most cases.

Table 4: A family event: percentage of parents and carers agreeing with attitudinal statements.

	Saunton surfing	Velopark cycling	Bigbury surfing	Average
The sibling(s) who attended were able to participate in the event.	100% (n=6)	100% (n=3)	92% (n=13)	<b>97%</b>
The sibling(s) who attended enjoyed the event.	83% (n=6)	100% (n=3)	85% (n=13)	<b>89%</b>
The adult(s) who attended enjoyed the event.	83% (n=11)	80% (n=20)	96% (n=26)	<b>86%</b>
Average	<b>89%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>91%</b>

Table 4 and the comments illustrate several key themes:

- 97% of the siblings who attended the three events were able to participate and 89% enjoyed the event (it is important to note that these figures are based on relatively low numbers, especially with respect to Saunton and the Velopark).
- 86% of the adults who attended the three events enjoyed the event. Where adults did not enjoy the event, the comments suggest that this is because of the stresses and strains of attending with a young person with significant challenges. As a parent at Saunton put it, ‘I love being at the beach but it can get stressful! It was nice for me to be able to relax for a bit’. Another commented, ‘Stressful, but only because of how John is’.
- Overall, each event has an approval rating of around 90% for sibling participation and enjoyment, and parent enjoyment.

The parents’ comments, in the ‘Family events’ box offer some insight into the reasons that the ‘whole family’ nature of BtB events is so important:

- The family feeling creates a special ‘warmth’.
- Participation by two or more siblings – one of whom has a learning disability – ‘on equal terms’ is a relatively rare and special. As the comment about the brothers illustrates, this a potentially moving experience for siblings and parents.
- The participation of others is encouraging for the young person with a learning disability.



## Family events: parent comments

*It's a family thing, that's the warmth I get from it. We make a surfing day of it.*

*A fantastic time, so lovely we could ride together on a side-by-side tandem.*

*Hey, I can surf too! John is encouraged when he sees me participate. We all enjoy it.*

*I met other parents.*

*Great that siblings surf together on equal terms.*

*All made very welcome and helped to surf. Two happy teenagers!*

- Parents have the opportunity to meet and socialise with other parents in similar situations.

## 2.4 Skills and future participation

As discussed in Chapter 1, further important objectives of BtB events are for both young people and their parents to learn new skills and to support future participation in adventure sports. With this in mind, the survey contained three questions designed to tap into these issues.

Table 5: Skills and the future: percentages of parents and carers agreeing with attitudinal statements.

	Saunton surfing	Velopark cycling	Bigbury surfing	Average
<b>The young person in our family acquired new skills at the event.</b>	80% (n=10)	50% (n=23)	69% (n=26)	<b>66%</b>
<b>As a result of the event, the young person in our family is more likely to participate in [the activity] in the future.</b>	100% (n=10)	70% (n=23)	96% (n=26)	<b>89%</b>
<b>The adults that attended learned new skills or information that will help the young person continue in [the activity]</b>	50% (n=10)	58% (n=19)	42% (n=26)	<b>50%</b>

It is notable that the percentages of parents and carers who agreed that new skills had been acquired – either by the young person or themselves – are lower than many of those discussed earlier. This is due to the already existing high levels of skills among many of the participants, especially in cycling, as well as in surfing. Within this context, the acquisition of ‘new skills’ by 66% of the young people and 50% of adults (across the three events) is highly positive. At the same time, the BtB team might like to consider discussing with the BtB instructor’s ways in which more explicit emphasis on new skills can be built into the BtB events.

## 2.5 Entertainment and refreshments

Table 6 provides details about the refreshments and entertainment that were provided at each event. Table 7 contains survey data relating to refreshments and entertainment at the three events. Illustrative comments relating to entertainment can be found in the ‘Entertainment’ box. Analysis of this data is interesting because it suggests that opinions about these features of the events are somewhat mixed.

With respect to refreshments, there is some evidence that the beach BBQ is valued by participants. As shown in Table 7, 62% agree that this is an important element of BtB events. One parent at Bigbury commented of his son who has a learning disability, ‘He always enjoys his BtB burger’. At the same time, another parent (this time at Saunton) felt that the sale of refreshments might amount to ‘over-commercialisation’.

