An evaluation of Children's Burns Trust Family Weekends 2023-2024

An independent evaluation by the VTCT Foundation Research Team at the Centre for Appearance Research

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Executive summary

Family weekends are residential events offering families with children with a burn injury the opportunity to meet others with similar experiences, supported by experienced burn care professionals. The weekend is built around a schedule of enjoyable and informative activities designed to allow families to relax and have fun, whilst learning about topics key to burns management and psychological coping. For the last three years, these events have been evaluated as part of an ongoing collaboration between Children's Burns Trust and the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR). The present evaluation assessed the family and staff experiences of the family weekends held in April 2023, September 2023 and April 2024, aiming to further develop the weekend programme to ensure their continued positive impact for attending families and staff.

To evaluate the 2023/24 family weekends, researchers from CAR collected and analysed mixed-methods data through online surveys completed by the families who attended, and staff involved in the planning and delivery of the weekends. The questionnaires explored the motivations, expectations, experiences, reflections and challenges associated with attending the weekends, as well as the long-term impact of the events on the families who attended. Parents and staff were also asked to report elements of the weekend they felt could be improved, to facilitate continued development of the weekends to maximise their impact.

Findings of the evaluation into the experiences of families and staff at the 2023/24 family weekends suggested that the events were highly positive, valuable, and enjoyable, providing a myriad of benefits for those who attended. Staff and parents reported the importance of having the opportunity to mix with others with shared experiences, often at varying stages of recovery. Families also noted the positive experience of having quality time away as a family and being able to learn more about burns and burn management. The benefits for staff ranged from developing their understanding of the real experiences faced by families with children with burn injuries to networking and informal supervision with other

specialists. A lasting positive impact of attending the weekend was also reported by the parents who completed the 6-week follow-up survey.

As a result of the evaluation, several evidence-based recommendations were made regarding the planning and delivery of future family weekends. Recommendations included possible alterations to the planning process to fit in with busy staff schedules, the introduction of larger break-periods in the weekend programme and the addition of a staff messaging group to facilitate greater ease of communication during the event. The impact of the changes implemented across the 2023/24 weekends following recommendations from the 2022 evaluation were also assessed with a view to the continued development of the family weekends.

In conclusion, the 2023/24 family weekends represented a positive, beneficial, and enjoyable experience for both families and staff who attended. The feedback provided was overwhelmingly positive and the overall evaluation findings display the ongoing value and impact of the initiative for families and staff.

Background

Children's Burns Trust is a small national charity providing rehabilitation support for burned and scald injured children and their families, as well as burns prevention and awareness campaigns. Since 2005, Children's Burns Trust have organised 'family weekends' as part of their support for children and their families. Family weekends are residential events offering a chance for children with burn injuries and their families to enjoy fun activities together and meet other families who have also experienced the impact of a burn injury in their lives. In addition, informational workshops on topics relevant to burns care and psychological support (e.g., burn and scar management and relaxation sessions) are provided during the weekend by a team of burn care professionals. The impact of initiatives supported by Children's Burns Trust is significant, with 64 parents and children and 36 staff attending the family weekends in 2022, over 350 members of the closed parent and carer Facebook group, and 1.5 million reached by the #BeBurnsAware awareness campaign for National Burn Awareness Day 2023.

Qualitative research into residential camps for children with burns and their families have displayed numerous potential psychosocial benefits to attending, including increased confidence, psychological recovery, normalization of experience of burns and social support (Hodgkinson *et al*., 2023; Neill *et al*., 2022), as well as fostering feelings of companionship and belonging (Kornhaber *et al.*, 2020); though, it is noted that these results have not been consistently replicated in quantitative studies, representing an ongoing challenge for clinicians and researchers (Thomlinson *et al*., 2023). Additionally, an evaluation of the 2022 Children's Burns Trust family weekends by researchers at the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) consolidated many of these positive findings. Findings of the evaluation suggested that the family weekends had been a positive and valuable experience for families and staff who attended, with benefits to spending time together outside of the hospital and sharing experiences with other families at varying stages of burn recovery. Specifically, for parents, it was beneficial to find a community with others who had similar experiences of burns and recovery and to learn about practical burns management, the

psychological impact of burn injuries and helpful coping strategies. Whereas for staff, there were benefits of connecting with staff from other services and patients in an informal environment, which also allowed them to reflect on their delivery of care and the complexities of family life.

In addition to the 2022 family weekend evaluation, researchers at CAR have substantial expertise in researching the psychosocial impact of burn injuries, providing further rationale for the continued collaboration for the 23/24 evaluation. Of this experience, multiple studies have related specifically to the psychosocial impact of attending burn camps (Armstrong-James, *et al.*, 2018a, b), parent's attitudes towards participating in burns research (Tollow *et al.*, 2022). In addition, research at CAR has led to the development of a UK parent-focused peer-informed website to support families of burn-injured children (Heath *et al*., 2019), development and validation of the CARe burn scales (patient reported outcome measures for use with adults, children, young people and parents of children with a burn injury (Griffiths *et al*., 2019), and ongoing work developing online support for people affected by burn injuries (including forthcoming research to develop a module on the Healthtalk website). Furthermore, CAR have recently collaborated with burns charity Dan's Fund for Burns to evaluate several of their support initiatives for adult burns survivors, including a recent adult burn survivor residential weekend.

The aims of this evaluation were:

- To evaluate the experiences of the staff and families attending the Children's Burns Trust 2023/24 family weekends, and the longer-term impact on the families who attended.
- To assess the impact of the recommendations implemented following the evaluation of the 2022 family weekends.

Evaluation Methodology

About the family weekends

During 2023 and 2024 three family weekends were delivered by Children's Burns Trust (April 2023, September 2023, and April 2024). The family weekends were conducted across locations in the UK in collaboration with two UK burns networks. In 2023 the family weekends were conducted in Penrith (Northern Burn Care Network) and Littlehampton (London and Southeast Burn Services). The April 2024 family weekend was conducted in Penrith (Northern Burn Care Network). Family weekends are supported by NHS burn care professionals from burn services in Newcastle, Sheffield, Wakefield, Manchester, Liverpool, Chelmsford, East Grinstead and Chelsea and Westminster. Four staff from Birmingham children's hospital attended the family weekend in April 2023 as observers. A total of 17 families and 39 staff members attended the three events (for a more detailed breakdown of attendance numbers see Table 1 below).

