

Appendix B

Barnet early years review – finding a better way to support children under five Consultation Findings

October 2014

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

We recognise the importance of the early years of a child's development and the important role our services can play in supporting families to ensure that children have the best start in life.

For this reason over the last eighteen months the council has undertaken a review of our early years services, including children's centres, early years health services and early education. The aim of the review was to improve support to families with young children, reduce the budget by £700,000 and improve identification and support to the most vulnerable families in our community.

The review found that whilst there were many positives, including a dedicated and passionate workforce, our service model needed to be transformed to improve outcomes for families.

In response to the review a case for change was developed and bold vision to improve Barnet's early years services whilst also achieving savings in 2015/16. The proposed changes, which were developed with help from children's centre workers, health professionals and families, and outlined the vision for early years and proposed changes to both improve our early years services and make the required savings. It also included proposed specific changes to opening hours at a number of children's centres.

The public consultation then gave the council the opportunity to consult widely on these proposals to find out whether residents and key stakeholders agreed with the approach and changes proposed.

This report outlines the full findings from the consultation. A summary of the findings have also been included in the full business case, demonstrating where feedback has been taken into account and how the council will consider some issues raised as part of the implementation of the early years review.

Some elements of the consultation response (section 1 and 2 of the questionnaire) have informed the full business case, whilst further information (sections 3 and 4 of the questionnaire) have not been included in the full business case but will inform the more implementation of the new model.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the detailed findings from the Early Years Review between 24 June 2014 and 12 September 2014.

1.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section outlines the key findings from the consultation which will inform the full business case. The more detailed feedback is outlined in section 3 and 4, but not been included in the summary of findings as it does not inform the full business case. This information will be used as part of the implementation of the new early years model, including feedback on sessions, times and some findings from the workshops.

1.2 Summary of Findings informing the full business case

➤ Aims

In both the early years questionnaire and the citizen's panel questionnaire the majority of respondents agreed with all the aims in the consultation document. In both questionnaires respondent's most positive feedback was for the aim 'ensure families get the right support at an early age' and 'ensure every child has access to quality childcare in Barnet'. The least supported aim was 'increase the number of parents with young children returning to work.' This was because some respondents disagreed with parents of very young children going out to work / wanted more to be done to help parents to stay at home.

➤ Vision

A. A more flexible model of support

A majority (69%) of the targeted early years questionnaire respondents agreed with a move to a more flexible model, with this increasing to three quarters (75%) of the Citizens' Panel respondents.

However, some respondents were concerned that this could mean staff moved around and worked at different venues which could have a negative impact on the relationship between families and staff. Consistent and high quality staff was seen as very important to parents.

B. More targeted support for children under five and their families

The majority (73.8%) of the targeted early years questionnaire respondents agreed with more targeted support for children under five and their families increasing slightly to 79.4% of respondents in the citizen panel questionnaire.

However, Parents felt strongly that the universality of services was important and that if it was only for 'deprived' or 'needy' people there would be a stigma attached and people would be put off from attending. It was also felt strongly that families from all

backgrounds and cultures could have problems and that services shouldn't be targeted just based on deprivation.

C. A more collaborative model

The majority (69.4%) of the early years targeted questionnaire respondents agreed with a more collaborative model, increasing slightly to 73% of respondents to the citizen panel questionnaire. Through all channels of engagement this aim was strongly supported by families and parents and staff fed back that this was already happening across a number of children's centres.

D. A family based approach

The majority (84.8%) of the early years targeted questionnaire respondents agreed with a family based approach, reducing slightly to 81.9% of respondents to the citizen panel questionnaire. Through all channels of engagement this aim was strongly supported by parents.

E. Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children's centres

The majority (77.9%) of the early years targeted questionnaire respondents agreed with increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children's centres, slightly increasing to 79.6% of respondents to the citizen panel questionnaire. Involving parents and communities in children's centres was widely supported, although some respondents felt that volunteers could add more to children's centres but that they could not replace professional staff. Through the consultation over 150 people expressed an interest in volunteering opportunities around early years services, approximately 15 per cent of the people who responded to the consultation.

➤ Proposed changes

This section summarises the consultation feedback in regard to the proposed changes to early years services.

A. Locality Model

More respondents who completed the early years questionnaire (35.9%) agreed with a move to a locality model than disagreed (23.7%). In the citizen's panel questionnaire a majority (51%) of the citizen's panel respondents agreed with a move to a locality model, with 6.1% disagreeing.

Further feedback included:

- The present model works well and there is no need for change
- There was a varied response to the move to a locality model, with some respondents feeling it would be a benefit to share ideas and training, whilst there were concerns that it would mean less consistent staff in centres, which was the most important part of the support children's centres offered.

- A risk was raised that a change to a locality model could have an impact on the trust built between the children's centre and the local community. There was also a feeling that it contradicted the move to increased involvement of parents and communities.
- It was emphasised that when children's centres were initially developed the idea is they would be within pram-pushing distance of vulnerable families to reduce the barriers to accessing services and this principle should continue to be centre of the early years offer.

B. Children's centres managed by one organisation

More respondents who completed the early years targeted questionnaire (42.4%) agreed with children's centres managed by one organisation than disagreed (22.3%). In the citizen's panel questionnaire a majority (62.5%) of the citizen's panel respondents agreed with a move to a locality model, with 10.7% disagreeing. It was clear when discussing with families around who would manage children's centres they did not understand the difference between the children's centre being run by the council or the school as they saw both as the same organisation.

Further responses included:

- Some parents welcomed the idea of the council running children's centres and locality based advisory boards, whereas a number of parents felt that outsourcing or cutting services could have an adverse effect.
- Respondents from number of children's centres said that they thought engagement with the community and schools was important and there was some concern about how services, resources, responsibility and staff would be split between CCs and adjoining schools and nurseries
- There were worries raised that inconsistent central or school management could also have adverse effect on safeguarding and dealing with emergencies.
- Schools who currently delivered the children's centre on site were very keen to continue in their role and many of the head teachers proposed that they would prefer to take a proportion of the £700k saving as a reduction from their budget to avoid the need for a new early years delivery model.

C. Integration of health visitors

The majority (78%) of the early years targeted questionnaire respondents agreed with the integration of health visitors and early years services, with only 6% disagreeing. A majority of citizen's panel questionnaire respondents (79%) agreed with the proposed change. Feedback from the consultation workshops included the following comments from parents / staff;

- Midwife and health visitor appointments in the children's centre are a good way of introducing new parents to the space.
- All children's centre should have facilities for midwifery and health visitors.

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- The majority of parents were happy with the health visitor and midwifery services they had received, with many parents becoming involved in children's centres through a referral from community midwives or health visitors. However, there was also a common message that links with health and children's centres could be improved, with health visitors referring more parents to children's centres.

Feedback from health visitors included;

Some health visitors were supportive of integration whilst others were either not, or wanted more information on what was meant by 'integration'. The following advantages and disadvantages were fed back from health visitors;

Potential advantages of integration;

- A more seamless service.
- Better support for vulnerable families.
- Improved assessment of need for children.
- Improved information sharing (although has to be on a need to know basis).
- Greater understanding of the role and areas of expertise of each service.

Potential disadvantages of integration;

- Loss of identity of the health visiting service.
- Information to be spread to widely.
- Isolation of health visitors from the wider health service.
- Risk to depth of training and skills of staff.

D. Changing of opening hours for certain buildings

The main response from families who use children's centres across Barnet was how important the support, advice and information they receive is, and has been, to their lives. This was the case in the three centres in which the Council proposed significant changes to, with parents at the drop in-sessions for these 3 centres outlining the quality and importance of the services offered.

Whilst more people agreed with the changes to the children's centres building than disagreed as part of the citizens panel survey, the early years questionnaire targeted at children's centre users had more people disagreeing than agreeing with the proposal. Comments made through the consultation included;

- Reducing opening hours is not conducive to being flexible.
- Reducing hours does not allow for quality of service and does not help parents.
- Fewer hours means a lesser service.
- There should be more services, not less.
- Continuity to services should be preserved.
- Do not close or change settings.

➤ **Proposed significant reduction in opening hours**

A. St Margaret's

More respondents who completed the early years targeted questionnaire (25.3%) disagreed with the proposal for significant changes to services at St Margaret's children's centre, compared to 14% who agreed with the changes. The citizen's panel was more supportive of the proposed changes, with 23.3% agreeing with the proposed changes and 14.1% disagreeing. In both surveys approximately 60% neither agreed or disagreed or answered 'don't know'. The following feedback was collected from the drop-in sessions;

- The key message was that children's centre was very important to the local community, especially in the early days when the child is young and the parents can feel isolated.
- All parents urged that services should not be reduced too much as they were important to the local service.
- There were limitations at St Margaret's with sharing with the nursery (e.g. sharing the main hall).
- Being local was very important as it meant it was easy to get there without a car.

B. Hampden Way

More respondents who completed the early years targeted questionnaire (29.4%) disagreed with the proposal for significant changes to services at Hampden Way children's centre, compared to 12.5% who agreed with the changes. The citizen's panel was more supportive of the proposed changes, with 23.1% agreeing with the proposed changes and 13.9% disagreeing. In both surveys approximately 60% neither agreed or disagreed or answered 'don't know'.

The drop-in session for Hampden Way parents was held at Sweets Way (on recommendation from the children's centre manager), therefore the majority of the focus was on the Sweets Way venue, which parents felt was very important. Other comments included;

- Parents were worried about the cuts and the impact on services
- All parents thought the quality of the sessions at Sweets Way and Hampden Way were of high quality.

C. Stonegrove children's centre

More respondents who completed the early years targeted questionnaire (30.3%) disagreed with the proposal for significant changes to services at Stonegrove children's centre, compared to 16.1% who agreed with the changes. The citizen's panel was more supportive of the proposed changes, with 22.8% agreeing with the proposed changes and 13.3% disagreeing. In both surveys approximately 60% neither agreed or disagreed or answered 'don't know'.

The following feedback was collected from the drop-in sessions in regard to the significant changes;

- Stonegrove is an area with high levels of need, especially where there is currently temporary housing / families moving due to regeneration.

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- The children's centre has a very important role in the local community, any reduction in hours would have a big impact on the community.
- Trust is key to a good service and this is only built over time. The staff and support has been very positive and it was felt it is important to keep these services.
- The council should try and keep as much support as possible, but can understand the financial pressure.
- Should not close the centre, it is very important. If it was closed people would feel isolated.
- Worry that there could be a break down in the links with the community that have been built over a long period of time, and that children's centres are key to reducing crisis and the need for expensive resource down the line.
- The children's centre has good relationship with the church, and other community support such as the food bank.

➤ Savings proposals

In both the early years review questionnaire and citizen's panel questionnaire the most popular responses were 'reductions in management and administrative costs' and 'relocation of services where the current location is expensive or unsuitable'. In the early years questionnaire the least popular response to be pursued was reductions in the number and/or type of activities offered, followed closely by reductions in support to childcare settings. In the Citizen's panel survey the lowest responses were around reduction in support to childcare settings in Barnet and reductions in family support to the most vulnerable families. Reduction in opening hours at some centres was the third least popular option in the early years review questionnaire but third most popular in the citizen's panel questionnaire.

1.3 Aims of Consultation

The aims of the consultation were to;

- Give a clear rationale to the public about the changes being proposed following the early years review outline business case.
- Allow the public to feedback on the proposed model.
- Establish whether the public agree with the early years priorities and approach.
- Get detailed feedback from families and the wider community on what is most important to them about children's centres.
- Get detailed feedback from staff and key stakeholders on how the detail of the new early years model should operate.
- Establish how parents / community groups would like to be more involved in the early years agenda e.g. through volunteering.

Identify whether particular groups are adversely impacted by the changes and whether mitigating measures can be taken to address this impact.

1.4 Consultation approach

The early years consultation took place between 24 June and 12 September 2014. A twelve week public consultation period allowed residents enough time to respond to the consultation. The objective of the consultation was to allow stakeholders (including families) to inform and influence the development of the full business case for a new model for early year's services in Barnet.

SECTION 2

**DETAILED FINDINGS –
QUESTIONNAIRES**

2.1 Methodology

In order to ensure as many people as possible could respond to the early years review a range of methods were used to collect feedback. These included;

- The early years review questionnaire was made available on Engage Barnet (<http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/>).
- Children's centres were provided with paper copies of the consultation document and questionnaires.
- Ten drop-in sessions were convened across different children's centres or local venues to support families to complete the questionnaire, answer further questions or take verbal feedback if this was the preferred method of communication. Drop-in sessions were held between 4 July and 22 July 2014.
- A questionnaire was also sent out to the council's Citizen's Panel, which is a panel of 2000 residents who are profiled to be statistically representative of the population of Barnet. This allowed the council to collect responses beyond those who would usually attend children's centres or early years settings.
- There was also an email address and phone number made public to allow feedback directly at any point through the consultation period.
- The survey and drop-in sessions were promoted through the council's partners, children's centres, early years settings, schools, libraries and through a press release and via Community Barnet to ensure a good response rate.
- An independent research organisation (The Innovation Unit) were commissioned to undertake a range of workshops, five with targeted families who regularly used children's centres and five with staff and volunteers at the council. This took place between 22 July 2014 and 19 August 2014.

All the information above was then collated and used to inform the development of the full business case and will also be used to inform the detailed implementation of the new early year's model. The questionnaire responses and feedback were analysed through this period to ensure the consultation was informing the detailed design work. The responses from the paper and online versions were aggregated and updated by QRFS before being analysed by the early years review project team. The responses from the early years review questionnaire and citizen's panel have been kept separate to allow for a comparison in responses.

The consultation used a targeted approach of communication and engagement to ensure key stakeholders had an opportunity to take part in the consultation. The key stakeholders engaged with are outlined in the table below.

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Consultation	Target audiences and areas for consultation and engagement – Children’s Centres
Public and other stakeholders	Families with young children in Barnet (uses of both targeted and universal services), including families with protected characteristics.
	Specific groups, in particular those with a disability or a child with a disability, receive targeted support or have low levels of engagement with children’s centres
	Local community groups and organisations
	Childcare / providers of Early Education
Staff	Early Years and childcare support team
	Children’s Centre Managers and staff
	Health staff, including Health Visitors and Community Midwives
	Family Services and Early Intervention staff
Schools	School head teachers, governors and staff

2.2 Questionnaire design

The early years review consultation questionnaire was designed to get the viewpoints of families and residents on the proposed changes to early years services in Barnet and collect detailed information to inform the implementation of the new early years model. The consultation aimed to capture the views in regard to the following;

- The aims of the early years review.
- The vision for the early years service.
- The proposed changes to the early years service model, including specific changes to the opening hours at 3 children’s centres.
- The approach to savings the council will pursue.
- Detailed information on how families use children’s centres, including their views on;
 - Activities and services.
 - Convenient times to access services.
 - Best locations to access services.