Turning to the entertainment, this mixed picture is deepened:

- For many young people, parents and siblings, the entertainment is an important component of BTB events. Both the circus performer and the live music are valued and enjoyed by many.



Table 6: Refreshments and entertainment at the three BtB 2018 events.

Event	Refreshments	Entertainment
<b>Saunton surfing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free juice, water, fruit, lollipops for volunteers;</li> <li>Free water for participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daisi Circus Performance Artist</li> </ul>
<b>Velopark cycling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free juice, water, fruit, lollipops for volunteers;</li> <li>Free water for participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daisi Circus Performance Artist</li> <li>Samba Roc Band</li> </ul>
<b>Bigbury surfing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free juice, water, fruit, lollipops for volunteers;</li> <li>Free water for participants;</li> <li>Pay Beach BBQ, with free burger for volunteers (provided by Totnes Rotary Club, all proceeds to BtB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daisi Circus Performance Artist</li> <li>Turning Tides Band</li> </ul>

Table 7: Entertainment and refreshments: percentage of parents and carers agreeing with attitudinal statements.

	Saunton surfing	Velopark cycling	Bigbury surfing
<b>The lack of beach entertainment at Saunton detracted from the event</b>	0% (n=11)	n/a	n/a
<b>The young person in our family enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and Vinnie the Circus Performer)</b>	n/a	55% (n=20)	n/a
<b>The siblings who attended enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and Vinnie the Circus Performer)</b>	n/a	67% (n=3)	n/a
<b>The young person who attended enjoyed the beach activities (Turning Tides Band and Vinnie the Circus Performer)</b>	n/a	n/a	46% (n=26)
<b>The sibling(s) who attended enjoyed the beach activities (Turning Tides Band and Vinnie the Circus Performer)</b>	n/a	n/a	38% (n=13)
<b>To what extent do you think that the BBQ or other food and drink is an important part of Breaking the Barrier events</b>	n/a	n/a	62% (n=26)

- At the same time, the entertainment is considered to be relatively unimportant by some parents. For instance, at the Saunton surfing event, which had no entertainment, no survey respondents agreed that this detracted from the event.
- Further, in a small number of cases, the entertainment was felt to be unhelpful.

Clearly, the enjoyment or not of entertainment is always a matter of personal preferences, and – given the challenges that some BtB participants experience – it is certainly the case that some



forms of entertainment might not be suitable for some participants. That said, there is no evidence here that the entertainment overly influences decisions to attend BtB events. This raises the importance of attempting to gather information from non-participants in the future.

## 2.6 The long-term benefits of participating in BtB

Some of the parent interviewees have been coming to BtB events for a number of years, perhaps as many as eight or nine. This gave us the opportunity to ask about the long-term benefits for the young people and their families of participation in BtB. As illustrated by the comments in the 'Long-term benefits' box, parents identified a number of benefits:

- Friends. The opportunity to participate with friends is valuable.
- Familiarity. Long-term participation in BtB enables the young people to become very familiar with all aspects of the events. This is especially helpful in the context of young people who might be anxious in new situations.
- Anticipation. Several parents spoke of the value of BtB as something to look forward to, for the young person and for the family.
- Family tradition. One parent spoke about the way in which participating in BtB repeatedly, and the familiarity that it builds, leads to participation becoming a family tradition.
- Ongoing improvement. One parent spoke about the improvements that she was able to see in her daughter's participation.

## 2.7 Recommendations for development

The foregoing materials demonstrate that the three BtB 2018 events met their objectives to a very high degree, in terms of supporting and enabling comfortable and enjoyable participation by young people with learning disabilities and their families. In particular, the evaluation has emphasised the role of the event teams – made up largely of volunteers – in this achievement.

That said, it is important to highlight the one or two areas in which improvements might be made to the existing BtB event format.