Each weekend was organised to include a combination of planned activities and time for families to socialise together. Activities at the family weekends were designed to accommodate both children and parents and included: swimming, farm park visits, a beach trip, a llama walk, storytelling and kid's crafts and party. Though some activities also gave the parents a chance to have some time without their children, including the option to have a massage, a hydro-relaxation session, and a parent-only meal.

On top of the sessions based around enjoyment and relaxation, informational sessions were also held for parents. These informational and support sessions covered topics such as 'scar management' and 'parents experiences after a burn'.

Table 1: Summary of Family Weekend 2023/24 Attendees.

Year	Family weekend	No. of families	No. of parents	No. of children	No. of staff
2023	Penrith (April)	6	11	10	14
	Littlehampton (September)	6	11	13	14
2024	Penrith (April)	5	9	12	11
	Total	17	31	35	39

Design

Quantitative and qualitative components were utilised to gather and analyse feedback about the family weekends from parents and staff members.

To take part in the evaluation, prospective participants were required to:

- Be attending a Children's Burns Trust family weekend in 2023/24.
- Be 18 years old or over at the time of the evaluation.
- Be able to read and write in English to sufficiently provide informed consent.

Data collection

Several online surveys including both rating scales and open-ended questions were used to collect data from parents and staff in attendance. Parents were asked to complete two questionnaires over a period of 6 weeks, relating to their families' experience of the weekend and their wellbeing (see Figure 1). Additionally, all staff involved in the planning or delivery of the event were invited to complete a staff evaluation questionnaire. Questionnaires were hosted on Qualtrics, a secure online survey platform (See Table 2 for a

summary of the survey questions and see Appendices A-C for full details of all survey questions)

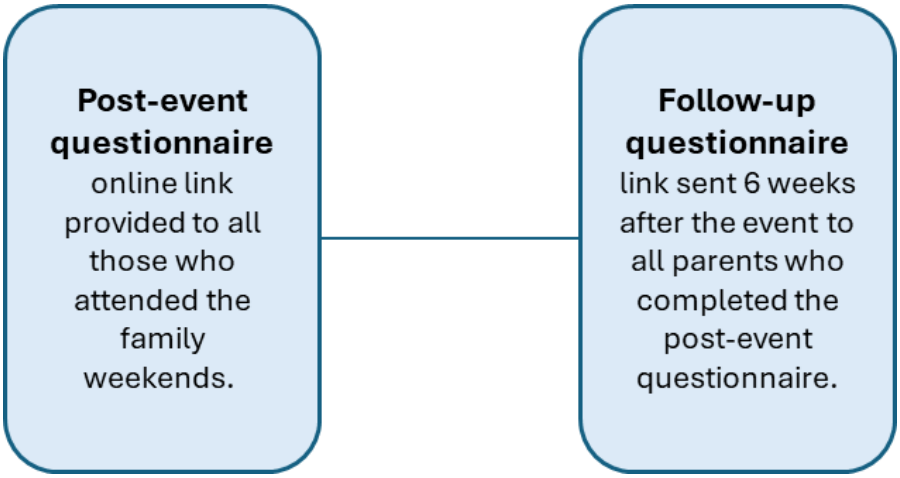


Figure 1: Diagram outlining the delivery of methods of data collection.

Parents were provided with details of the evaluation via a physical handout distributed in the final session of the family weekend. Families were also prompted to respond to the post-event questionnaire via emails sent by relevant hospital staff. The link to the staff evaluation was sent directly to staff following the weekend. Six weeks after the family weekend, the link to the follow-up survey was emailed to all parents who completed the post-event survey.

Prior to completing each questionnaire, parents and staff were required to read a participant information sheet and privacy notice (including adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) and complete a participant consent form.

Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide a summary of the feedback on the events. Qualitative open-ended responses to the surveys were analysed using content analysis, before results from both methods of data collection were collated in order to present the findings thematically within this report.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for this evaluation was provided by the University Research Ethics Committee at the University of the West of England (HAS.22.02.068). Consideration was given to ensure that informed consent was obtained, the risk of participant distress was minimized, and all participants were aware of their right to withdraw.

Table 2: Summary of questions included in the evaluation questionnaires.

Post-event questionnaire	**Follow-up** questionnaire	**Staff evaluation** questionnaire
Demographic and support information.	Overall experience of family weekend on reflection.	Number of previous weekends attended.
Reasons for attending the family weekend.	Likelihood of attending another Children's Burns Trust event.	Elements of the weekend that worked well.
Expectations for the weekend and whether these were met.	Impact of weekend on family over previous 6 weeks.	Elements perceived to have been gained by families as a result of attending the weekend.
Most liked element of the weekend.	Any additional comments about the weekends.	Whether they had gained anything from the weekend.
Any elements they would change.		Improvements to the planning process of the weekend.
Whether they had gained anything from the weekend.		Overall improvements to the weekends.
Any changes to thoughts about their child's burn as a result of the weekend.		Any challenges experienced while attending the weekend.

Challenges associated with attending the weekend.		Any additional comments about the weekends.
Overall rating of their families experience of the weekend.		
Child and siblings experience of the weekend.		
Whether they would recommend the weekend to others.		

Evaluation Results

Participants

Of the total 31 parents (from 17 families) who attended the 2023/24 family weekends, 42% (n=13) participated in the evaluation (See Table 3). 54% (n=7) of the total participant parents attended the 2023 weekends, while the remaining 46% (n=6) attended the 2024 weekends. Eleven of these parents identified as mothers and two as fathers. The mean age of parent respondents to the evaluation was 36 years old (ranging from 24 to 48 years old). Among these parents reported ethnicities included Black African, Mixed South American, White British, White Eastern European and British Asian.

Children with a burn injury were aged between 18 months and 10 years old at the time of the evaluation and were aged between 14 months and 8 years old when they sustained their burn injuries. 83% (n=10) of parents reported their child's burn injuries to have been caused by liquid (e.g. hot water/steam or other liquid, such as cooking oil), while one parent reported their child's burns to have been sustained during a house fire and another through electricity (e.g. electric socket, live wire/object). 100% (n=12) of parents reported that their child was still receiving medical treatment (including physiotherapy or scar management) from burns services at the time of the evaluation. Additionally, 100% (n=12) of the parents felt that they had received the support they needed since their child's burn injury.

Six weeks after the event, the 13 parents who completed the post-event questionnaire were invited to complete a follow-up questionnaire. Only 54% (n=7) of those parents completed the follow-up.