The survey used both closed and open ended questions to ensure the council could collect quantitative data but also allow respondents could write in the reasons for their answers. The questionnaire also included questions about the individual so the council could analyse who was responding to the questionnaire.

2.3 Response to the consultation

The consultation has involved over one thousand Barnet residents, staff and other stakeholders, all which will inform the full business case and the detailed design of the new early years model. The following table outlines the methodologies and number of participants involved.

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Method	Summary	Participants
Online questionnaire	Available at Engage Barnet	134
Paper questionnaire	Paper copies of the questionnaire were circulated children's centres	150
Citizen's Panel questionnaire	A questionnaire went to all Citizens' panel members to get a representative sample of Barnet residents.	623
Workshops with targeted families	5 workshops were held with targeted parents to get their views on early years	31
Workshops with staff and volunteers	5 workshops were held with staff and volunteers to their views on early years	42
Drop-in sessions at 9 locations across Barnet	Drop in sessions were held at children's centres and libraries to get feedback and help parents complete questionnaires.	180
Total		1,160

2.4 Early years review questionnaire response

The early years review consultation document and questionnaire was available online as well as paper copies being available at all Barnet's Children's Centres. An initial 600 questionnaires and surveys were sent out to the 13 children's centres, with further copies sent out on request. There were 134 completed questionnaires online and 150 paper copies completed.

2.4.1 Early years Review sample profile

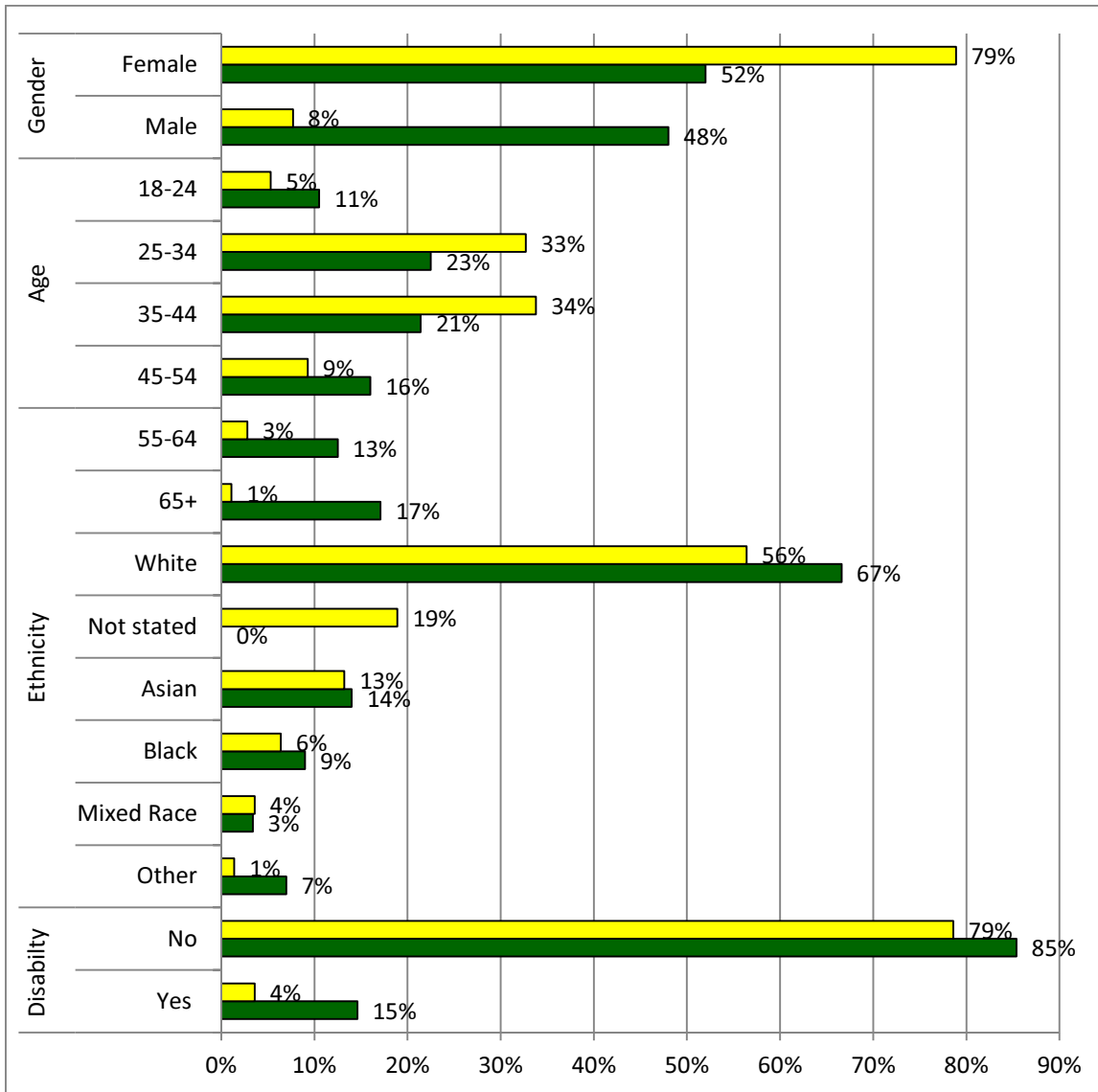
The chart below shows the demographic profile of those who responded to the early years review questionnaire compared to the population of Barnet.

The chart demonstrates that the respondents to the early years review questionnaire included significantly more females and significantly less males than Barnet's population. It also demonstrates that the majority of respondents (67%) were between 25 and 44. This is not surprising as the target audience is parents with children under 5 who are statistically most likely to fall between 25 and 44.

The breakdown of ethnicity related closely to Barnet's demographics, although there was an underrepresentation of white respondents

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Chart 1: Early years review questionnaire profile – key demographics



Yellow = Early years questionnaire response
Green = Barnet population

2.5 Citizens' Panel Response

The Citizen's panel questionnaire was sent out to the 2104 members of the panel. 753 questionnaires were sent out by post, with 283 responding (a response rate of 37.6%), with 1351 sent out online, with 421 responding (a response rate of 31.2%). The total number of respondents was 704 of 2104, an overall response rate of 33.5%.

2.5.1 Citizens' Panel sample profile

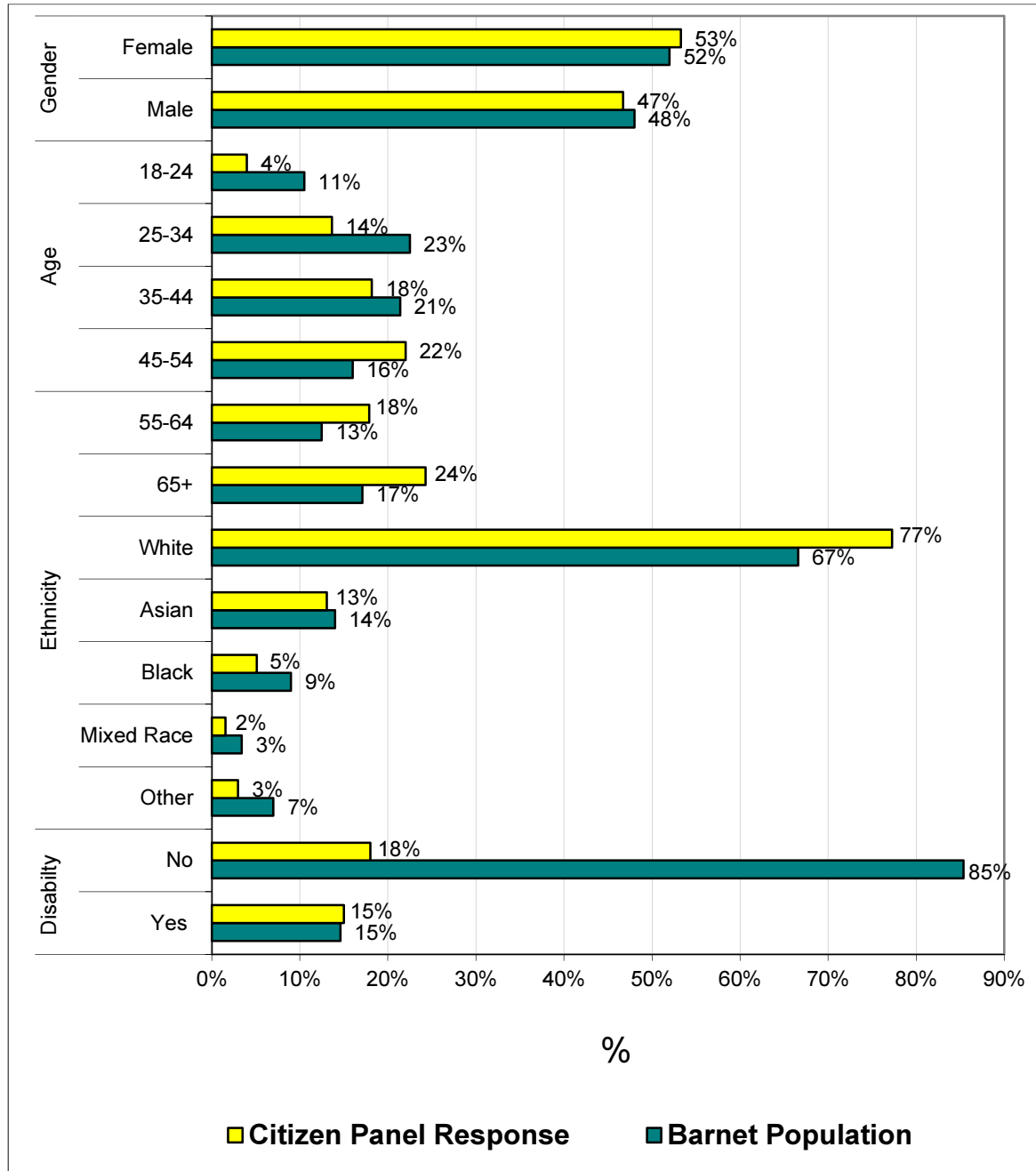
The chart below shows the demographic profile of those who responded to the panel survey compared to the population of Barnet.

The sample that responded closely matches Barnet's population profile in terms of gender and ethnicity. However, in terms of age, younger panel members are underrepresented and older panel members are over represented. There is also a

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slight over representation of white respondents and under representation of black and mixed race respondents. Weighting has been applied to tackle the issue of under and over representation in the sample, and it is the weighted data that is reported on in this report.

Chart 2: Citizens' Panel Sample profile – key demographics



2.6 Calculating and reporting on results

The results are based on “valid responses” only, i.e. all those providing an answer (this may or may not be the same as the total sample) unless otherwise specified. The base size may therefore vary from question to question depending on the extent of non – response.

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Differences between demographic sub groups have been reported on only where there is a significant difference from the overall Barnet population, and given that the sample size is small the analysis should be treated with some caution. This has only been undertaken in regard to the consultation findings which will influence the full business case at this stage.

2.7. Early years review questionnaire responses

Section 1: Our aims and vision for early years in Barnet.

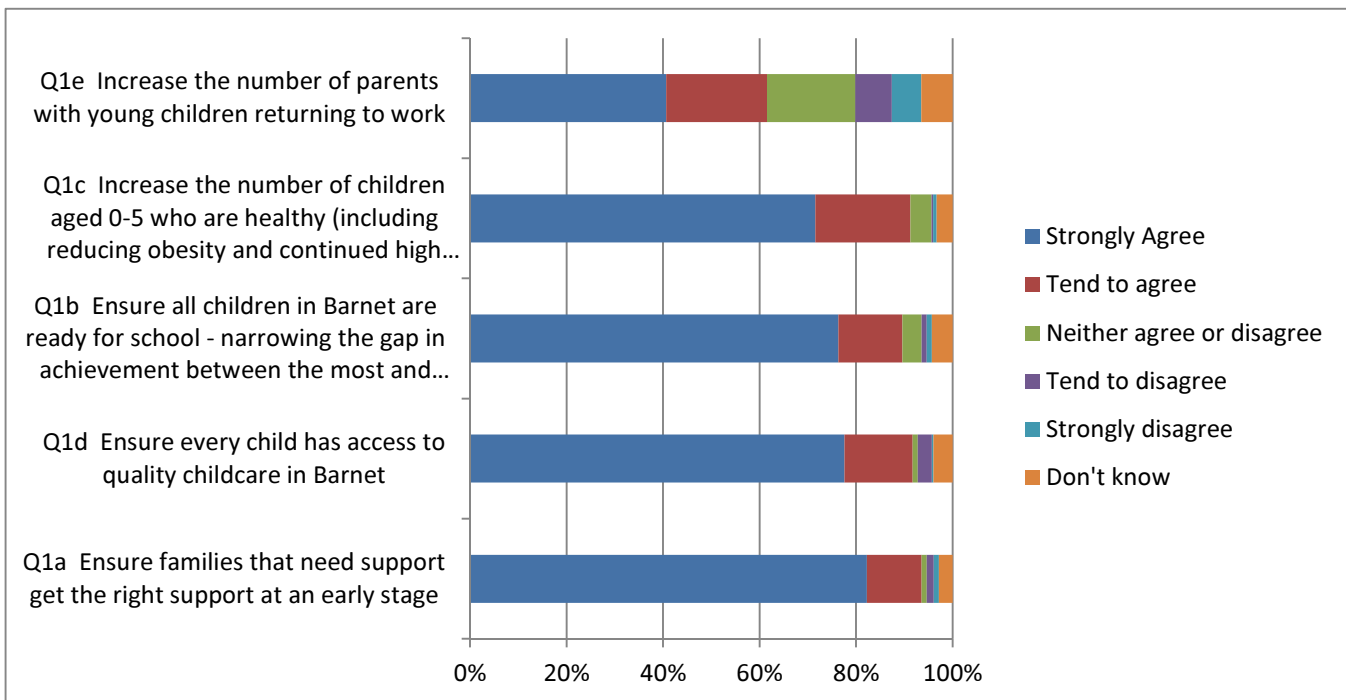
Responses to section 1 have been fed directly into the full business case which includes a summary of findings and a rationale for changes.

1. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the Aims

The majority of respondents agreed with all the aims, with four aims (a-d) receiving receiving 90 per cent agreement (either strongly or tend to agree).

The most supported aims were 'ensure families that need support get the right support at an early age' (94%), 'ensure every child has access to quality childcare in Barnet' (92%) and 'ensure all children in Barnet are ready for School' (91%). The least supported aim was 'increase the number of parents with young children returning to Work (62%).

There was minimal variation between respondents with different characteristics. All (100%) of respondents with a disability agreed with aims 1A, 1B and 1C. In regard to 1e, 27% of 45-54 year olds disagreed with the proposed aim, whilst 50% of respondents who 'preferred not to state' whether they were pregnant/on maternity leave disagreed with this aim, the highest of any group.



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The most common responses to which aims had been missed were ‘Disagree with parents of very young children going out to work/ Help parents to stay at home’ followed by ‘ensure children throughout the Borough have opportunities and ‘affordable childcare should be accessible for all’. The following table outlines the key aims that respondents felt the council had missed;

Are there any aims that may have been missed?	Number of responses	% on question base (81)
Disagree with parents of very young children going out to work/ Help parents to stay at home	9	3%
Ensure children throughout the Borough have opportunities of learning/ Meet challenge of diversity	8	3%
Affordable child care should be accessible to all	7	3%
Financial help with childcare / Enable parents to return to work	6	2%
Ensure support for vulnerable children and parents is maintained	5	2%
Ensure a wide range of activities are accessible	4	1%
Educate parents regarding supporting their children's' learning / To be responsible for their children	4	1%
Make advice and support for new parents more readily available	4	1%
Not all families in need of help and support are 'deprived'	4	1%
Community integration. These services give a sense of community	3	1%
Ensure children have a chance to socialise and integrate	3	1%
Ask for a small contribution from parents	3	1%
More facilities for special needs children	3	1%

2. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with each part of our Vision

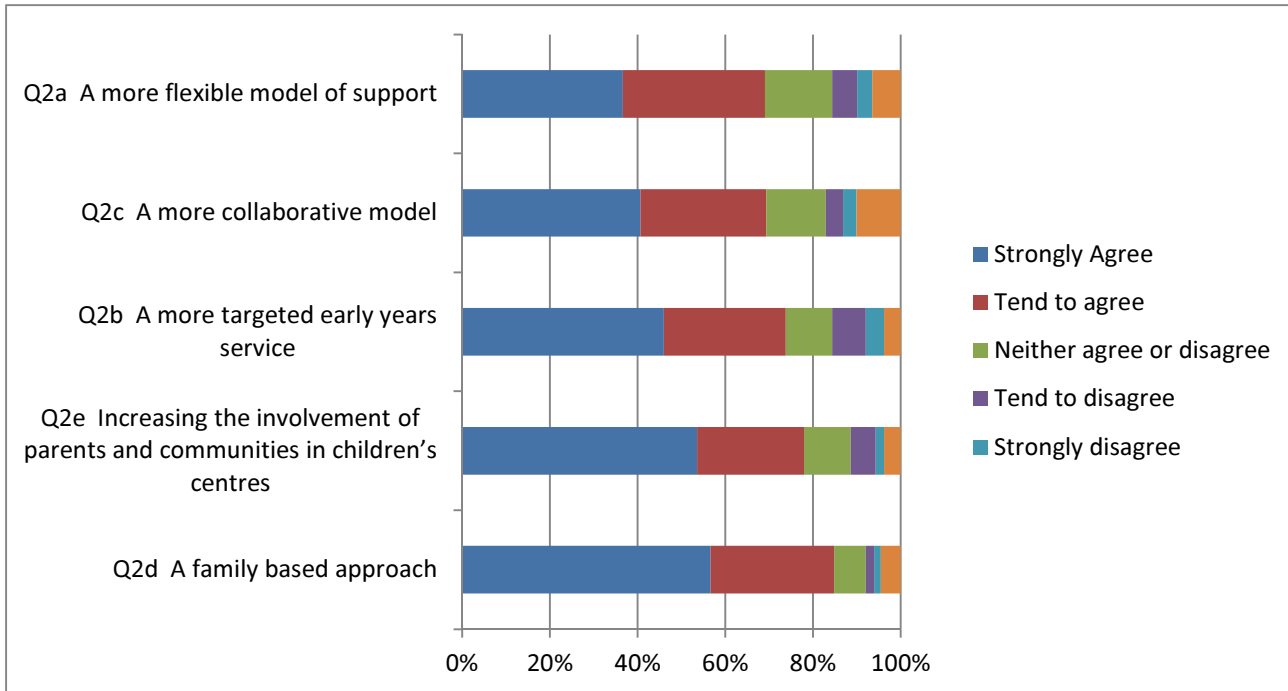
The majority of respondents agreed with all vision set out with the council, with ‘a family based approach’ and “Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children’s centres’ receiving the most positive support.

The most strongly supported vision overall is a Family based approach, supported by 85% of respondents, followed by increasing the involvement of of parents and communities in children’s centres (78%). The least supported vision overall was the vision for ‘a more flexible model of support’.

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In regard to 2a, 87% of 18-24 year olds agreed with the changes compared to 57% of 45-54 year olds. In regard to 2b, asian responders were more likely to agree with a more targeted early years service (89%) compared to white (73%) and black responder (72%). In response to 2c, 86% of asian respondents agreed in comparison to 61% of black responders.

Mixed race respondents were more likely to disagree (20%) with the proposal of Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children's centres, compared to white (6%) and asian (11%) respondents.



The most common reason for disagreeing with the vision was around volunteering, with the two most common responses being 'Increasing the involvement of parents equates to replacing professional staff with volunteers' and 'Parents are not necessarily the right people to involve', the third most common response was 'There is a risk of ignoring the rights and needs of average families in order to target the vulnerable'.

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Further responses are outlined in the table below;

If you disagree with any of these please give reasons for your answer.	Number of responses	% on question base (65)
Increasing the involvement of parents equates to replacing professional staff with volunteers	9	16%
Parents are not necessarily the right people to involve	9	16%
There is a risk of ignoring the rights and needs of average families in order to target the vulnerable	8	14%
There still needs to be universal services / Services for all the community/ not too targeted	7	13%
If too targeted a lot of families will be isolated / not catered for	6	11%
More flexibility means more closures / Reduced service/ Service cuts	5	9%
It would reduce the service to those who need it most	4	7%
A danger of the centres becoming stigmatised / Only problem children / families	4	7%
The service will not be better with such a large cut in funding	3	5%
There is a danger of local knowledge being lost	3	5%
Concern that family will lose invaluable support	3	5%

Section 2: Proposed changes for the new model

Responses to section 2 have been fed directly into the full business case and a summary of the findings from responses can be found in the FBC.

3. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the Proposed Changes

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed change 'Integration of health visitors and early years services', whilst more people agreed than disagreed with the other proposed changes.

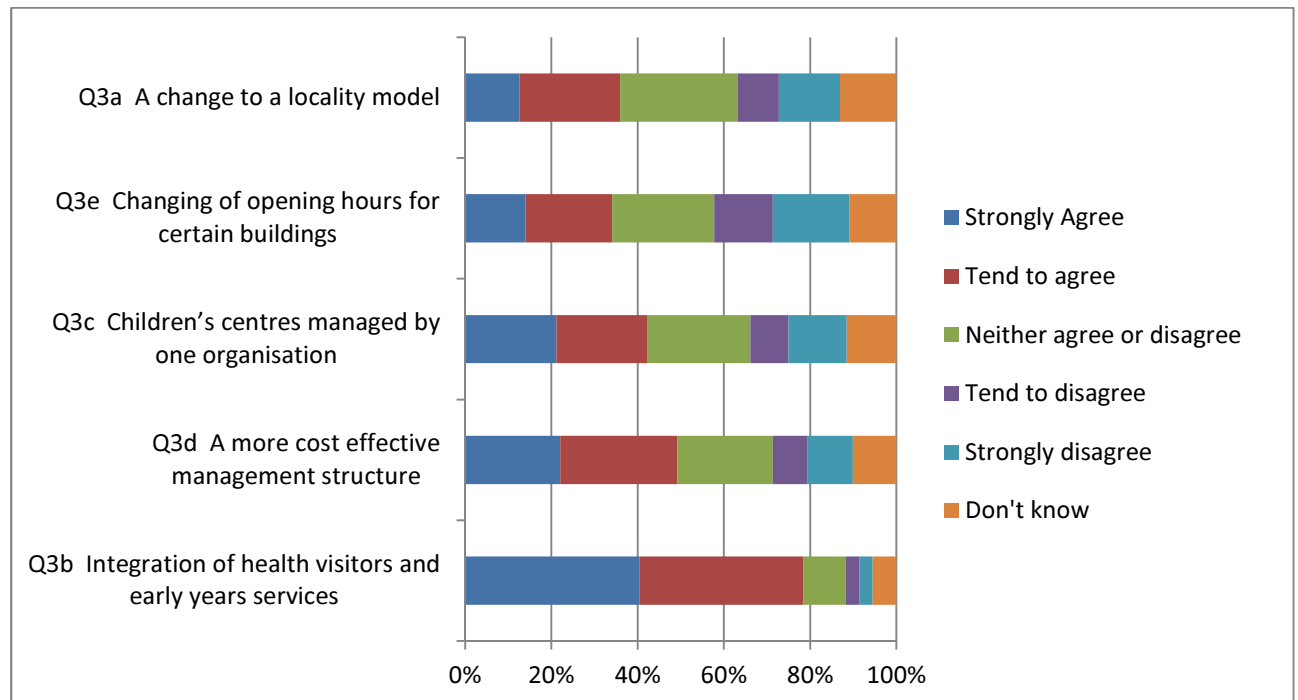
The most supported proposed change was the integration of health visitors and early years services (78%), followed by 'a more cost effective management structure' (49%). The least supported proposed changes were a change to the locality model (36%) and 'changing of opening hours of certain buildings' (34%).

Whilst more people agreed with all the proposed changes than disagreed, in regard to some changes, specifically 'changing of opening hours for certain buildings' and 'a change to a locality model' the support was not as strong, with only 3% more agreeing than disagreeing in regard to changes to opening hours of certain buildings.

In regard to a 3a, change to a locality model, respondents between the ages of 18-24 (38%) and 45-54 (40%) were more likely to disagree compared to 25-34 year olds (25%) and 35-44 year olds (25%). Disabled respondents were most likely to disagree with this change (55%).

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In regard to 3d, a more cost effective management structure, 40% of 18-24 year olds disagreed, compared to only 16% of 25-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds. Disagreement was also higher from 18-24 year olds in regard to 3e, change of opening hours for certain buildings (43%) than other age groups.



The most common response for disagreeing with changes focused on impact of changes. The most common responses were that the the current model 'works well at the moment/ No need for change/ Would lose local knowledge', that 'Fewer hours means a lesser service/ More, not less is required' and that the council should 'Preserve continuity/ Do not close or change settings'.

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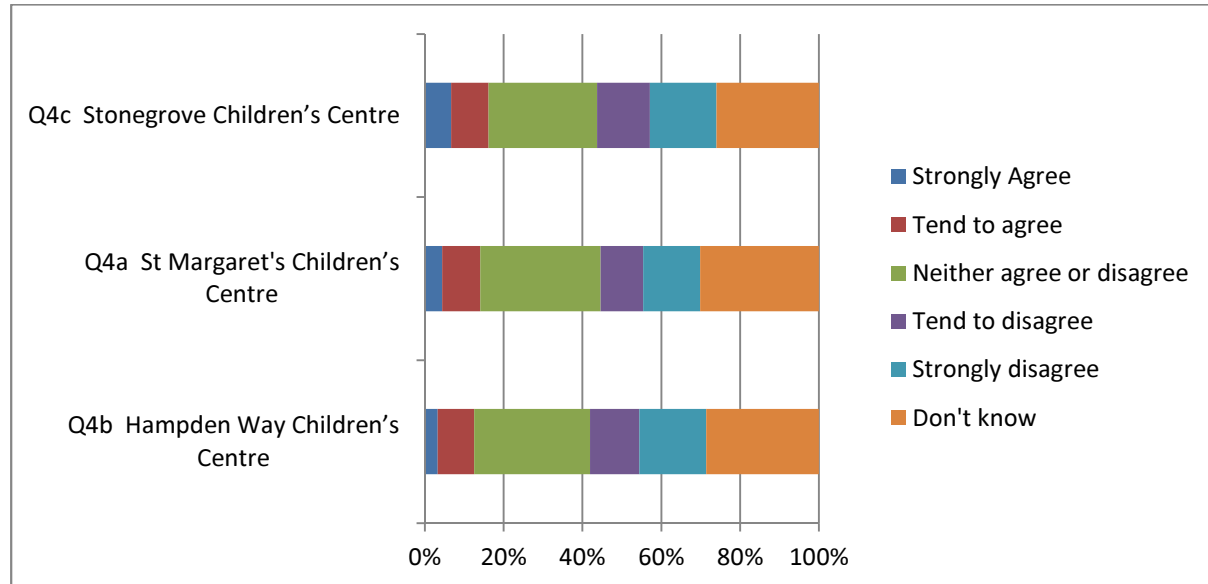
The table below outlines further reasons respondents disagreed with the proposed changes;

If you disagree with any of these please give reasons for your answer.	Number of responses	% on question base (132)
Locality Model: It works well at the moment/ No need for change/ Would lose local knowledge	19	16%
Fewer hours means a lesser service/ More, not less is required/	18	16%
Preserve continuity/ Do not close or change settings	16	14%
Reducing opening hours is not conducive to being flexible/ Does not allow for quality of service / does not help parents	15	13%
Do not have fewer people managing multiple centres/ Each centre should be managed on-site	9	8%
Would lead to a reduction in services offered	9	8%
Not just one organisation / Unwise to put faith and trust in single organisation / needs a check, a monitor	8	7%
One organisation would be under too much pressure	7	6%
Parents are unlikely to travel far if service not available locally / Not everyone can travel	7	6%
All areas should have all sessions offered / Accessible to all	5	4%
Smaller groups are more cost effective and efficient/ Able to act quicker and communicate better	3	3%
One organisation means lack of competition/ risk of reduction of quality of service	3	3%
More centres are needed, not less. Parent need more support, not less	3	3%
This would mean an unbalanced provision at the expense of some areas/ Equal services should be available throughout Borough	3	3%

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4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the changes to opening times at the following children's centre buildings?