- As discussed above, consideration of the ways in which more explicit emphasis on new skills can be built into the BtB events.
- A number of parents highlighted the challenges of 'waiting around' with a young person who might be nervous or anxious (these comments were made in the context of some scheduling problems that were caused by more families being late than is the norm at one of the surfing events). In response to this challenge, parents made specific suggestions for additional beach or trackside activities at BtB events: face painting, an ice cream stand and boules.

## Entertainment: parent comments

*Jane loved Vinnie and being shown tricks, but has sensitive ears so the band was too loud*

*The samba band were great.*

*John learned some amazing ball skills from Vinnie.*

*John doesn't like the beach entertainment generally.*

*We were there for the surfing so lack of entertainment wasn't an issue.*

*Jane was very single minded so when the surfing was finished it was time to leave!*

*John listened to the band for a short while...and I thought they were amazing!*

## Long term participation: parent comments

*As soon as we know the dates, they go in the calendar.*

*Jane talks about it for a long time before, the build-up.*

*Great thing about it is the confidence of familiarity, it's a family tradition.*

*Yes, there's definitely ongoing improvement each year.*

- These suggestions were also made within the context of parents' sense that BtB events would benefit from a more obvious socialising element, both for the young people and the adults.

- One parent also emphasised the value of medals or certificates for participation at events.

- While recognising the challenges, some parents commented that they would appreciate more one-to-one instruction time for their children. One parent commented, 'We finally got going and it was time to get out of the water'.

### **2.8 Comments from the BtB team**

A draft of this evaluation report was discussed with the Lifeworks BtB team on Monday 12 November 2018 and between the BtB team and the Lifeworks Senior Leadership Team (SLT) the following week. As well as welcoming the very positive findings from the evaluation, the team also responded very positively to:

- The recommendation to focus on new skills.

- The calls for more activities at events.

- Suggestions for the introduction of certificates (which the BtB team reported were awarded at the Celebration event in 2017).

- In addition, the team had already committed itself to trying to develop future event formats at which longer periods of one-to-one instruction would be possible.

All of these issues are now on the BtB team's agenda for implementation in 2019.

# 3. The partner organisations

## 3.1 The role of the partner organisations

*The role of our partner organisations cannot be overstated. It simply would not be possible to put on Breaking the Barrier without the support – most of it voluntary – of our partners. With their tireless enthusiasm, good nature and expertise, they bring so much to the events.*

**(Lifeworks Community Projects Manager)**

Reflecting Lifeworks' 2016-2020 Strategy, each year, the BtB

### Role of partners

*Five staff and ten family members volunteered, on the beach and in the water! Plus the £1500 contribution.*

**(Raymonde Nathan, JLT Group)**

*We brought two minibuses filled with specialist bikes. We helped them chose the most suitable bikes.*

**(Jon Duckham, WESC Foundation)**

*8-12 people volunteer each year. We transport, set-up and run the BBQ.*

**(David Stevens, Totnes Rotary Club)**

events rely upon considerable support from partner organisations, as well as voluntary support from Lifeworks staff and trustees. This takes the form of: sponsorship, significant voluntary effort at the events themselves (for example, with expert instruction, event management, registration, and ongoing support before, during and after young people's participation in the adventure sports) and the provision of specialist equipment.

Table 8 shows the full range of voluntary contributions to BtB 2018. The Table shows that Lifeworks has BtB partnerships with a wide range of organisations. While some of these partnerships were new in 2018, others go back almost ten years. The interviews with three partners emphasise the importance of stakeholder outreach in developing new partner relationships. Of the three relationships that were explored, one mentioned a letter from Lifeworks, one a talk by the then CEO and one a targeted approach from Lifeworks. Initiating, developing and maintaining productive partnerships is clearly a key strategic priority for the Lifeworks Community Projects team.

### Evaluator' summary

The partners are invaluable to BtB.

Partners contribute because they share the values and objectives of BtB.

Partners also gain a lot from supporting BtB.

Challenges emphasise the importance of open communication and debriefing.

Table 8: Voluntary and free contributions to BtB 2018<sup>8</sup>.