Out of a total 39 staff members who attended the 2023/24 family weekends, 72% (n=28) participated in the evaluation. 68% (n=19) of the total staff respondents attended the 2023 weekends and 32% (n=9) attended the 2024 weekend. Most staff respondents had previously attended a family weekend (n=21), with only 7 reporting the 2023/24 weekends as being their first. Of those who had attended a previous event, the mean number of previous events was 6 (ranging from 1 to 15 previous events).

Table 3: Number of evaluation participants per survey.

Data collection method	Number of participants
Post-event questionnaire	13
Follow-up questionnaire	7
Staff evaluation questionnaire	28

Post-event Questionnaire Results

Overall experience of the weekend

Parents were asked a series of questions relating to their families' overall experience of the family weekend (see Table 4). Responses to these questions provide highly positive overview of their experiences of the weekends.

Table 4: Quantitative results regarding families' overall experience of the weekend.

	Participant response
How would you rate your family's overall experience of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?	100% 'Very good'

Would you recommend the Children's Burns Trust family weekend to other families of a child with a burn?	100% 'Yes'

Parents who selected that they would recommend the family weekends to other families also provided qualitative responses detailing why this was. In turn, this provided an additional insight into their overall experience of the weekend. See below for several quotes provided by parents:

Would you recommend the Children's Burns Trust family weekend to other families of a child with a burn? If so, why?

"It was an amazing experience for both the children and as parents to get an understanding of burns and letting people with different experiences of burns and how mostly we are all going through the same things."

"It is comforting to meet other families who have been through similar experiences as ourselves. We can empathise with each other and chat openly with them as they know what you've been through and won't judge you."

"Opening up about experiences can be hard for many families, but it appears to be extremely beneficial. I feel like we somehow built a stronger bond with each other in the family too. Furthermore, allowing children to enjoy playing with others and with hospital staff in a safe environment is really helpful for them, especially after the traumatic experience in hospitals."

"Everyone who had experienced a burn injury in family, will benefit from what we had there. Support, care, mental care, joy and fraternity. Opportunity to speak and opportunity to forgive themselves."

"There's a wide variety of activities to do, and the staff from the hospital who organised this are lovely, and the staff at the hotel were dears too. Would 100 percent recommend and would most definitely come again."

Motivations to attend

Parents were asked to report their top three reasons for attending the family weekend. Answers to this question were grouped into five overarching categories (listed in descending order of the frequency they were reported):

- For parents and children to meet and socialise with others with similar experiences.

- To have a fun time away with the family.
- For support and learning related to scar and burn management.
- Help children overcome their fears of burns treatment and hospital environments.
- To build on previous positive experiences of support.

The most cited motivation for attending was the chance for parents and children to meet and talk with others who could understand and relate to the challenge of experiencing a burn injury within the family. Parents also felt that the weekend provided the opportunity to spend some quality time away with their loved ones. Additionally, the family weekends were viewed as a learning opportunity, a way to gain burn related support and knowledge and to help their children become more comfortable around burns specialists outside of a hospital environment.

Parents experiences of the weekend

When asked what they hoped to get from attending the weekend, parents' answers fell into four categories outlined in the figure below. Example quotations reflecting the meaning of each category are also included.

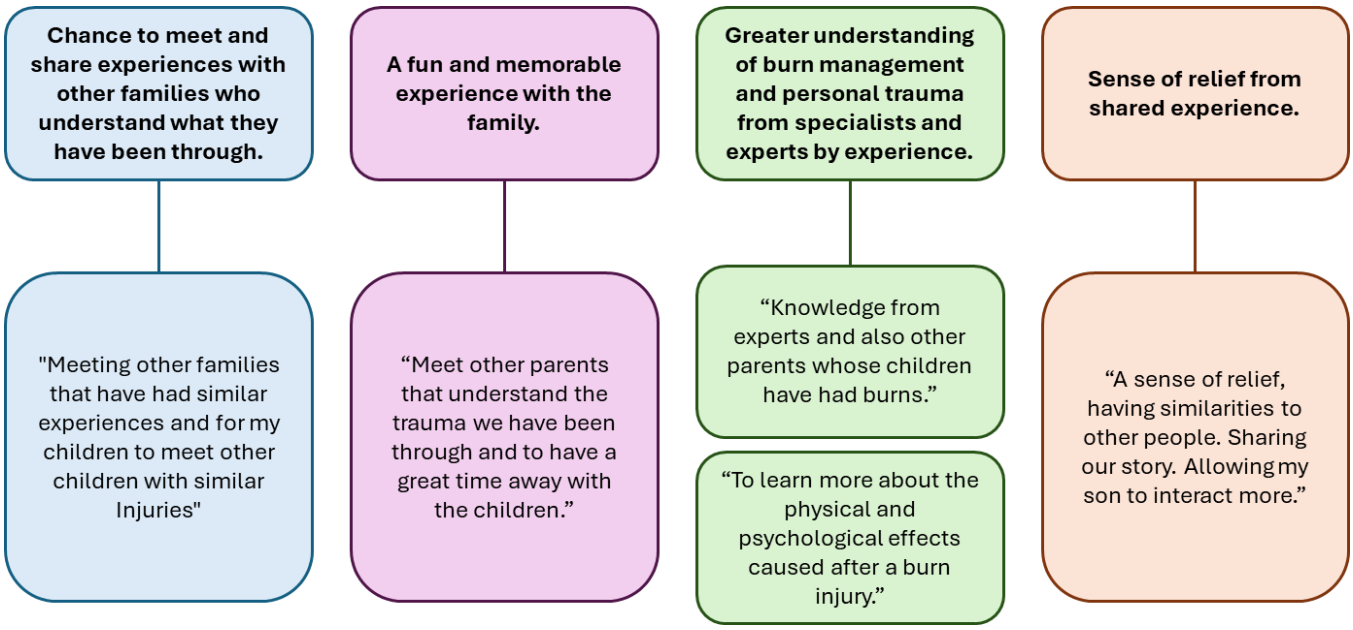


Figure 2: Diagram presenting categories of parents' hopes for the outcomes of the family weekends.