All buildings had a greater proportion of respondents disagreeing with changing the opening times than respondents which agreed with changing the opening times.



- 16% agreed, 30% disagreed and 54% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don't know in regard to changes to opening hours at Stonegrove children's centre.
- 14% agreed, 25% disagreed and 61% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don't know in regard to changes to opening hours at St Margaret's children's centre.
- 13% agreed, 29% disagreed and 58% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don't know in regard to 'Children's centres managed by one organisation'

In regard to the proposed significant reduction in opening hours at all 3 children's centre buildings 16-24 year olds were most likely to disagree with the proposals, with 43% disagreeing with changes at St Margaret's, 57% with Hampden Way and 46% with Stonegrove children's centre.

In regard to all of the proposals there were significantly more people who disagreed with significant changes across all children's centres. The most common responses to disagreeing with the changes all focus on the negative impact on reducing hours. By far the most common response was that 'this is a necessary area of support for children / Do not cut resources / Do not reduce hours' followed by 'Would have an impact on the community/ Not helpful to the vulnerable' and the impact in regard to distance, emphasising that 'Alternatives need to be close / Not too far away / Many cannot or will not travel'

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

The table below outlines the reasons respondents disagree with these proposals.

If you disagree with any of these please give reasons for your answer.	Number of responses	% on question base (107)
This is a necessary area of support for children / Do not cut resources / Do not reduce hours	26	27%
Would have an impact on the community/ Would mean the most needful people would not have the contacts they need/ Not helpful to the vulnerable	16	17%
Alternatives need to be close / Not too far away / Many cannot or will not travel	12	13%
Would make the service less flexible/ Would not meet the needs of parents	10	10%
Buildings should be open longer if anything / More hours and services needed, not less	8	8%
Would be more crowded if have fewer hours but the same demand / Puts too much pressure on the resources that are left	7	7%
Fits the areas needs / Perfectly placed as they are	5	5%
All parts of Barnet should have the same support, not just areas of deprivation	5	5%
Parents meet other parents which decreases sense of isolation/ Increases social integration	4	4%
Plans need to take the changing demographics in the areas into account	4	4%
Concern about service availability during regeneration / change-over period	4	4%

The results below show the respondents views from each children's centre in question.

4a. Stonegrove Children's Centre Building

21 respondents from Stonegrove children's responded to the question on specific changes to the opening hours at the centre. 28% agreed with the proposals, 52.4% disagreed and 19% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don't know.

Response	Number of responses	% on question base (21)
Strongly Agree	3	14.3%
Tend to agree	3	14.3%
Neither agree or disagree	2	9.5%
Tend to disagree	6	28.6%
Strongly disagree	5	23.8%
Don't know	2	9.5%

4b. St Margaret’s Children’s Centre Building

6 respondents from St Margaret’s children’s responded to the question on specific changes to the opening hours at the centre. 17% agreed with the proposals, 50% disagreed and 33% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don’t know.

Response	Number of responses	% on question base (6)
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Tend to agree	1	17%
Neither agree or disagree	2	33%
Tend to disagree	1	17%
Strongly disagree	2	33%
Don't know	0	0%

4c. Hampden Way Children’s Centre Building

12 respondents from Stonegrove children’s responded to the question on specific changes to the opening hours at the centre. 0% agreed with the proposals, 67% disagreed and 33% neither agreed or disagreed or answered don’t know.

Response	Number of responses	% on question base (12)
Strongly Agree	0%	0
Tend to agree	0%	0
Neither agree or disagree	17%	2
Tend to disagree	8%	1
Strongly disagree	58%	7
Don't know	17%	2

5. Savings Options you think should be Pursued

The consultation document outlined that the Council’s preferred approach was to achieve saving by:

- reducing management and administrative costs
- moving some services where the current location is expensive or unsuitable
- reducing opening hours at some centres.

It then set out that if sufficient savings could not be achieved through the approaches above, that the Council would explore further options, such as reducing the following;

- family support to the most vulnerable families
- the number and/or type of activities offered
- support to childcare settings in Barnet.

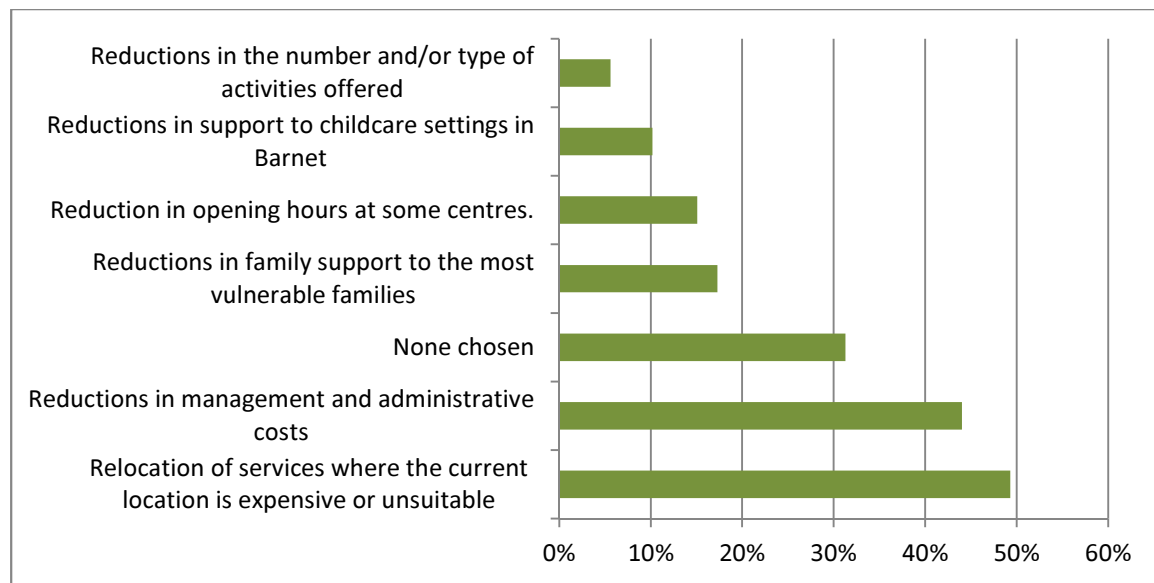
EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Respondents were asked to tick the savings options they thought should be pursued.

The most popular savings option to be pursued is relocation of services, with 49% of respondents suggesting they thought this should be pursued. Other popular savings options include reduction in management costs (44%) and reductions in family support to the most vulnerable families (17%),

The least popular options include reductions in number and type of settings/activities (supported by 6%), and reductions in support to childcare settings (supported by 10% of respondents) and reduction in opening hours of some centres (15%).

31% of respondents stated chose none of the options.



Those on who respondent to say they were on maternity leave (60%), 18-24 year olds (67%) and black (60%) respondents were more likely to agree with the relocation of services where the current location is expensive or unsuitable. Those between the ages of 45-54 were more likely to support a reduction in family support to he most vulnerable (35%) compared to 17% on average. Whereas 44% of people selected reductions in management and administrative costs, only 17% of Black respondents selected this as there preferred savings options to be pursued, compared to 70% of mixed race respondents.

The most common responses focysed on maintain funding ('Funding must be maintained to allow system to work efficiently/ No savings should be attempted in this service area') and that 'cut down on management and administration costs/ Streamline management'.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Further comments from respondents are summarised below;

Reasons for choice of savings options	Number of responses	% on question base (6)
Funding must be maintained to allow system to work efficiently/ No savings should be attempted in this service area	20	7%
Cut down on management and administration costs/ Streamline management	17	6%
These savings will have the least impact on the service/ Better to reduce than lose the services altogether	11	4%
Vulnerable families need as much support as possible	9	3%
Do not use expensive premises/ Don't spend too much on buildings/ This is common sense	8	3%
Cut down on waste and duplication / Work responsibly/ Evaluate services/ More efficiency	8	3%
Do not cut opening hours or the service/ This would affect children too much	7	3%
Saving costs at this stage is likely to cause expense to other services later	6	2%
Children are our futures and therefore are important	6	2%
Make cuts in other areas/services if necessary. Not these services	6	2%
Relocate centres to existing local premises/ Relocate to cheaper premises	5	2%
Families often cannot or will not travel and so services need to be local to them	3	1%
Will undo all the good that has been done up to now	3	1%

Section 3: What is Important to you?

Responses from section 3 have fed into the detailed design and will be used to inform the implementation of the new early years model, but are not referred in the full business case at this stage.

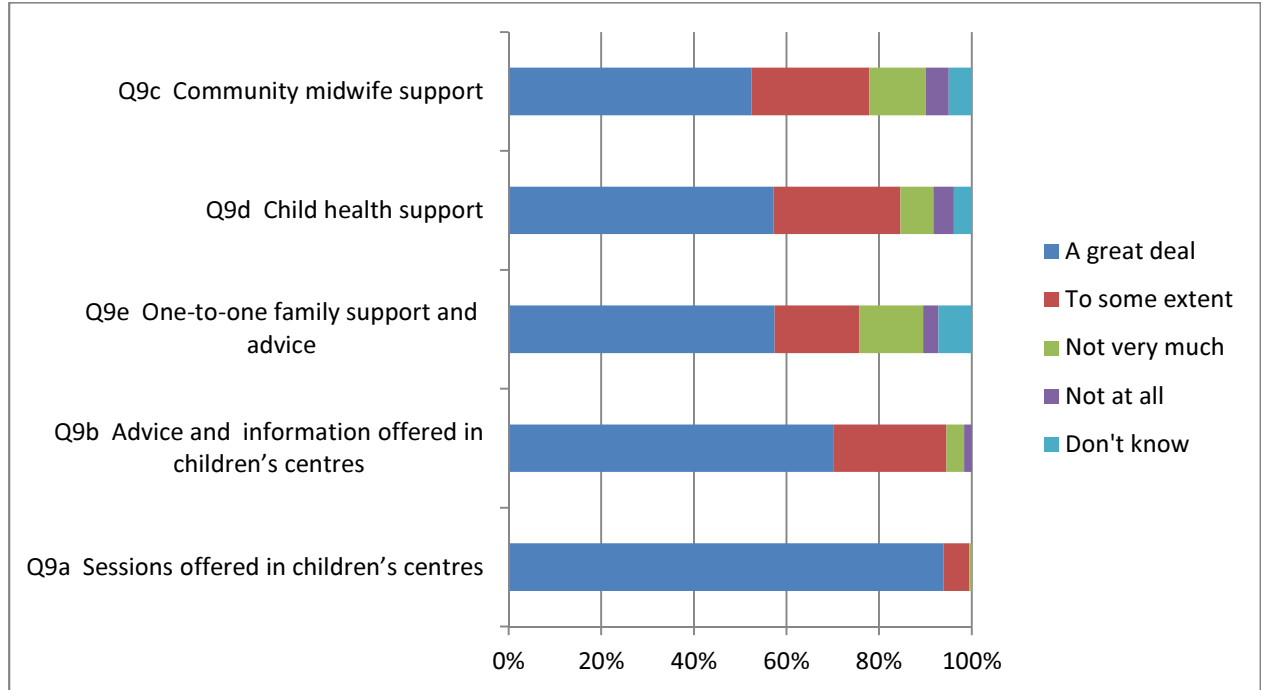
The following questions were answered if the respondent stated they were a Barnet resident with a child under 5.

9. How highly do you value the following services

The vast majority of respondents valued all services they received, demonstrating that users of the service value the advice, information and support they receive from children's centres very highly.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

The most highly valued service was sessions offered in children’s services (valued, either to a great deal or to some extent, by 99% of respondents). 95% of respondents value the advice and information offered in children’s centres, 85% child health support, 78% community midwife support and 76% one-to-one support.



The most highly valued service was sessions offered in children’s services (valued, either to a great deal or to some extent, by 99% of respondents). 95% of respondents value the advice and information offered in children’s centres, 85% child health support, 78% community midwife support and 76% one-to-one support.

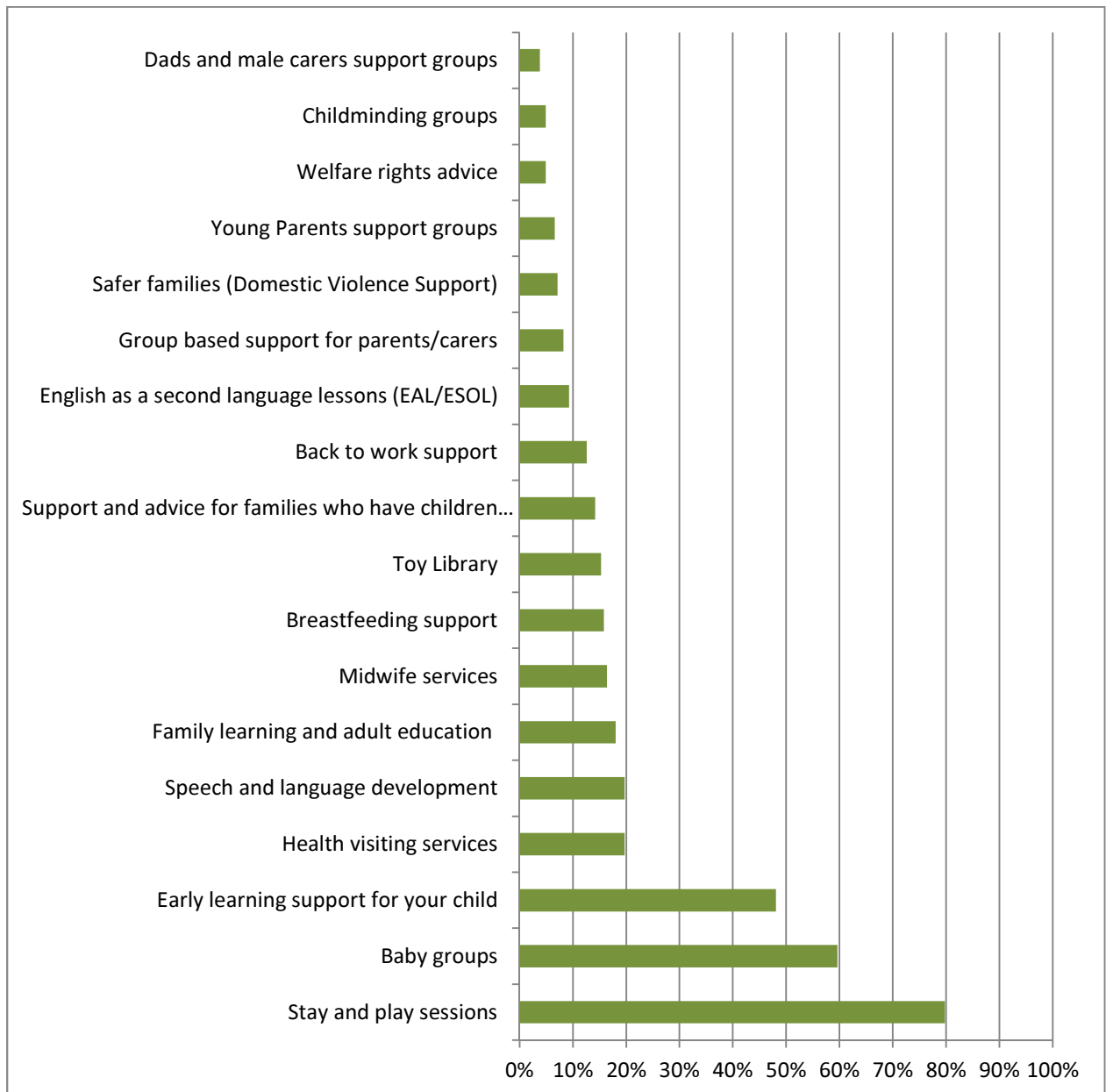
10. What sessions are most important

As expected, there was a range of responses in regard to the most important sessions to parents. Those sessions which were deemed most important to the most amount of people were unsurprisingly the universal services, with 80% choosing stay and play sessions, 60% baby groups and 48% early learning support for your child. This matches the popularity of attendance at various children’s centres.