<p><b>Saunton surfing</b>  <b>Lifeworks:</b> 1 volunteer (event co-ordination).  <b>Saunton Hotdoggers Surf Club:</b> 19 volunteers (surfing instruction; rig and derig; further support in and out of the water).  <b>Parents:</b> 2 volunteers (registration and buoyancy aids).</p>
<p><b>Torbay Velopark</b>  <b>Lifeworks:</b> 2 volunteers (event coordination).  <b>Lifeworks trustees:</b> 1 volunteer (track support).  <b>British Cycling:</b> 2 instructors (paid for by British Cycling).  <b>Velopark Veterans:</b> 2 volunteer escorts.  <b>Lex Leisure:</b> free use of Velopark (charge made for bike hire).  <b>WESC Foundation:</b> specialist cycles, hoist, 2 volunteer enablers.  <b>Samba Roc:</b> 10 voluntary musicians.  <b>Devon County Council Disabled Children’s Services:</b> 1 volunteer.  <b>Parents:</b> 2 volunteers (registration and helmet fitting).</p>
<p><b>Bigbury surfing</b>  <b>Lifeworks:</b> 3 volunteers (event co-ordination, surfing coordination, driver/rig/derig).  <b>Lifeworks trustees:</b> 2 volunteers (support in and out of water).  <b>Totnes Rotary Club:</b> Beach BBQ, 8 volunteers.  <b>JLT Group:</b> event sponsorship, 15 volunteers in/out of water.  <b>Turning Tides Band:</b> 8 volunteer musicians.  <b>The Wave Project:</b> 3 volunteer surf instructors.  <b>Devon County Council Disabled Children’s Services:</b> 1 volunteer.  <b>Parents:</b> 2 volunteers (registration, buoyancy aids).  <b>Discovery Surf School:</b> 2 volunteer surf instructors.</p>

As discussed in Chapter 2, according to the parents and carers of the young people, the contributions of these volunteer teams in providing an enabling and confident atmosphere for them and the young people is invaluable. As indicated in the comment at the start of this chapter, this view is shared by Lifeworks itself.

To better understand the perspectives of the partner organisations, we undertook four telephone interviews with representatives of three of the partners. In particular, we were keen to understand: reasons for supporting BtB, the experiences of volunteers on the day (both positive and challenging) and any impacts on the volunteers themselves and the organisations. In addition, the key themes from

<sup>8</sup> Please do check out the work and services of these generous organisations:

Hotdoggers: <https://www.hotdoggers.co.uk/>;  
Daisi: <https://daisi.org.uk/dramaandperformance/>;  
WESC: <https://www.wescfoundation.ac.uk/>;  
Samba Roc: <https://www.creativetorbay.com/samba-roc-band/>;  
Devon County Council: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/care-and-health/>;  
Totnes Rotary: <http://www.totnesrotary.co.uk/>;  
JLT Group: . <http://www.jlt.com/>;  
Turning Tides Band: <http://www.theturningtidesproject.org.uk/>;  
Discovery Surf School: <http://www.discoverysurf.com/>;  
Wave Project: <https://www.waveproject.co.uk/>.

## Reasons for supporting BtB

*BtB fits our ethos: helping others, particularly local people and charities. It's a challenge to find ways of helping young people but Bigbury fits the bill. It also gives our people a nice day out on the beach.*

*(David Stevens, Totnes Rotary Club)*

*Being involved in these events means we learn and don't get stuck in our ways.*

*(Jon Duckham, WESC Foundation)*

*It's how I feel, I look forward to it each year.*

*I feel I'm giving something back. It's a fun day and you meet and help some great people.*

*(Lisa Longworth, JLT Group)*

*It's fantastic that our bikes can be put to good use in the local community.*

*(Jon Duckham, WESC Foundation)*

the interviews, and the role of the partner organisations more generally, was discussed at the participatory workshop with the Lifeworks Community Projects team.