Parents' actual experience of the weekend likely fulfilled these hopes, as 100% (n=13) of the respondents expressed that the family weekend had met or exceeded their expectations ("*Yes, they went above and beyond my expectations*"). When asked which part of the weekend they had most enjoyed, parents indicated a variety of elements that stood out to them:

- "*How it was so packed with stuff to do that concentrated on the parents and children*."
- "*Everything. I think it was organised extremely well. There was time for both parents and children to enjoy time together and individually. Although it was a very busy weekend, it was all packed in very well.*"
- "*Meeting families with similar injuries, sharing experiences, meeting other staff from different hospitals.*"
- "*Everything really! It was well organised and we knew what we were doing at set times. Lots of swimming which was great, plus time out for the adults.*"
- "*The activities, getting to see the children mix with other families and the staff*."

Elements gained from attending the weekend

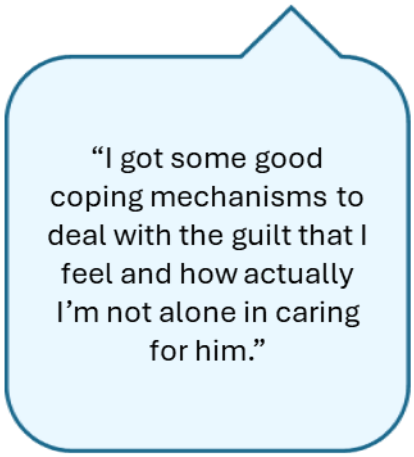
Parents were asked to describe any elements they had personally gained through attending the weekend. Their answers fell into five categories:

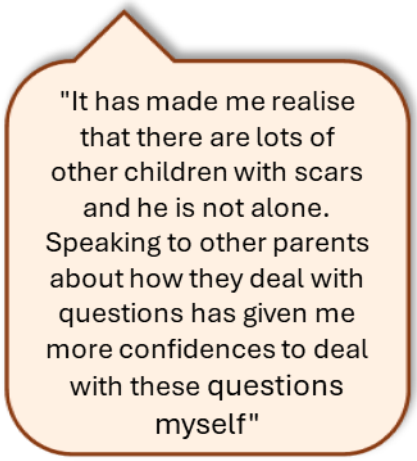
- Knowledge about burn and scar management from experts.
- Psychological relief and self-forgiveness.
- Togetherness with others with shared experiences.
- Self-confidence and resilience.
- Forming new friendships.

Additionally, parents were asked if attending the weekend altered their thoughts about their child's burn injury. Of the total respondents, 6 reported that attending the weekend had changed their perceptions of their child's burn injury, while 6 said they were not sure.

Of the parents that reported a change to their perceptions, the most reported was feelings of being better able to cope with guilt related to the accidents that had caused their child's injuries. Some parents reported that meeting others with similar experiences had prompted

them to reframe their thoughts about managing their child's burn, viewing it less of a solitary experience. While for one parent, meeting others in a similar situation had provided them with an improved understanding and confidence in dealing with questions related to their child's burns.





Some parents also reported that their children's attitudes towards and confidence in discussing their own or their siblings' burns had changed as a result of the weekend. This was exemplified in one parent's statement: "*My children are comfortable now and talk about the burns with no worries*". For another parent, discussions with others at the event had allowed them to realise the importance of taking care of themselves: "*It has reminded me of the importance of self-care and taking some time for myself*".

Children and siblings' experiences of the family weekends

Parents were asked a series of questions on the experiences of the family weekend of both their child with a burn injury and the child's non-affected siblings. Of the 13 respondents, 11 parents provided responses to the section of the evaluation exploring the experiences of their children at the event. 100% of the parents who completed this section gave their children's (child with burn and siblings) enjoyment of the event the maximum rating.

In addition, parents were asked to report the elements of the weekend most enjoyed by their children. The elements most enjoyed by the children with burns and their siblings were very similar, with parents most frequently stating that the swimming activities and activities with animals were enjoyed the most. Whilst the storytelling, music session, fire station

experience, food, crafts and interactions with staff and other children were also mentioned to be enjoyed by some children.

Though it was expressed that many of the children in attendance were "*too young to have really learnt anything*" from attending the weekend, some parents described the impact the experience had on their children's views of burns. For one sibling of a child with burns, meeting other children with similar injuries to their sibling had allowed them to realise that "*other children have burns and scars like his little brother*". This was echoed as another parent described that attending the weekend had caused their child to learn "*that lots of children have burn injuries and they don't let their injuries hold them back*".

Challenges experienced and suggestions for future weekends

Only 15% of respondents reported that they had experienced any challenges in attending the weekend, and of these, all reported challenges were outside of the control of event organisers (e.g., car issues). However, some potential improvements to the organisation of the experience were outlined by parents:

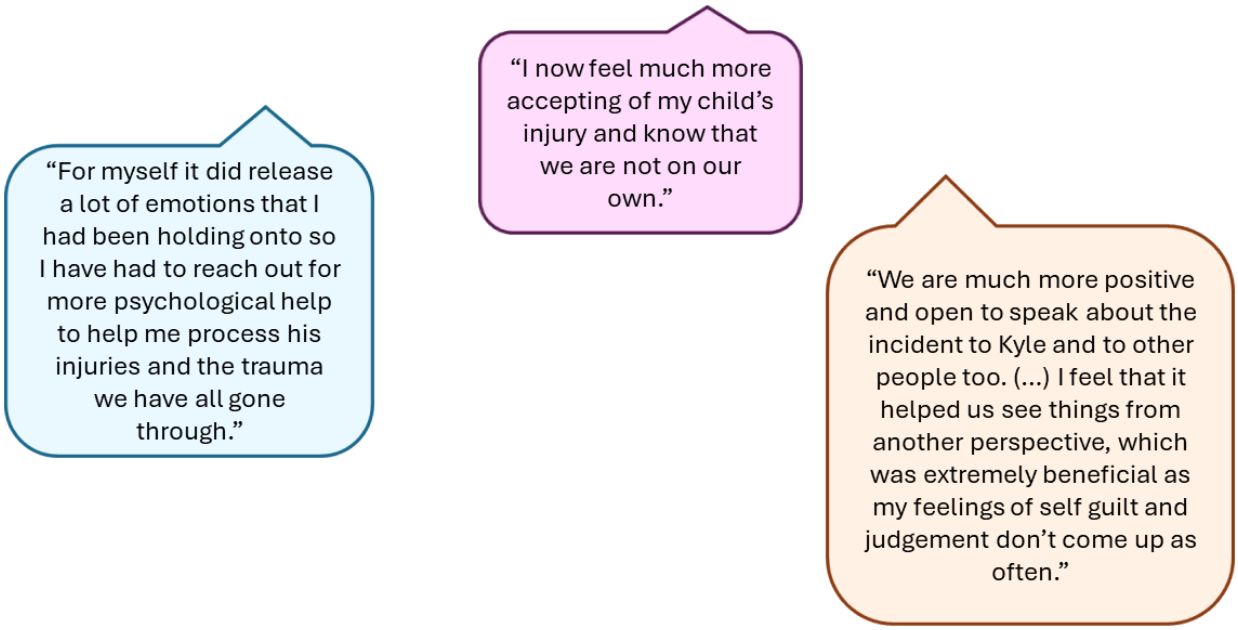
- "*A little bit more free time if possible as my son needed to nap but only sleeps in a cot so we missed some activities so he could sleep.*"
- *"If it could be offered more than just twice a year for new families to enjoy, that would be fantastic*."
- "*The pyschology session on the Saturday late afternoon was very powerful and the session I was quite worried about attending. I wasn't sure how I'd feel talking about the injury again. As I mentioned previously, I thought I'd be the only one to be upset. I think perhaps this session could be earlier in the day so we could have chance to discuss things later*"
- "*Just a very very minor thing - Copy of the slides from the first session or say bring your phone in to take photos- we didn't do either and just in case wanted to refer back*."