The sessions considered least important included dads and male carers support group (4%), childminding groups (5%) and welfare rights advice with(5%). It has been taken into account that only 8% respondents were male, 3% childminders or childcare works and that some sessions will be less popular with the majority of respondents due to be targeted services (such as welfare rights advice).

Respondents were allowed 3 choices to this question.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION



In questions later in the consultation questionnaire, parents were asked what services were not currently offered which they would like to see introduced, there were very few responses but the most common was around 'better facilities and therapy for children with additional needs', 'No - everything is there' and 'More 'stay and play' sessions'.

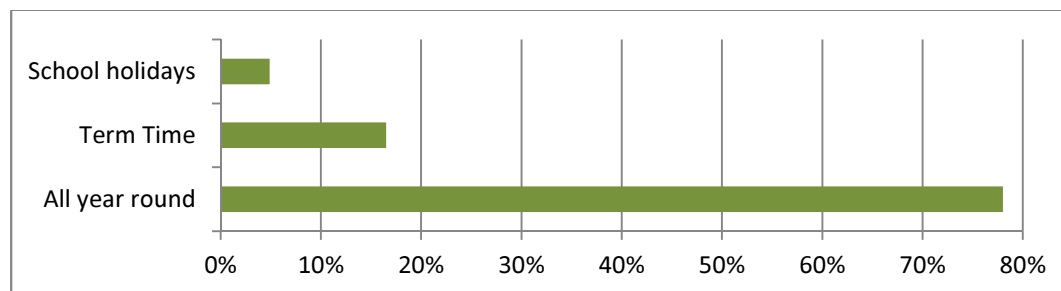
EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Further responses are detailed below.

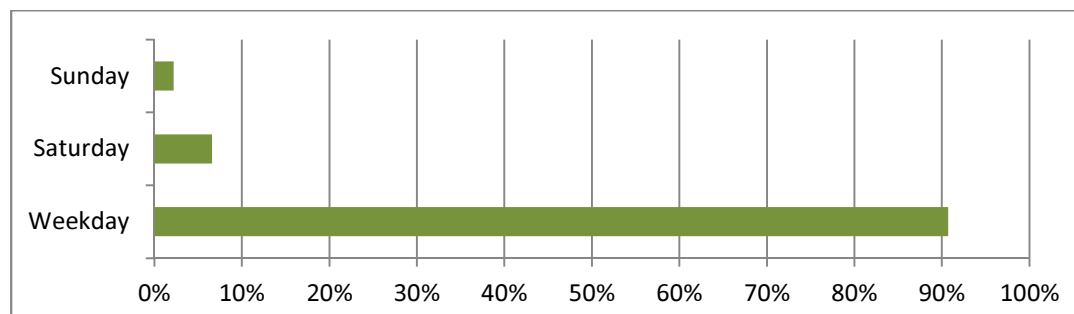
Services for children under five not currently offered (question 14)	Number of responses	% on question base (76)
Better facilities and therapy for children with additional needs	6	3%
No - everything is there	5	3%
More 'stay and play' sessions/Play and learn / Stay and learn	5	3%
Music	4	2%
Use libraries more for childrens acitvities	4	2%
More nursery places	4	2%
Creche facilities	3	2%
Swimming groups	3	2%
Enough child care services generally	3	2%
Better / Longer facilities for working parents	3	2%

11. What times are most convenient for you to access services

78% of respondents found Children's Centres open all year round were more convnient (compared to 5% school holidays and 17% term time).

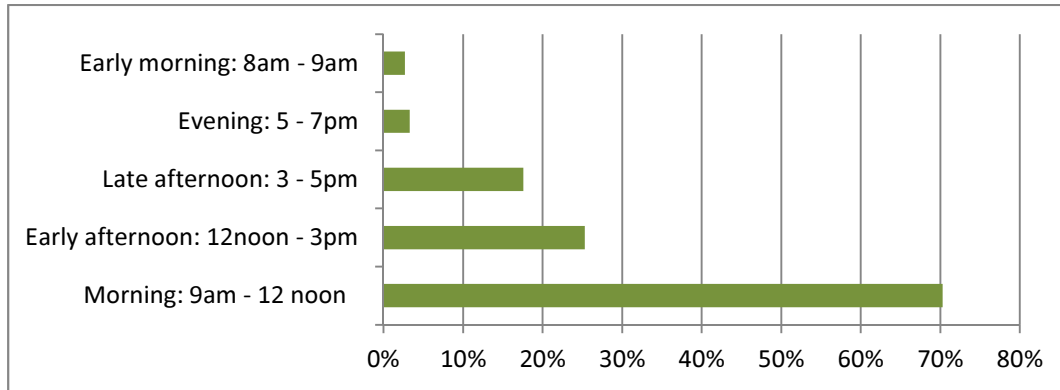


Weekdays are the most convenient day of the week for 91% of respondents compared to 7% and 2% Sundays and Saturdays respectively



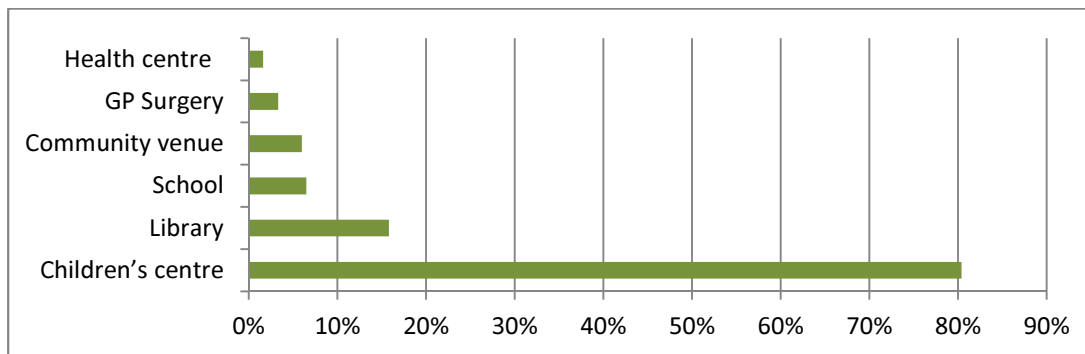
The most convenient time for Children's Centres to operate is Morning, (9am – 12 noon) for 70% of respondents, 25% preferred early afternoon (12 – 3pm) and 18% late afternoon (3-5pm).

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION



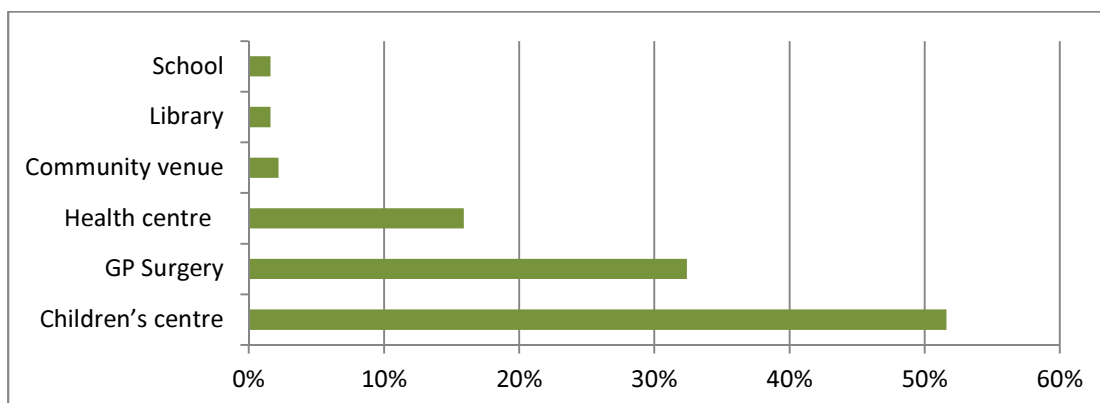
12. Which location is best for you to access services?

The most convenient place to access Children's Services was a Children's Centre (80%), followed by library (16%), School (7%) and Community venue (6%).



13. Where do you prefer to meet your health visitor or community midwife?

The most convenient place to meet your health visitors or community midwives was a Children's Centre (52%), followed by a GP Surgery (32%) and a Health Centre (16%).



15. How will the proposed changes impact you? (all respondents)

The most common responses were either fearing 'Some activities I have used may become unavailable' and that changes might mean that 'My children will not have the opportunity to play with other children'.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Further responses are summarised in the table below;

How will the proposed changes impact you?	Number of responses	% on question base (149)
Some activities I have used may become unavailable	27	14%
My children will not have the opportunity to play with other children / Bonding/ learning to socialise	21	11%
Negatively	14	8%
Less opportunity to meet other moms/ would feel isolated and alone	12	6%
I hope for improvement / Impact will be for the better	11	6%
Child would lose opportunities to learn valuable things / Participate in development activities	11	6%
Very little / It wouldn't affect me	10	5%
Less opportunity to access support services / advice	9	5%
May have to travel a long way to find activities for children / Difficulty accessing	9	5%
Depends on what the opening hours would be	6	3%
Family are dependent upon the children's centre	4	2%
Would affect my access to education	4	2%

Section 4: What is important to you

Responses from section 4 have fed into the detailed design and will be used to inform the implementation of the new early years model, but are not referred in the full business case at this stage.

21. Can you suggest other ways in which we could change early years?

The most common responses focused on the quality of the current service ('No, it is an excellent service / It is good the way it is') or the desire to not see savings ('Do not reduce the budget / Do not cut spending on these services').

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Further responses are detailed in the table below.

Can you suggest other ways in which we could change early years?	Number of responses	% on question base (42)
No, it is an excellent service / It is good the way it is	18	6%
Do not reduce the budget / Do not cut spending on these services	13	5%
Target/ help vulnerable groups / families	7	3%
Good education in early years is vital for successful integration into society/ Groups should be run when children are very young	7	3%
Support and care in the early years pays off later on	6	2%
Ensure all children have a good basic education before school . Nursery education / learning	6	2%
Help families that work	5	2%
Prefer session to be led by a professional / trained person. Not a parent	4	1%
Cut out bureaucracy / Cut out waste	4	1%
More early years centres are required in the borough	4	1%
Co-ordination between the services / High level of inter-communicatio needed / Avoid duplication	4	1%
Meet with and listen to parents	4	1%
Train up Voluntary assistants rather than engage more highly paid professionals / Use semi-retired people with professional skills/ Use students studying relevant courses	3	1%
More parenting classes / Target parents education and attitudes/ Advise on healthcare	3	1%
More for kids and parents	3	1%
Ensure a full range of activities in all centres	3	1%
Meet with and listen to existing children centre staff	3	1%

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

23. How can we encourage more parents/carers/residents to be involved in children's centres?

The most common responses focused on the need to improve promotion ('More information is needed / Promotion of activities/ Advertising of sessions') and increase the volunteering opportunities ('Have volunteering opportunities for parents / carers'). The table below summarises further responses;

How can we encourage more parents/carers/residents to be involved in children's centres?	Number of responses	% on question base (148)
More information is needed / Promotion of activities/ Advertising of sessions	29	20%
Have volunteering opportunities for parents / carers	26	18%
Encourage parents to be more inter-active with the children	10	7%
Working groups of parents to promote and organise events	9	6%
Consult with them	9	6%
Advertise the playgroups	8	6%
Engage with local community / promote sites as being 'community hibs' that other groups can use	8	6%
Hold Fun days / Open days	7	5%
Promote friendliness and involvement between staff and parents and carers	7	5%
Keep services as they are now / Do not cut budgets	4	3%

There were 34 parents who responded to being interested in volunteering opportunities at children's centres. There will be a response going out to all interested people in the near future.

3. Citizen’s Panel Questionnaire Response

Section 1: Our aims and vision for early years in Barnet.