### 3.2 Reasons for supporting BtB

*"The surfing is the thing. The overall atmosphere, when the sun shines it is a fun place to be. The kids get so much out of being in the water and the parents seeing children doing something they could never think of them doing – priceless."  
(Raymonde Nathan, JLT Group)*

As illustrated by the comments in the 'Reasons for supporting BtB' box and the others on these pages, the interviews suggest a subtle combination of key altruistic, personal and organisational reasons for supporting BtB:

- Support for the various objectives of the programme.
- Personal satisfaction and enjoyment.
- Benefits for the organisation and staff/members.
- The local and community element



*"I was accompanying one of the young people to the water and we had to walk through the water where the sea had come in. I was walking in front of the young person who decided to splash me, not just splash but thoroughly soak me. We had such fun and were laughing like drains."  
(Lisa Longworth, JLT Group)*

*"The volunteers from our staff spend all their working time in an office at a desk, so it's good to get out and see a different side of life and get a different perspective."  
(Raymonde Nathan, JLT Group)*

*"It's a day well spent. We are exhausted afterwards but we've enjoyed ourselves and, more importantly, it's seeing the people we are there to help enjoying themselves."  
(David Stevens, Totnes Rotary Club)*

### 3.3 Recommendations

From the comments of the partner organisations, it is clear that the partnership between BtB and the partners is – to a considerable extent – a very positive and mutually beneficial one. This reflects very well on both Lifeworks and all of the partner organisations. At the same time, within the context of the strategic importance to Lifeworks of ongoing learning, we specifically asked about 'challenges' in the interviews with partner organisations. Analysis of comments in this respect emphasises the importance of open lines of communication between the BtB team and the partners, and – though this can be time-consuming – particularly specific debrief sessions after events. There is clearly considerable potential in this for learning in both Lifeworks and the partner organisations.



Some of the challenges were of an organisational or practical nature (for instance, the challenges of transporting specialist cycles and BBQ equipment). Perhaps more telling were comments that highlighted the value of open communication and debriefing:

- It is clear that the partners and volunteers have an outstanding understanding of learning disability that is more developed than is typical in society. At the same time, there were just one or two comments in the parent and partner interviews that indicate that – as for all of us – there is always more to learn about the particular challenges of everyday life with a young person with a

learning disability.

- Within the context of the obvious pressures of running BtB events, the interviews also illustrated the potential for on-the-ground misunderstandings or disagreements between the Lifeworks and volunteer teams over details of event implementation.

### **3.4 Comments from the BtB team**

The review workshop on 13 November 2018 was incredibly useful in responding to the recommendations discussed above. The meeting between the BtB team and the Lifeworks Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has consolidated these very positive responses.

Already appreciating the importance of partnerships with volunteers (as reflected in the Lifeworks strategy, 2016-2019), and mindful of the challenges in maintaining positive and productive partnerships over extended periods, the BtB team mentioned that they were already planning a ‘Love your volunteer’ thank you event for early 2019. With SLT support, this has now been confirmed for Saturday March 2 2019.

In addition, sparked by the observation that the relationship between BtB and the partners was particularly focused on the weeks leading up to the BtB events themselves, the idea emerged for a year-round partners communication programme. The BtB team decided to discuss this further, but immediately opportunities to communicate after events and at Christmas presented themselves in the discussion.

The BtB team has also now committed, with SLT support, to implement a late afternoon/early evening informal on-beach training and development workshop for volunteers before the start of the 2019 BtB programme. A particular element of this workshop will be to role play scenarios that will emphasise the best ways in which to engage with young people and their parents at BtB events (including when things do not appear to be going to plan). It is important to emphasise that this engagement is already excellent, so it is very encouraging that the BtB team has committed to develop this even further. In further appreciation of the value of the volunteers, the plan is to provide free food and drink at the workshop.

A further element of the workshop discussions was the new partnership-building work that the BtB team is currently doing in preparation for new developments in the scale and scope of the BtB programme for 2019. The emphasis on long-term planning in this area is clearly impressive.

# 4. Registration, communications and evaluation

## Summary

Parents are very supportive of a new one-off, online registration process (with annual updates, as needed)

Event communications appear to be working well.

Although yet another form, the need for evaluation is appreciated by parents.