Despite this, most responding parents actively expressed that they wouldn't change any elements of the weekend and would be interested in attending other similar events in the future.

Follow-up Questionnaire Results

Despite multiple reminders being sent, a reduced 54% (n=7) of the respondents to the post-event questionnaire completed the follow-up. The parents who did complete the 6-week follow-up were asked to rate their experience and whether they would recommend family weekends to other families of children with burn injuries. 86% of responding parents rated their experience 'very good' and 100% selected that they would be 'very likely' to recommend the weekends to other families. This indicates that for the majority of responding parents their positive views of the family weekend experience had been maintained since the event.

Parents also described the impact the weekend had on their families over the six weeks following the event. It was expressed that the weekend had acted as an emotional release for one parent, improving bonds in the family. While others explained that they were now more comfortable, accepting and open about their child's burns.



Several attendees of the 2024 weekend also explained that they had formed a WhatsApp group with the other parents who attended, maintaining contact over the weeks following the event. The group was described as offering a safe non-judgemental space to share experiences and any issues encountered:

"The mums who were at the weekend have a WhatsApp group and it has been great to be able to chat with them about different things/issues without being judged and knowing they understand what I have been through."

Staff Evaluation Questionnaire Results

Overall experience of the weekend

Staff were asked a series of questions regarding their overall experience of the family weekend (see Table 5).

Table 5: Quantitative results regarding participants' overall experience of the weekend.

	Staff response
How would you rate your overall experience of taking part in the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?	93% 'Very good' 7% 'Good'
Did you experience any challenges taking part in this family weekend? (e.g. travel, access, communication)	93% 'No' 7% 'Yes'

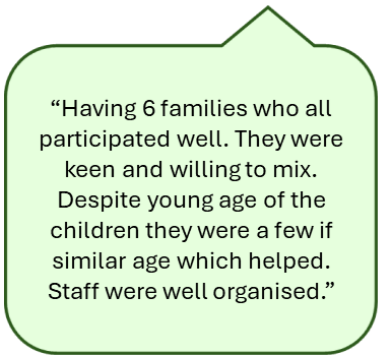
Staff reported that they had experienced challenges in taking part in the weekend were asked to explain the types of challenges they had experienced. Although very few challenges were reported, one staff member mentioned that they had to self-fund their travel expenses and participation in the weekend, which had made it challenging to fit into their time around work commitments.

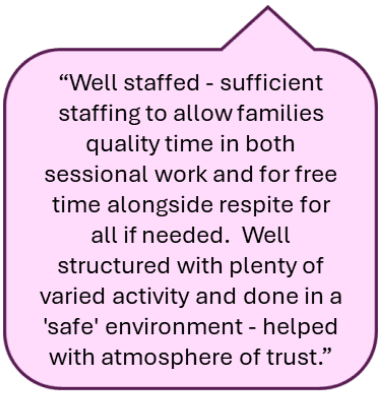
Staff experiences of the weekend

Staff respondents were also asked the elements of the family weekend that they felt worked well. Their answers to this question were grouped into categories, the most frequently cited of which are included below:

- Willingness among parents and staff to interact with one another.

- Staff being experienced and working well together.
- Range of enjoyable activities.
- Well-organised nature of the weekend.
- Similar characteristics across attending families.
- Sufficient staffing for individualised support.





In addition, staff were asked to report the elements they felt they had personally gained from attending the family weekend. Responses to this question were grouped into five categories:

- Chance to develop skills and learn from other specialists.
- Emotional reward of being able to support the families.
- Greater understanding of the experiences of patient families with children with burn injuries.
- Opportunity to develop relationships with patient families outside the clinical setting.
- Chance to enjoy a fun weekend.

"Sharing experience of the family weekends. Also discussing with colleagues our services in an informal peer supervision"

"Opportunity to network with colleagues, reminder of the huge impact a burn injury has on families."

"Lovely to have time in a non hospital environment with parents and children. When stresses of work are very high it's easy to lose sight of why we do what we do. These weekends bring a renewed sense of purpose to my day to day role"

"I gained a greater understanding of what parents struggle with psychology following their child sustaining a burn injury"

Similarly, staff were asked what they felt the families had gained from attending the weekend. See below for several staff quotes that capture the overall responses of the respondents.

Do you think families gained anything from attending the family weekend? If so, what do you feel they gained?

"I think they gained significantly psychologically by meeting others who had been through a similar trauma. They gained a greater understanding of the scarring and treatments. Sharing their stories in the psychology sessions was beneficial as it helped them feel less isolated as they could relate to each other. I feel that through this they gained confidence (children and parents) especially by participating in new activities and sharing their experience."

"Families engaged with each other and shared experiences. They had opportunities to spend time as a family also and as well as speak to staff. Having a protected time to focus on their rehabilitation."

"Support and confidence in grasping opportunities and having a go, developing self and each other. Management of burns aftercare, ongoing development, resilience, supporting each other, enjoying family experiences and child/family being with staff in a non-clinical setting and experiences therefore our relationships benefitting from spending time together in non nursing interactions."

"Sharing stories Shared experiences Knowing how they feel is 'normal' and understandable and they are not the only ones Being able to talk about the injury and their feelings more openly as feel others understand Being able to hear and gain different perspectives from people at different stage post burns."