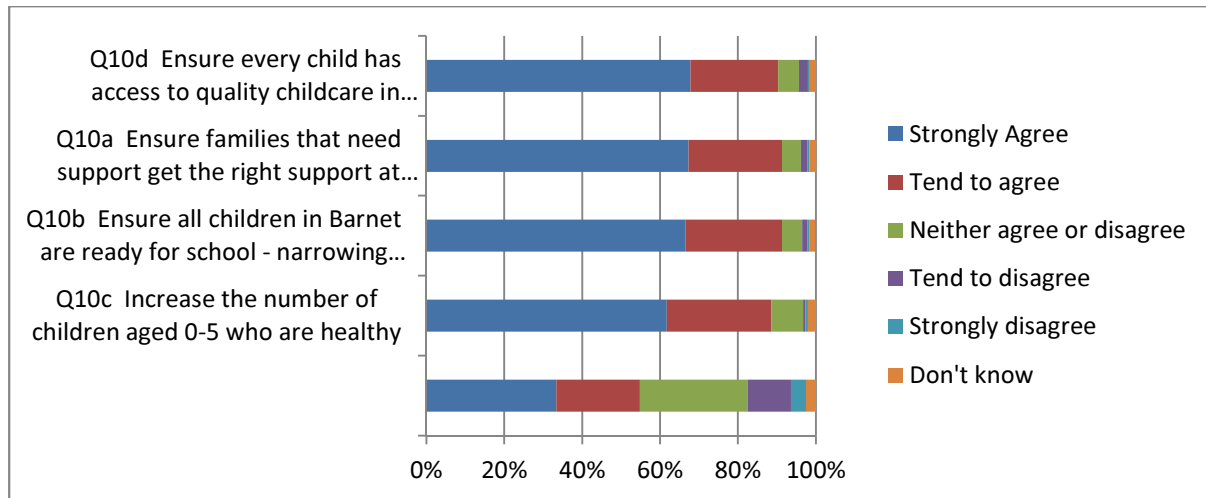
Responses to section 1 have been fed directly into the full business case and a summary of the findings from responses can be found in the FBC.

1. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the Aims:

A majority of Barnet respondents either strongly agree or tend to agree with all of the aims.

The most supported aims were ‘ensuring families that need support get the right support at an early age (91.3%) and ensure all children in Barnet are ready for School (91.3%). Whilst the least supported aim was Increase the Number of Parents with Young Children Returning to Work (54.8%).

Black ethnic group respondents (78%) and respondents aged 25-34 years (68%) were more likely to agree with the aim to increase the number of parents with young children returning to work. Parents with young children are significantly more likely to agree with the aim: to increase the number of parents with young children returning to work (64% compared to 54%).



The most common responses focused on education of parents (‘Educate parents regarding supporting their Childrens' learning / To be responsible for their children’) and support with childcare to help parents return to work (‘Financial help with childcare / Enable parents to return to work’).

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

The table below summarises further responses;

Are there any aims that may have been missed?	Number of responses	% on question base (169)
Educate parents regarding supporting their childrens' learning / To be responsible for their children	3%	17
Financial help with childcare / Enable parents to return to work	2%	16
Disagree with parents of very young children going out to work/ Help parents to stay at home	2%	13
Make advice and support for new parents more readily available	2%	12
Affordable child care should be accessible to all/ Help working parents and the vulnerable	2%	10
Ensure support for vulnerable children and parents is maintained	1%	9
Ensure enough school places for every child/ Fair allocation of school places	1%	9
Reserve help for those that really need it - most families are able to take on their own responsibilities	1%	9
Ensure children throughout the Borough have opportunities of learning/ Meet challenge of diversity	1%	7
Educate parents regarding a healthy diet / cooking/ Active lifestyle	1%	6
Ensure access to safe, clean play areas	1%	6
Introduce play with learning modules/ Learning with fun/ More playgroups	1%	5
Less incidence of 'failing'	1%	5
Check recipients of support are genuine / deserving	1%	5
Target vulnerable people before they become parents - educate in the role of parenting	1%	5
Ask for a small contribution from parents	1%	5
Use local trained volunteers to help families	1%	4
Early intervention in problem families is very important/ It would reduce future crime rate	1%	3
Improve procedures/ Simplify application forms	1%	3
Improvements should be able to be made without incurring any extra costs	1%	3
Holistic approach to social, learning and community based skills	1%	3

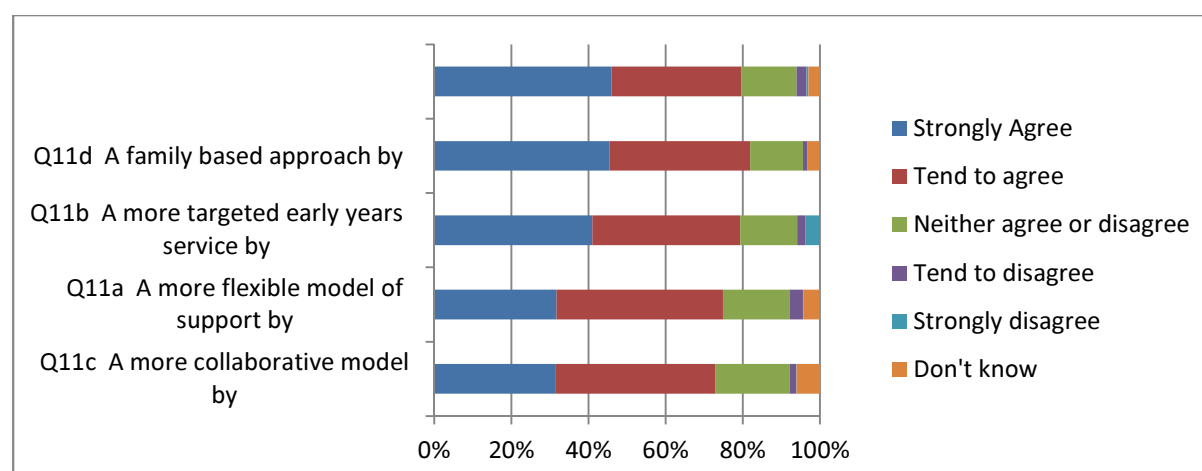
2. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with each part of our Vision

A majority of Barnet respondents either strongly agree or tend to agree with Barnet's proposed vision for Early Years services.

The most strongly supported vision overall is a Family based approach, supported by 82% of respondents. The least supported vision overall is a more collaborative model, supported by 73% of respondents.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Black ethnic group respondents express more support for all of the proposed visions, significantly so for a more flexible model (94%), a more targeted Early Years system (97%) and a family based approach (83%).



The most common reason for disagreeing with the vision was that it risked ignoring the needs of the most vulnerable ('risk of ignoring the rights and needs of average families in order to target the vulnerable' and 'It would reduce the service to those who need it most' and questions around volunteering ('Parents are not necessarily the right people to involve' and 'Increasing the involvement of parents equates to replacing professional staff with volunteers'). The table below summarises further responses

Reasons for disagreement with Vision	Number of responses	% on question base (42)
There is a risk of ignoring the rights and needs of average families in order to target the vulnerable	7%	3
It would reduce the service to those who need it most	7%	3
Parents are not necessarily the right people to involve	7%	3
Increasing the involvement of parents equates to replacing professional staff with volunteers	7%	3
More flexibility means more closures / Reduced service/ Service cuts	7%	3

Section 2: Proposed changes for the new model

Responses to section 2 have been fed directly into the full business case and a summary of the findings from responses can be found in the FBC.

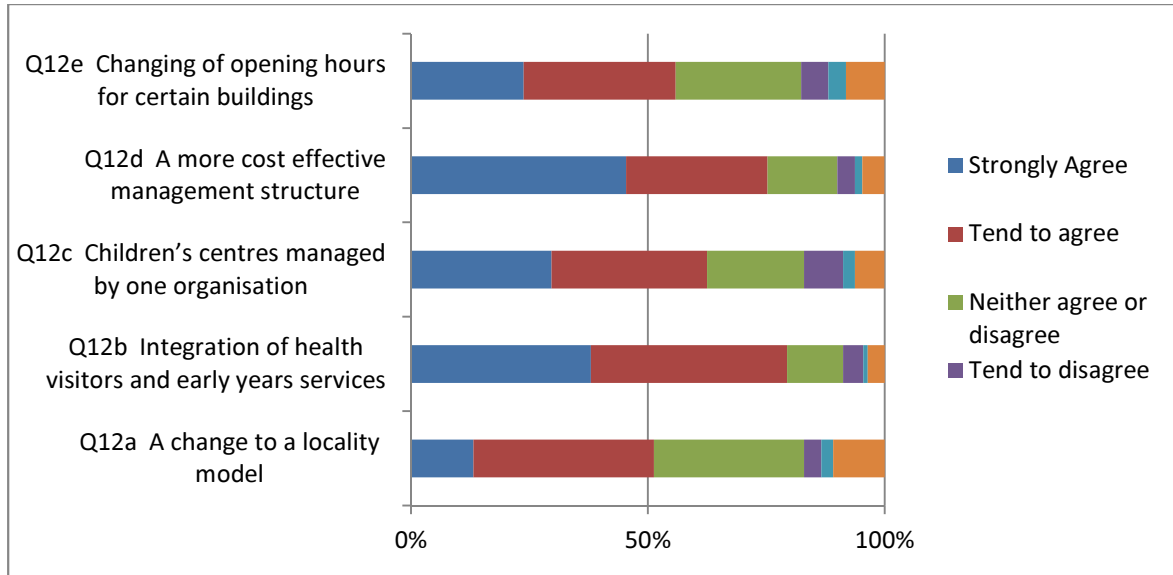
3. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the Proposed Changes

A majority of Barnet respondents agree with each of the proposed changes outlined.

The most supported proposed change was the integration of health visitors and early years services (79%), whilst the least supported proposed change was a change to the locality model (51%).

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18-24 year olds were also significantly less likely to agree with developing a more cost effective management structure (54%). Their most strongly supported changes were a change to the locality model and integration of health early years services. Their least supported change was changing opening hours and a more cost effective management structure (at 54%). It indicates that 18-24 year olds are less likely to support any proposed changes.



The most common reasons for disagreeing with the proposed changes were that 'Fewer hours means a lesser service', and that 'Reducing opening hours is not conducive to being flexible'.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

The table below outlines further reasons respondents disagreed with the proposed changes;

If you disagree with any of these please give reasons for your answer.	Number of responses	% on question base (132)
Fewer hours means a lesser service/ More, not less is required/ Services outside school hours are required	17%	23
Reducing opening hours is not conducive to being flexible/ Does not allow for any increase in demand or quality of service	12%	16
Not just one organisation / Unwise to put faith and trust in single organisation / needs a check, a monitor	9%	13
Preserve continuity/ Do not close or change settings	6%	8
One organisation means lack of competition/ Perhaps only the very basic standards would be met/ Outsourcing not a good idea	6%	8
Locality model works well/ No need for change/ Would lose local knowledge	5%	7
Support services that are available through schools / Make more services available through schools/ Keep schools involved	4%	6
Works better if overseen centrally	4%	5
This would mean an unbalanced provision at the expense of some areas/ Equal services should be available throughout Borough	4%	5
One organisation would be under too much pressure	3%	4
Do not have fewer people managing multiple centres/ Each centre should be managed on-site	3%	4
Look at solutions to problems. Not at cost cutting.	2%	3
No confidence in Council	2%	3

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the changes to opening times at the following children's centre buildings?

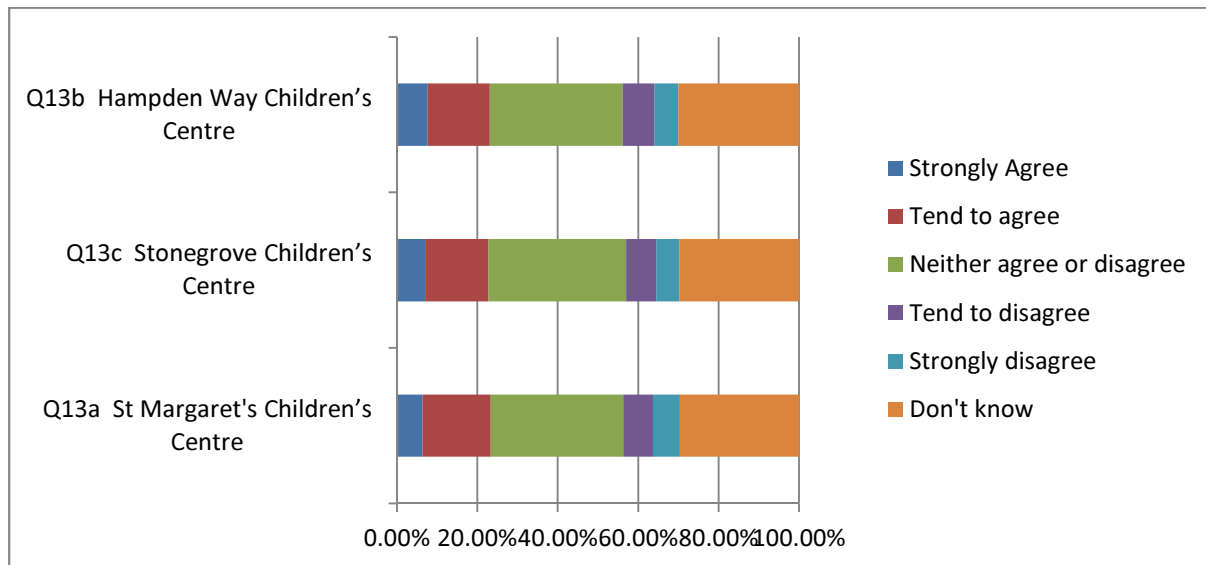
Fewer than 25% Barnet respondents agreed with changing the opening times at St Margaret's, Hampden Way and Stonegrove Children's Centres respectively.

Approximately 33% of respondents neither agree nor disagree; and a further 30% of respondents didn't know.

Approximately 14% of respondents tended to disagree or strongly disagreed.

Black ethnic group residents are significantly more likely (45%) than the Barnet average to agree with changing the opening times at St Margaret's and Hampden Way Children's Centre respectively. A higher proportion of Black respondents also support changing the opening of Stonegrove Children's Centre than any other sample group (38%).

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION



The main reasons for disagreeing with the proposal focused on the impact on the community and that changes were 'Not helpful to the vulnerable' or 'would not meet the needs of parents'. This was followed by comments focusing on not cutting resources ('This is a necessary area of support for children / Do not cut resources').