### 4.1 Registration

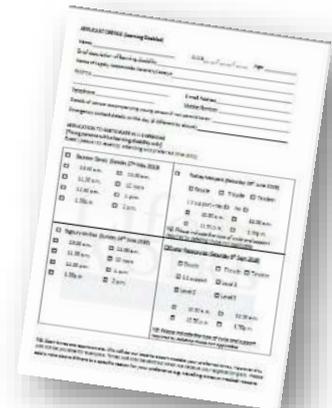
The BtB registration form and process, event communications and post-event feedback and evaluation processes were discussed in the seven telephone interviews with parents (but were not covered in the broader survey).

The registration or application form for BtB 2018 was seven pages long (and was fronted by two pages of programme and event information). In 2018, the form contained sections relating to: names and contact details of the young people and their parents or carers; preferred timings for one-to-one sessions at all four planned events (as well as preferred cycles for the cycling events); media and marketing consent form; newsletter sign-up; medical details; bookings for siblings/parents; legal information and waiver; deposit payments; and a completion checklist.

In 2018, registration forms were emailed to potential participants and could be downloaded from the Lifeworks website. Forms could be completed digitally or manually and returned to Lifeworks by email or post.

A number of themes can be identified in the views of the parents. These are illustrated by comments in the 'Registration' box:

- As parents of young people with learning disabilities, all of them commented on the fact that they have to fill in lots of forms, and many said that this can be onerous and even stressful.
- Within this context, although they appreciated the need for a lengthy registration form, most interviewees were critical of the annual nature of the registration process. Parents described this as 'frustrating' and 'annoying'.
- One parent commented that annual registration was important because 'things change'.



- However, most parents were highly supportive of a new registration system in which registration data is stored by Lifeworks (as long as permission is granted) and parents are given the opportunity to check and update information each year.
- Although parents agreed that digital forms and the use of email was an improvement, there was also considerable support for an on-line registration system.

Most of the parents who were interviewed would clearly be highly appreciative of a new registration system, so it is recommended that Lifeworks explore the possibilities for this.

#### 4.2 Event communications

Following registration, parents are sent details about their participation in each event. In contrast to the registration process, the event communications did not garner significant comment. One parent commented that the time between registration and event communication was too long. Notwithstanding this comment, it appears that the event communications meet the needs of the parents.

#### 4.3 Event evaluation

Feedback or evaluation surveys have been a feature of BtB for a number of years. In 2018, Lifeworks was able to move the surveys online (offering greater scope to add comments) and was able to draw on the input of a professional evaluator.

Like the registration form, evaluation surveys are always perceived as another thing to do in already busy lives. That said, the parents that we interviewed appreciated the value of and need for evaluation, and found the new online evaluation survey beneficial. There is no evidence that parents found the surveys onerous.

*"Giving online feedback was brilliant."*

*"It's great to have the survey, but I always feel guilty for not filling it in quickly enough."*

*"Well, it's easy to share favourable views, but it's another survey and life takes over."*

One interviewee made a highly prescient comments about the evaluation: that it fails to directly reflect the voices of the young people themselves. This is an important point and will be rectified next year. This parent comment should also be understood in the context that previous BtB feedback forms *did* actively seek the views of the young people themselves, but this was unfortunately overlooked this year.

*"It would be good to survey the young people, where is their voice?"*

### Registration: parent comments

*It really annoys me, why do I have to do it each year? Doing it online and keeping the data would be most helpful.*

*It's very cumbersome, would be much better online. As a veteran, it's frustrating as you've done it before.*

*It needs to be detailed, but it would be nice if they could be kept, and I would be happy for Lifeworks to do that.*

*It has to be done every year because things change. The right questions are being asked, they're not onerous but pertinent.*

#### **4.4 Comments from the BtB team**

At the evaluation report review meeting, the BtB team reflected with satisfaction that the transition to on-line feedback forms was supported by the parents (albeit without an emphasis on the voice of the young people in this first year).

However, the BtB team was more struck by the strength of parents' feelings with respect to the annual and document-based nature of the registration process and the corresponding desire to move to a one-off and on-line system. At the same time, the team noted that this chimes with their own desire to move to on-line registration across Lifeworks' community projects and that this issue has been previously discussed with the Lifeworks Senior Leadership Team. On this basis of the strength of feeling among the parents – and the evaluator – the BtB team raised this again with the Lifeworks SLT in November 2018 and secured a commitment to introduce online registration in 2019.