Staff suggestions for future weekends

Despite the significantly positive feedback provided by staff on the weekend overall, elements for improvement for future weekends were identified (see Table 6).

Table 6. Overview of staff feedback for improvements to the overall weekend and elements of the planning process.

Improvements to overall weekend	Improvements to planning process
Selected activities should be catered to the age range of children in attendance.	Gain detailed demographic information on families and any additional needs prior to the event.
Greater selection of toys and books are needed.	Reduce number of planning meetings and organise further in advance.
More insistence that parents take part and are punctual.	Important to continue to have backup families in case of dropouts.
Larger gaps or nap times between sessions.	Provide more detailed information on the contents of the weekend to families in advance.
Addition of quieter low arousal spaces.	Have families meet before attending to save time during the weekend.
Initial staff meeting held at the event site.	Addition of a group chat for mass communication during the weekend.
Improved vegetarian and gluten free options.	

Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation suggest that the 2023/24 Children's Burns Trust family weekends were successful in providing a valuable and enjoyable experience for many of the families and staff in attendance. A central element of this success was the positive impact of families of children at differing stages of recovery after a burn injury being able to mix, share their experiences, and learn coping strategies from one another in a safe and supportive environment. The benefits of such experiences were reported across both parents and children and included psychological relief, reduced feelings of isolation and increased confidence and resilience (many of which were reported to have been maintained at follow-up). These results reinforce the findings of the 2022 evaluation and previous research on burn camps (Neill *et al*., 2022; Kornhaber *et al.*, 2020), further displaying the effectiveness and value of the family weekends.

In addition, the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of burns care and coping with trauma from burns specialists through both informal discussions and informational sessions added another dimension of value to the weekends. For many parents, the weekends represented a chance to learn more about their child's burn injury and options for treatment and management from a variety of specialists, some of whom they might not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet. Whereas some children benefitted from being able to interact with staff outside of a hospital environment. The importance of including informational activities and staff with experience of treating patients with burn injuries is therefore emphasised, reflecting the findings of previous research evaluating burns camps (Armstrong-James, *et al.*, 2018a, b).

In conclusion, the experiences of families and staff involved in the 2023/24 family weekends were exceedingly positive, with some additional long-term benefits of attendance reported at follow-up. Some key evidence-based recommendations for future weekends identified within the evaluation will be outlined below, alongside a review of the limitations of the findings of this evaluation.

Recommendations for future weekends

While much of the parent and staff feedback was exclusively positive, several alterations to the planning and weekend program were suggested. Recommendations for changes to future weekends and evaluations have been made based on these suggestions and the overall evaluation of the 2023/24 family weekends.

Evaluation of changes implemented from the 2022 evaluation

Several evidence-based recommendations resulting from the findings of the evaluation of the 2022 family weekends were piloted and fully implemented across the 2023/24 weekends. Implemented changes related to the organisation and delivery of the events, as well as the approach to the evaluation. Specifically, greater time was allocated for planning meetings prior to the events. First-time staff were invited to a one-to-one video call with Children's Burns Trust staff and provided with additional information on their roles and responsibilities. An updated information pack was provided to attending families, outlining important event related details to help align parents' expectations with the real experience of the weekend. In addition, as staff and parent feedback from the 2022 evaluation suggested that the weekend schedule was too busy, additional rest and family time was included in the 2023/24 schedule. Significant alterations were also made to the delivery of the follow-up survey to increase engagement, as none of the families of the 2022 weekends completed the follow-up. This involved a reduction in the follow-up period post-event (from 10 to 6 weeks), the addition of phone or message reminders, a shorter follow-up survey and a £10 gift voucher incentive for completion of the survey.

Despite planning meetings being organized further in advance of the weekend, this was mentioned to be a continuing issue by one staff member. However, as another staff respondent stated that they would prefer fewer meetings, it would likely be challenging to entirely accommodate the needs and preferences of every staff member. Likewise, despite the inclusion of greater rest periods between activities, staff and parent feedback from the 2023/24 weekends still mentioned the need for further free time built into the schedule. While this likely indicates the need for further alterations to accommodate increased gaps between activities, it is also representative of the difficulty of allocating enough rest time

without removing other aspects of the weekend, particularly given the overwhelming positive feedback relating to the itinerary of activities.

The changes applied to the distribution process and content of the follow-up survey proved to increase engagement, with the 2023/24 follow-up survey yielding seven responses. As such, it is recommended that the aforementioned changes to the follow-up survey are applied in any future evaluations of the family weekends.

Changes to organization and planning of future weekends

Staff made several suggestions relating to streamlining or altering the process of planning the weekends. Due to the busy schedules maintained by many NHS staff members, some staff suggested reducing the frequency of planning meetings and organizing them further in advance. It was felt that this might help staff members fit the meetings into their schedules, ensuring they are able to attend as many as possible.

Further, while the possibility of families dropping out prior to the weekends was recognised as being an unavoidable issue which is often out of the control of the organizers, the importance of securing backup families to take the place of any dropouts was stressed. Another suggestion was to collect more detailed demographic information from prospective attending families while planning a weekend (e.g., ages and injuries of children) to appropriately cater activities to the demographics. Such information was also suggested to be used to select families with children of similar ages to attend the same weekend, if possible, as this was seen to help with group cohesion and allow activities to run smoothly.

Reflecting on the activity program and organization of aspects during each weekend parents and staff made several suggestions for elements that could be changed (see p.16-17 for parents and p.21-22 for staff for detailed list of suggestions). Both parents and staff recognized the continued need for larger gaps between activities. For parents with young children, it was suggested to be difficult to make sure their children were ready for each activity (e.g., getting changed before or after a swimming session) given the limited time between activities. However, it was also recognized that the short turnaround between activities was required to ensure that the busy itinerary of activities could fit into the weekend schedule. Additionally, several staff expressed the possible benefits of introducing

a messaging group chat during each weekend to streamline the communication between staff members.