The table below outlines further reasons respondents disagreed with the proposed changes;

Reasons for disagreeing with changes to opening times?	Number of responses	% on question base (96)
Would have an impact on the community/ Would mean the most needful people would not have the contacts they need/ Not helpful to the vulnerable	23%	22
Would make the service less flexible/ Would not meet the needs of parents/ Would not accommodate parents who work	19%	18
This is a necessary area of support for children / Do not cut resources	13%	12
Would depend on how far away other children's centres are	9%	8
South Barnet needs more support/ All parts of Barnet should have the same support, not just areas of deprivation	8%	7
Would be more crowded if have fewer hours but the same demand/ Need to allow for population growth	5%	5
Buildings should be open longer if anything	3%	3

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

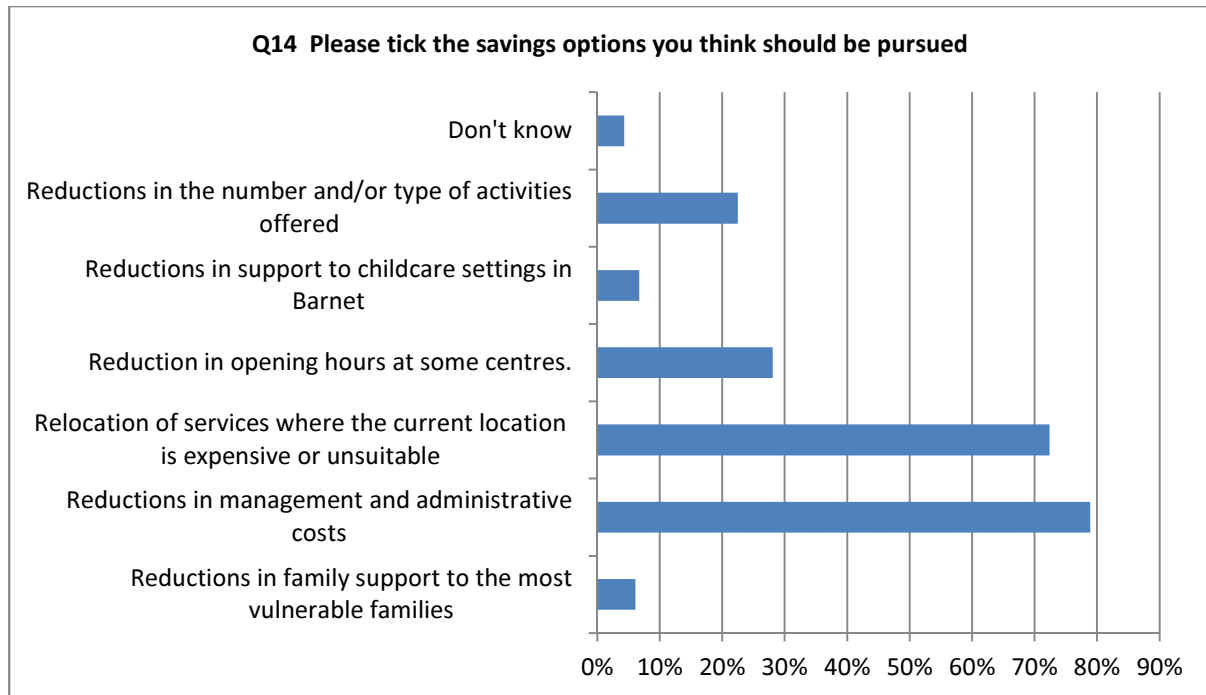
5. Savings Options you think should be Pursued (Tick up to 3)

Overall, the most popular savings options are reductions in management and administrative costs (proposed by 79%) and relocation of services (proposed by 72%).

Overall the least popular savings option is reduction in support to childcare settings (proposed by 7% of respondent); reduction in support for vulnerable families is also less popular (6%).

25-34 Year olds are significantly less likely than the Borough average to agree with 'relocating services' (58%) however, this is still their second most popular savings option after

Black ethnic group respondents are more likely than the Borough average to agree with reductions in family support to the most vulnerable families. Black ethnic group respondents' most popular savings options are the same as that for Barnet overall



The main reasons for choice of savings was on those services which would have the 'the least impact on the service' and comments against budget reductions such as 'Funding must be maintained to allow system to work efficiently/ No savings should be attempted in this service area'.

Respondents of Mixed ethnic group are more likely than the Barnet average to disagree with the savings options due to more flexibility meaning more closures / reduced service/ service cuts. Respondents of Asian ethnic group are more likely than the Barnet average to disagree with the savings options due to flexibility creating chances for needs to be missed

The table below outlines further reasons respondents chose particular savings to be pursued.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Reasons for choice of savings options	Number of responses	% on question base (658)
These savings will have the least impact on the service/ Better to reduce than lose the services altogether	9%	62
Funding must be maintained to allow system to work efficiently/ No savings should be attempted in this service area	8%	53
Cut down on management and administration costs/ Organisations can become top heavy/ Streamline management	7%	44
Vulnerable families need as much support as possible	6%	39
Cut down on waste and duplication / Work responsibly/ Evaluate services/ More efficiency	6%	38
Do not use expensive premises/ Don't spend too much on buildings/ This is common sense	4%	27
Relocate centres to existing local premises/ Relocate to cheaper premises	3%	16
Encourage families to do more to help themselves	3%	16
Makes economic sense / Logical	2%	13
Make sure staff work for their jobs / Earn their money/ Quality not quantity	2%	11
Do not cut opening hours or the service/ This would affect children too much	1%	9
Money saved in management should be then spent on frontline services	1%	9
Ask for a small contribution from parents using the centres	1%	8
Provide fewer types of activity to save money	1%	8
Children are our futures and therefore are important/ Children are our most precious resource	1%	7
Have multiple use of facilities / premises	1%	5
Increase Council Tax to protect this service	1%	4
Only cut hours if the facility is underused / Opening hours can be better organised	1%	4
Use trained volunteers	1%	3
Vulnerable families already receive support from Social Services so this is unnecessary	1%	3

Section 3: What is Important to you?

Responses from section 3 have fed into the detailed design and will be used to inform the implementation of the new early years model, but are not referred in the full business case at this stage.

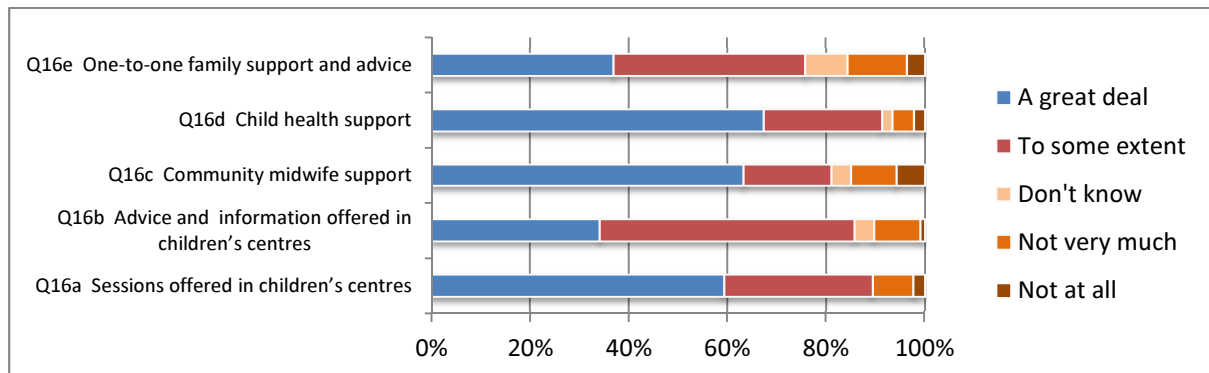
The following questions were answered if the respondent stated they were a Barnet resident with a child under 5.

9. How highly do you value the following services?#

As with the early years questionnaire, the vast majority of respondents valued all services they received, demonstrating that users of the service value the advice, information and support they receive from children’s centres very highly.

Respondents are most likely to value child health support (91%) and sessions offered in children’s centres (89%)

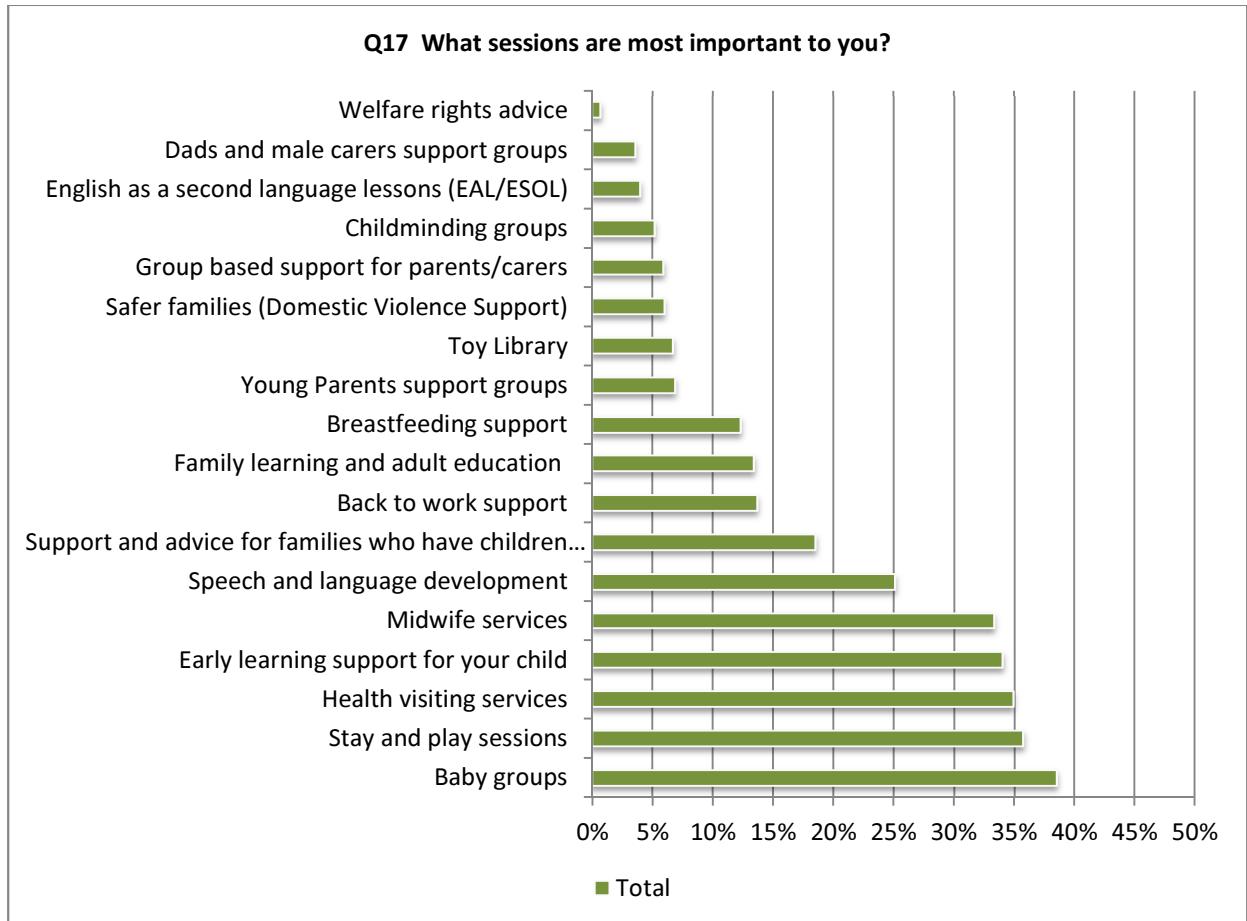
Respondents are least likely to value one-to-one family support and advice (76%)



10. What sessions are most important?

The 3 most important sessions to the Barnet overall respondents include: Baby groups (39%), Stay and play sessions (36%) and Health visiting services (35%). All these services are universal and are very popular services across Barnet.

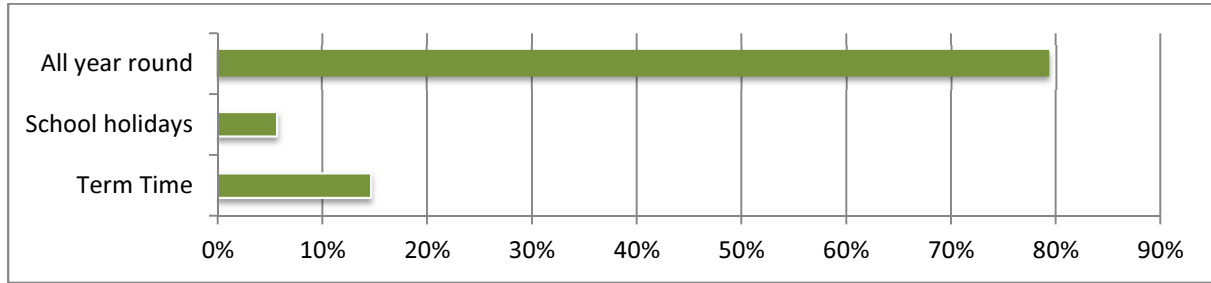
Each respondent was allowed 3 choices.



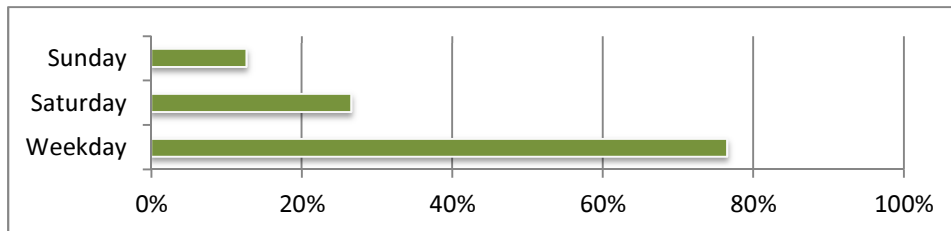
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11. What times are most convenient for you to access services?

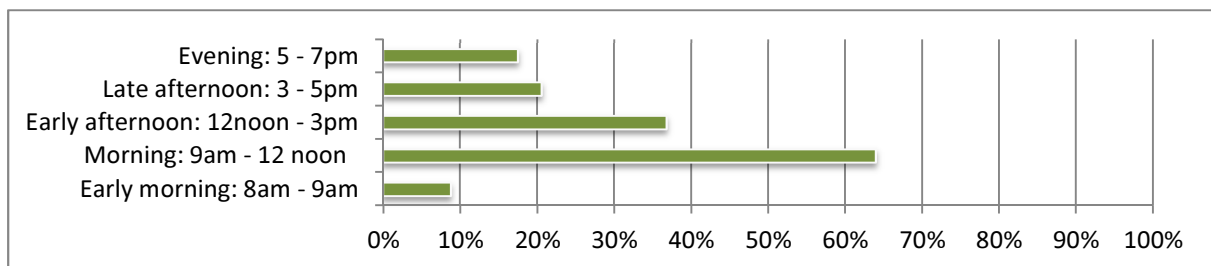
79% of respondents found Children's Centres open all year round were more convenient (compared to 6% school holidays and 15% term time).