## 5. Ideas for the future

As part of the interviews with parents, we asked them to think about the directions in which Lifeworks might take the BtB programme. We discussed this issue with parents in two ways: in a visioning way, i.e. based on the assumption that ‘money is no object’, and in a more pragmatic and grounded way. These discussions produced a range of suggestions, which we report in full below. Although some of these suggestions fall outside of BtB’s focus on adventure sports, they may be appropriate for other Lifeworks programmes and certainly reflect parents’ identification of where there is unmet need for young people with learning disabilities and their families.

### 5.1 More of the same and overnight events

Given that surfing has been an element of BtB for many years, it is not surprising that it is understood by most parents to be at the heart of what BtB is all about. Although cycling is a much more recent element of BtB, this is also very popular. Thus, a key theme of the discussions with parents is that they would like *more* opportunities to surf and cycle.

Several parents expressed a desire for more frequent or even regular surfing and cycling events (as well as other sports, which we discuss below). The Camel Cycle Trail was mentioned by one parent. A more ambitious suggestion, made by several parents, was for an overnight residential or camping event. For parents of older young people – potential elements of this, such as meals and perhaps a disco, as well as the overnight element itself – would be helpful for young people’s independence and social skills (and would provide respite for parents).

### 5.2 Other sports



Water sports were often mentioned by parents. This is most likely due to the historical centrality of surfing to BtB, as well as the variety of exciting opportunities afforded by the Devon coast, not to mention the River Dart. Thus, sailing and kayaking were mentioned as potential adventure sports, and Dart Sailability<sup>9</sup> was specifically mentioned as a potential partner.

Swimming was also mentioned by one parent. This was particularly in the context that surfing – as a BtB sport – is undertaken by the young people on a more-or-less

individual basis. By contrast, swimming lends itself more easily to group activities and socialising, as well as fitness. A desire for group activities was also more generally expressed.

Two parents suggested multiple-sport events. One parent suggested a mini Olympics, that might consist of sports such as croquet and bowling, while another suggested an activity day at Ashcombe Adventure Centre<sup>10</sup>, where go carts, zip wires and rock climbing are available). Finally,

9 <https://www.dartsailability.org/>.

10 <https://www.ashcombeadventure.co.uk/>.

one parent mentioned horse riding. Driving at Exeter Racecourse was also mentioned by one parent, as an option for older young people.

### **5.3 Socialising**

The issue of socialising was raised by most of the parents in the contexts of both the young people and the parents:

- Many parents observed that the opportunities for the young people in their families to socialise are rare and that they have few friends. Within this context, parents said that they would appreciate greater opportunities for young people to socialise at BtB events, as well as events whose main purpose is socialising and socialisation.
- As was discussed earlier, some parents discussed the value of the opportunities that they have at existing BtB to socialise with parents 'like them', that is to say parents who understand the ups and downs of life with a young person with learning disabilities.

### **5.4 Performance arts**

Two parents specifically mentioned the performing arts, in particular dance and drama, as activities that they would value for their children. The idea of a performing arts festival at Dartington was mentioned. This idea has obvious associations with the Ordinary Art Festival that Lifeworks initiated in 2018<sup>11</sup>.

### **5.5 Strategic ideas**

As part of the discussions about the future, two parents mentioned strategic ideas. One was to focus on securing more local sponsorship for BtB. Another, made by a parent with experience in this area, was to make a film about how the events are put together, implemented and enjoyed.

### **5.6 Responses from the BtB team**

All of these issues were discussed at the evaluation report review meeting on 12 November 2018. Expressing gratitude for the parents' input, the team emphasised the following points:

- The BtB team is already exploring the possibilities to introduce a 2019 programme of more frequent and regular events at which greater one-to-one instruction would be possible. Planning is now well underway and will involve training some older participants in BtB to support the delivery of the events.
- The BtB team agrees with parents that water-based adventure sports are central to BtB. With this in mind, the team is already developing a relationship with a partner that would allow significant numbers of young people to safely participate in a water-borne adventure sport in 2019.
- The team responded very positively to the idea of creating a film about BtB. Noting that young people with learning disabilities had themselves photographically documented BtB 2017, the team observed that this might be conceived as a participatory activity for some of the young people.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lifeworks-uk.org/2018/02/ordinary-art-festival-2018/>.