Limitations

Due to the voluntary nature of participation in the evaluation, the findings can only represent the views and experiences of those who participated. As 42% of attending parents and 72% of staff responded to the post-event questionnaire, the results may not be representative of everyone who attended. Likewise, as a further reduced 23% of total attending parents completed the follow-up questionnaire, it is also unclear whether the findings on the long-term impact of attending the weekend represent the experience of the majority of attendees. In addition, it is important to note the possibility of self-selection bias in the sample of attendees who decided to take part in the evaluation. It is possible that there were differences between those who chose to engage with the evaluation and those who chose not to, which might have caused them to hold differing beliefs about the family weekends, influencing the overall results.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the VTCT Foundation for funding this evaluation and the collaboration between Children's Burns Trust and the Centre for Appearance Research. Thank you to the Fire Fighters Charity for providing the use of their rehabilitation centres for the family weekends. Thank you also to all the families and staff for taking the time to participate and share their experiences.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Post-Event Evaluation Questionnaire

Family evaluation questionnaire

An evaluation of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend

Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. If you are not sure about any of the questions, or have any concerns, please contact the researcher (Dr Pippa Tollow; Pippa.Tollow@uwe.ac.uk, 0117 32 87389).

First, we would like to know a bit about you and your family, and the support you have received.

1. **What is your age?**

_____

2. **How would you describe your gender?**

_____

3. **How would you describe your ethnicity?**

_____

4. **What is your relationship to the child that had a burn (e.g. mother/father/parent/grandparent/carer/other relation)?**

_____

5. **How old was your child/the child you care for when they had their burn injury?**

_____

6. **How old is your child/the child you care for now?**

_____

7. **What caused the burn?**

|_| Flame (e.g. flame on cooker, clothes caught fire)
|_| Liquid (e.g. hot water/steam or other liquid, such as cooking oil)
|_| Contact (e.g. hot cooking pan, iron, friction)
|_| Electricity (e.g. electric socket, live wire/object)
|_| Chemical/acid (e.g. cleaning products, caustic soda)
|_| Other (please specify)_____

8. **Are you or your child/the child you care for currently receiving support from your burns service? (please tick all that apply)**

_ Medical treatment (including physiotherapy and scar management)

_ Psychological support for my child

_ Psychological support for myself or other family members

_ No, none

9. **Do you feel you have had the support you need since your child/the child you care for had their burn?**

_ Yes
_No

If you would like to tell us more about this, please write this below:

_____

_____

_____

10. **How many people live in your household?**

_____children _____ adults

11. **How many people from your household attended the Family Weekend?**

_____children _____ adults

The next set of questions are about your expectations and experiences of the family weekend – please answer openly and honestly, your feedback will be used to improve the family weekend for other parents and children.

12. **What were your top 3 reasons for attending the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

13. **What were you hoping to get from the family weekend?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. **Did the family weekend meet your expectations?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
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15. **What did you like most about the family weekend?**

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_____
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16. **What would you have changed about the family weekend?**

_____
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17. **Do you feel you gained anything from attending the family weekend? If so, what?**

_____

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_____

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_____

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18. **Do you feel that attending the family weekend has changed your thoughts about your child's burn injury at all?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, how do you feel this has changed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. **How would you rate your families overall experience of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?**

1 (very bad)	2 (bad)	3 (average)	4 (good)	5 (very good)

20. **Did you experience any challenges attending the family weekend? (e.g. travel, access, communication, accommodation)** *(please tick one)*

- Yes

- No

If yes, please tell us about these challenges:

_____
___
_____
___
_____
___

ADDITIONAL ADULT
Did another adult attend the family weekend with you? If they would also like to complete the questionnaires above, please tick 'yes' and the questions above will be repeated for them to complete.

- Yes, another adult also attended the family weekend with me and would like to complete this questionnaire now.

- No

[If yes, display questions 12-20 for additional adult to complete]

YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE OF THE EVENT
These questions are regarding your child with a burn injury and their experience of the family weekend.
We would encourage you to discuss these questions with your child and ask for their ideas when answering these questions. If this is not possible, please answer these questions with them in mind.
If you feel these questions aren't relevant because of the age of your child/children, please skip to the next page.

21. **How much did your child/children enjoy the family weekend?**

1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (A lot)

22. **What did your child with a burn injury enjoy most about the family weekend?**

_____
___
_____
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_____
___

_____
___

23. **What did your child with a burn injury not enjoy about the family weekend?**

_____
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_____
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_____
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24. **What (if anything) has your child with a burn injury learned while they were at the family weekend?**

_____
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SIBLING'S EXPERIENCES OF THE EVENT

These questions are regarding sibling's experiences of the family weekend. We would encourage you to discuss these questions with your child/children and ask for their ideas when answering these questions. If this is not possible, please answer these questions with them in mind.

If you feel these questions aren't relevant because of the age of your child/children, please skip to the next page.

25. **How much did your child/children enjoy the family weekend?**

1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (A lot)

26. **What did your child/children enjoy most about the family weekend?**

_____
___
_____
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_____
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_____
___

27. **What did your child/children not enjoy about the family weekend?**

_____
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_____
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_____
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_____
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28. **What (if anything) has your child/children learned while they were at the family weekend?**

_____
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_____
___

FINAL QUESTIONS

29. **Would you recommend the Children's Burns Trust family weekend to other families of a child with a burn?**
(please tick one)
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

Please tell us why you chose this answer?

_____
___
_____

Family evaluation questionnaire

An evaluation of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend

Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. If you are not sure about any of the questions, or have any concerns, please contact the researcher (Dr Pippa

Tollow; Pippa.Tollow@uwe.ac.uk, 0117 32 87389).

First, we would like to know a bit about you and your family, and the support you have received.

1. **What is your age?**

_____

2. **How would you describe your gender?**

_____

3. **How would you describe your ethnicity?**

_____

4. **What is your relationship to the child that had a burn (e.g. mother/father/parent/grandparent/carer/other relation)?**

_____

5. **How old was your child/the child you care for when they had their burn injury?**

_____

6. **How old is your child/the child you care for now?**

_____

7. **What caused the burn?**

|_| Flame (e.g. flame on cooker, clothes caught fire)
|_| Liquid (e.g. hot water/steam or other liquid, such as cooking oil)
|_| Contact (e.g. hot cooking pan, iron, friction)
|_| Electricity (e.g. electric socket, live wire/object)
|_| Chemical/acid (e.g. cleaning products, caustic soda)
|_| Other (please specify)_____

8. **Are you or your child/the child you care for currently receiving support from your burns service? (please tick all that apply)**

_ Medical treatment (including physiotherapy and scar management)

_ Psychological support for my child

_ Psychological support for myself or other family members

_ No, none

9. **Do you feel you have had the support you need since your child/the child you care for had their burn?**

_ Yes
_No

If you would like to tell us more about this, please write this below:

_____

_____

_____

10. **How many people live in your household?**

_____children _____ adults

11. **How many people from your household attended the Family Weekend?**

_____children _____ adults

The next set of questions are about your expectations and experiences of the family weekend – please answer openly and honestly, your feedback will be used to improve the family weekend for other parents and children.

12. **What were your top 3 reasons for attending the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

13. **What were you hoping to get from the family weekend?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
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14. **Did the family weekend meet your expectations?**

_____
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15. **What did you like most about the family weekend?**

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16. **What would you have changed about the family weekend?**

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17. **Do you feel you gained anything from attending the family weekend? If so, what?**

_____
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_____
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_____
_

_____
_

18. **Do you feel that attending the family weekend has changed your thoughts about your child's burn injury at all?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, how do you feel this has changed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. **How would you rate your families overall experience of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?**

1 (very bad)	2 (bad)	3 (average)	4 (good)	5 (very good)

20. **Did you experience any challenges attending the family weekend? (e.g. travel, access, communication, accommodation)** *(please tick one)*

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, please tell us about these challenges:

_____
___
_____
___
_____
___

ADDITIONAL ADULT
Did another adult attend the family weekend with you? If they would also like to complete the questionnaires above, please tick 'yes' and the questions above will be repeated for them to complete.

- ○ Yes, another adult also attended the family weekend with me and would like to complete this questionnaire now.
- ○ No

[If yes, display questions 12-20 for additional adult to complete]

YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE OF THE EVENT
These questions are regarding your child with a burn injury and their experience of the family weekend.

We would encourage you to discuss these questions with your child and ask for their ideas when answering these questions. If this is not possible, please answer these questions with them in mind.
If you feel these questions aren't relevant because of the age of your child/children, please skip to the next page.

21. **How much did your child/children enjoy the family weekend?**

1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (A lot)

22. **What did your child with a burn injury enjoy most about the family weekend?**

_____
_____
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23. **What did your child with a burn injury not enjoy about the family weekend?**

_____
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24. **What (if anything) has your child with a burn injury learned while they were at the family weekend?**

_____
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SIBLING'S EXPERIENCES OF THE EVENT
These questions are regarding sibling's experiences of the family weekend.

We would encourage you to discuss these questions with your child/children and ask for their ideas when answering these questions. If this is not possible, please answer these questions with them in mind.
If you feel these questions aren't relevant because of the age of your child/children, please skip to the next page.

25. **How much did your child/children enjoy the family weekend?**

1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (A lot)

26. **What did your child/children enjoy most about the family weekend?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

27. **What did your child/children not enjoy about the family weekend?**

_____
_____
_____
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28. **What (if anything) has your child/children learned while they were at the family weekend?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

FINAL QUESTIONS

29. **Would you recommend the Children's Burns Trust family weekend to other families of a child with a burn?**
(please tick one)
- Yes
- No

Please tell us why you chose this answer?

_____
___
_____
___

_____
___

30. **Would you be interested in taking part in a short follow-up questionnaire about the impact of this event on you and your family in ten weeks' time?**

The follow-up questionnaire will be shorter than this questionnaire and will ask about how your family have felt since the event.
If you select 'yes', a link to this online follow-up questionnaire will be emailed to you approximately 10 weeks after the family weekend.
- Yes
- No

31. **Would you like to tell us anything else about your experience of the family weekend?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire regarding the Children's Burns Trust family weekend.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Dr Pippa Tollow (pippa.tollow@uwe.ac.uk; 0117 32 87389**)**

_____
___

30. **Would you be interested in taking part in a short follow-up questionnaire about the impact of this event on you and your family in ten weeks' time?**

The follow-up questionnaire will be shorter than this questionnaire and will ask about how your family have felt since the event.
If you select 'yes', a link to this online follow-up questionnaire will be emailed to you approximately 10 weeks after the family weekend.

- Yes
- No

31. **Would you like to tell us anything else about your experience of the family weekend?**

_____

_____

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_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire regarding the Children's Burns Trust family weekend.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Dr Pippa Tollow (pippa.tollow@uwe.ac.uk; 0117 32 87389**)**

Appendix B – Follow-Up Evaluation Questionnaire

Family follow-up evaluation questionnaire

An evaluation of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend

Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. If you are not sure about any of the questions, or have any concerns, please contact the researcher (Dr Pippa Tollow; Pippa.Tollow@uwe.ac.uk, 0117 32 87389).

1. **Please enter your unique participant identifier here.**

_____

You were asked to create this code when completing the first questionnaire in this evaluation. This is the first three letters of your mother's first name and the year you were born.

If you do not know your unique participant identifier, please contact Pippa (pippa.tollow@uwe.ac.uk; 0117 32 87389)

2. **What impact, if any, has attending the Children's Burns Trust family weekend had on your family in the last ten weeks?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. **Do you feel that attending the family weekend has changed your thoughts about your child's burn injury at all?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, how do you feel this has changed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. **Have you noticed any changes in your child/children in the last ten weeks since the family weekend?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. **Have you noticed any changes in yourself or other family members in the last ten weeks since the family weekend?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **Do you have any other comments about the Children's Burns Trust family weekend that you would like to share with us? If so, please write these below.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing these questionnaires regarding the Children's Burns Trust family weekend.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Dr Pippa Tollow (pippa.tollow@uwe.ac.uk; 0117 32 87389**)**

Appendix C – Staff Evaluation Questionnaire

Family weekend - Staff Evaluation

An evaluation of the Children's Burns Trust family weekend

Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. If you are not sure about any of the questions, or have any concerns, please contact the researcher (Dr Pippa Tollow; Pippa.Tollow@uwe.ac.uk, 0117 32 87389).

1. **What do you think worked well about the family weekend?**

_____
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_____
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2. **What would you have changed about the family weekend?**

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3. **Do you feel families gained anything from attending the family weekend? If so, what do you feel they gained?**

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4. Do you feel you gained anything from attending the family weekend? If so, what do you feel you gained?

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5. **Do you feel anything could be improved in the planning process of the family weekend? If so, what?**

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_____
___

6. **How would you rate your overall experience of taking part in the Children's Burns Trust family weekend?**

1 (very bad)	2 (bad)	3 (average)	4 (good)	5 (very good)

7. **Did you experience any challenges taking part in this family weekend? (e.g. travel, access, communication)**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us about these challenges:

_____
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_____
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8. **Do you have any other comments about the event?**

_____
___
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_____
___

Thank you for completing this questionnaire regarding the Children's Burns Trust family weekend. If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Dr Pippa Tollow (pippa.tollow@uwe.ac.uk; 0117 32 87389**)**