## 6. A short conclusion from the evaluator

For a more detailed summary of the report, please see the Key findings section at the front of the report. In this short conclusion, I would like to make two key points.

First, the BtB events and programme clearly meet their objectives to a considerable degree. In addition, as is essential, the BtB team is able to draw on a wide range of partnerships that attract considerable voluntary and material support to the programme. The BtB team clearly has considerable skills in developing events and programmes that meet the needs of young people with learning disabilities and their families. In addition, the team is able to bring together and create event delivery teams that 'get it' in terms of create safe and highly enabling spaces in which learning disability becomes the norm. This capability is highly valued by parents and is very impressive.



Second, as would be expected, the evaluation has uncovered some important issues for the BtB team and Lifeworks to consider; these are described in the Key findings and the individual chapters. However, the point with which I would like to conclude is the enthusiasm and insight with which the BtB team responded to these issues in the report review workshop. Significantly, many of the issues for consideration were already on the minds of the team, and the new ones quickly became the subject of new ideas and action. Although it is a small team and it is constantly being pulled in many directions, the BtB team is always willing to learn and adapt, and shows creativity

and dedication in everything that it does. Of course, this is essential for the future success of the Breaking the Barrier programme.

*"A final comment? I just want to thank everyone,  
they are so good, so dedicated.  
It does make a massive difference to the families."*

# Appendix 1: survey questions

These are the survey questions as they appeared in the Velopark event survey. The questions in the two surfing events surveys mirror these aside from the references to the specific sport and specific entertainment.

1. Please can you tell us the name of the young person in your family. You don't have to do this, but it is useful in case we want to contact you.
2. Is this the first year that the young person has participated in Breaking the Barrier?
3. Was this the first time that the young person had participated in cycling?
4. The young person in our family was able to participate in the cycling.
6. The young person in our family enjoyed the cycling.
7. The young person in our family enjoyed the cycling. Would you like to add any comments on this topic?
8. The young person in our family acquired new skills at the event.
10. The young person in our family felt comfortable at the event.
11. The young person in our family felt comfortable at the event. Would you like to add any comments on this topic?
12. The cycling event met the needs of the young person in our family.
13. Would you like to add any comments relating to the statement, the cycling event met the needs of the young person in our family?
14. As a result of the event, the young person in our family is more likely to participate in cycling in the future.
15. As a result of the event, the young person in our family is more likely to participate in cycling in the future. Would you like to add any comments on this topic?
16. The young person in our family enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and/or Vinnie the Circus Performer).
17. Would you like to add any comments relating to the statement, the young person in our family enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and/or Vinnie the Circus Performer)?
18. How many siblings attended the event?
19. Broadly speaking, the sibling(s) who attended were able to participate in the cycling.
20. Would you like to add any comments on the topic, the sibling(s) who attended were able to participate in the cycling?
21. Broadly speaking, the sibling(s) that attended enjoyed the cycling.

22. Would you like to add any comments relating to the statement, broadly speaking, the sibling(s) that attended enjoyed the cycling.?
23. Broadly speaking, the sibling(s) that attended enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and/or Vinne the Circus Performer).
24. Would you like to add any comments on this topic, the sibling(s) that attended enjoyed the trackside activities (ROC Samba Band and/or Vinne the Circus Performer). ?
25. The adult(s) that attended enjoyed the event.
26. Would you like to add any comments relating to the statement, the adult(s) that attended enjoyed the event?
27. The adult(s) that attended learned new skills or information that will help the young person to continue or develop her/his cycling.
28. Would you like to add any comments relating to the statement, the adult(s) who attended learned new skills or information that will help the young person to continue or develop her/his cycling?