Weekdays are the most convenient day of the week for 77% of respondents compared to 27% and 13% Sundays and Saturdays respectively.



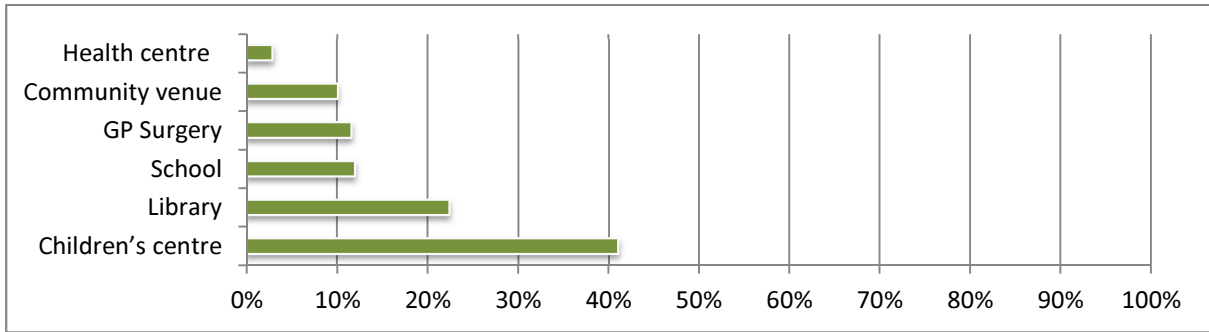
The most convenient time for Children's Centres to operate is Morning, (9am – 12 noon) for 64% of respondents, 37% preferred early afternoon (12 – 3pm), 21% late afternoon (3-5pm) and 18% in the evening (5-7pm)



12. Which location is best for you to access services?

The most convenient place to access Children's Services was a Children's Centre (41%), followed by library (22%), School (12%), GP Surgery (12%) and Community venue (10%).

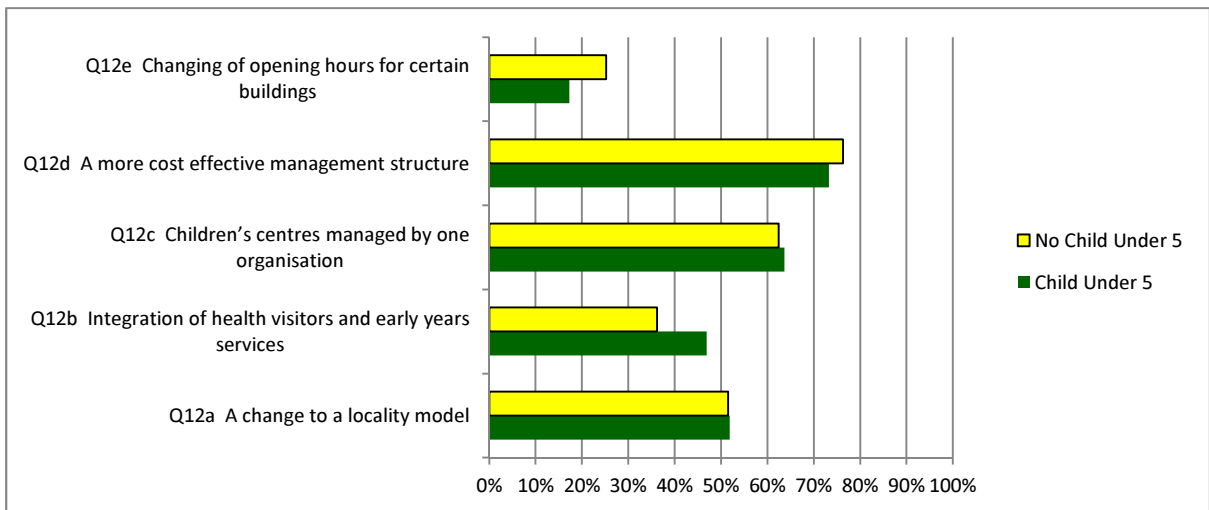
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Comparison of Parents with Young Children and Without Young Children

As a significant number of respondents to the citizen's panel did not have children under 5 some analysis was undertaken to see if the responses varied comparing respondents with a child under 5 and respondents without a child under 5.

The analysis demonstrated that the variation was minimal, as demonstrated by the comparison below.



SECTION 3

DETAILED FINDINGS – DROP IN SESSIONS AND GENERAL FEEDBACK

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3. Drop-in sessions and general feedback

Approach

Sessions were organised at the most suitable times for parents to attend. At the drop-in sessions there was a member of the project team, who gave more information on the changes, answered any questions and gave parents the chance to give face-to-face feedback on the proposals. There was also a chance for a member of the project team to support parents in completing the questionnaire.

This section also includes feedback from direct emails, letter or any other form of engagement through this period. The respondent's names have been kept anonymous

Dates

Children's centre/outreach venue	Date	Attendance
Barnfield CC	Monday 14 July 2014, 9:30am – 12:30pm	Approximately 30 parents attended the stay and play session
Child's Hill CC	Monday 21 July 2014, 2pm – 5pm	10 (1 head teacher, 1 FSW, 1 Governor, 7 parents)
Fairway CC	Thursday 3 July 2014, 9am – 12pm	Approximately 30 parents attended the stay and play session.
The Hyde CC	Tuesday 22 July 2014, 9 – 10am	Approximately 60 (mostly parents, with some staff and some volunteers)
Newstead CC	Thursday 17 July 2014, 9am – 12pm	Approximately 10 parents attended a discussion group and then approximately 20 parents attended the stay and play session.
Parkfield CC	Wednesday 9 July 2014, 3:30pm – 6:30pm	11 (parents and volunteers. impact on 15 children)
St Margaret's CC	Wednesday 9 July 2014, 9:30am – 12:30pm	12 families attended the Stay and Play session (parents, including 2 members of the Parents forum)
Stonegrove CC (St Peters Church Community Centre)	Thursday 10 July 2014, 10am – 12pm	Approximately 20 people attended the session that was run alongside a Stay and Play session (parents and people from the local community – including the church, youth group and wider community)
Sweet's Way Community	Monday 7 July 2014, 9am	Approximately 30-35

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Centre	– 12pm	parents attended the stay and play session
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Detailed findings

I. Aims

There was broad agreement with the aims of the council, although in regard to the recommendation that children’s centres should ‘increase the number of parents with young children returning to work’, some parents felt that parents should be supported whether they wanted to go back to work or wanted to look at their children at home.

II. Vision for early years services

There was broad agreement with the vision of the council, although there were some concerns over a few of the elements of the vision.

A more flexible model of support

- There was a worry this could mean that staff moved around and which could have a negative impact on the relationship between families and staff. Consistent and high quality staff were seen as very important to parents.

A more targeted early years service

- Parents felt very strongly that the universality of services were important and that if it was only for ‘deprived’ or ‘needy’ people there would be a stigma attached and people would be put off from attending. It was also felt strongly that families from all backgrounds and cultures could have problems and that services shouldn’t be targeted just based on deprivation
- Some respondents argued the best way to meet targets was to retain local management and that targets should be based on local knowledge and information provided from children’s centres as they are the people that know the communities best.

A more collaborative model

- This was strongly supported by the vast majority of families and it was felt this was already happening across a number of children’s centres.

A family based approach

- This was strongly supported by the majority of parents.

Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children's centres

- This was widely supported, although it was felt there were some contradictions between developing a flexible locality model and increasing the involvement of parents and the local community. It was felt that volunteers could add more to children's centres but that they could not replace professional staff.

III. Proposed changes to the new model

A change to a locality model

- There was a varied response to the move to a locality model, with some respondents feeling it would be a benefit to share ideas and training, whilst there were concerns that it would mean less consistent staff in centres, which was the most important part of the support children's centres offered.
- A risk was raised that a change to a locality model could have an impact on the trust built between the children's centre and the local community. There was also a feeling that it contradicted the move to increased involvement of parents and communities.

Integration of health visitors and early years services

- The majority of parents were happy with the health visitor and midwifery services they had received, with many parents becoming involved in children's centres through a referral from community midwives or health visitors. However, there was also a common message that links with health and children's centres could be improved, with health visitors referring more parents to children's centres.

Children's centres managed by one organisation

- Some parents welcomed the idea of the council running children's centres and locality based advisory boards. However, a number of parents felt that outsourcing or cutting services could have an adverse effect.
- Respondents from number of children's centres said that they thought engagement with the community and schools was important and there was some concern about how services, resources, responsibility and staff would be split between children's centres and adjoining schools and nurseries
- There were worries raised that inconsistent central or school management could also have adverse effect on safeguarding and dealing with emergencies.

A more cost effective management structure

- Some staff were worried that administrative capacity would decrease and it would take up more of their time that they could be supporting families.

Changing of hours for certain buildings

- There was a worry that cutting staff could risk increasing safeguarding standards or result in closures. It was also felt that a reduction in the number of hours could shorten sessions, and they were already too short for some parents.

Specific changes to children's centres

- At Stonegrove, St Margaret's and Hampden Way Children's Centre sessions there was support for the quality of services offered and their importance to families and the local community. Parents felt that having a venue that was local was very important for the local community.
- A number of respondents at Stonegrove challenged the significant changes. Respondents emphasised the importance of the children's centre to the wider community and the positive impact on families' lives. There was also feedback that Stonegrove was very isolated geographically and that families would not travel far to services so sessions should be maintained at the centre.

IV. What is Important to families

What times are most convenient for attending children's centre sessions?

- Mornings were the most popular sessions' time, although the exact time varied, with some parent's suggestion more sessions from 9:30am – 11am (after the school run). Other parents suggested more sessions in the afternoon or long and more flexible sessions.

What sessions/support are most important to you?

- The most popular sessions were: stay and play, rhyme time, soft play, creative play, terrific 2s, boogie mites, school starter classes and trips outside of the CC.
- Parents also value courses for parents (i.e. childcare, first aid, CV writing and EAL) as well as advice on unemployment, benefit changes and domestic problems.
- Across all the drop-in sessions parents said they valued the opportunity to meet other parents at children's centres, with many saying they had felt isolated before coming to the children's centre.

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- Parents felt the positive impact children's centres had on child development was very important, building confidence and communication.
- Parents felt the key to good and supportive services across a range of children's centres was friendly, welcoming and consistent staff. There was a feeling from some people that changing staff, or asking them to work across localities, could be detrimental to the trust built up between staff and local communities over time.
- There was a common view that children's centres form strong links with the local community.

Which location is best for you to access services/sessions?

- Respondents felt strongly that services should be local and near public transport.
- Some parents said they would travel further for more suitable or better sessions.

V. Further comments

Volunteering

- The most prevalent barriers to volunteering were; not enough information on how to volunteer, not asking parents to volunteer, fear of commitment and issues around managing children/childcare and work.
- There was positive feedback from a number of volunteer in the work they did and how it was support them back to work.
- Some respondents felt that there could be improvements in how children's centres supported volunteering by children's centres, better training opportunities and better using volunteer's skills.

Income generation

- Charging - Respondents from Child's Hill and Sweet's Way suggested charging or asking parents to donate to sessions or resources (i.e. tea and coffee). One parent suggested utilising the means testing model used by Camden.
- Using the space – parents suggested better use of space to raise revenues, especially at weekends when the building was empty.

Comments on the process / consultation questionnaire

- An issue was raised that the document implied that the current Stonegrove site would close as part of the regeneration. It was noted that 'The site can only be closed when the land has been transferred from London Diocesan Fund / Edgware Parish and this will only happen after the new building (joint community centre and church) has been built to standards acceptable to LDF.

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This was changed in the consultation document to be clearer following feedback.

- There were some concerns around the difficulties in answer the questionnaires and that more testing could be done with varies groups as part of the next consultation. This *(and similar) responses will inform future consultation.*
- There were concerns over the timescales for consultation with the consultation closing on 12 September and the Full Business Case going to the Children's, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee on 15 September. *The date of committee has now changed to 28 October. Consultation responses have been analysed throughout the consultation period and informed he detailed design.*

SECTION 4

**DETAILED FINDINGS –
WORKSHOPS**

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

4.1 Methodology

Ten two-hour consultations were held between 15th July 2014 and 19th August 2014 in a number of Children's Centres across Barnet, as follows

4.1.1 Service User Consultations

The workshops with users of the services were targeted at families who regularly use services, with sessions targeted at those who receive family support or those with English as an additional language. Children's centre staff were involved in inviting families to ensure they felt comfortable attending the sessions.

Service User Consultations	
Children's Centre	Participants
Barnfield	9 (all female)
Bell Lane	9 (7 female, 2 male)
Coppetts Wood	5 (all female)
Parkfield	1 (female)
Wingfield	7 (all female)
Total	31 (29 female, 2 male)

The consultations with service users were centred around people's lived experience of Early Years services. During these discussions we explored:

- What support people value the most
- Where support takes place, and where people would like it to take place
- When support is most needed
- How people feel during the early years phase
- What needs people have during the Early Years phase
- What is good about the current early years service
- What is bad about the current early years service
- Service users' ideas for improving Early Years services

4.1.2 Staff and Volunteer Consultations

A set of workshops were arranged with children's centre staff and volunteers. Each children's centre (whether they were holding a workshop or not) had members of staff present, this was organised by the children's centre managers.

Staff and Volunteer Consultations	
Children's Centre	Participants
Barnfield	8 participants (all staff members)
Newstead	6 participants (5 staff members, 1 volunteer)
Parkfield	17 participants (13 staff members, 4 volunteers)
Stonegrove	6 participants

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	(all staff members)
Underhill	5 participants (all staff members)
Total	(37 staff members, 5 volunteers)

The consultations with staff members and volunteers were centred around the Early Years support they offer to parents and carers. During these discussions we explored:

- What support they provide
- Where this support takes place
- When support is provided
- How they feel when providing this support
- What they need to provide this support
- What is good about the current early years service
- What challenges they face
- Staff members' ideas for improving Early Years services

Outline slightly different to wider consultation – designed to engage in a way which related to people's lives etc.

Consultation design

An initial session was held with Barnet Council in July 2014 in order to develop research questions and a shared set of principles to drive the consultation process.

Consultations

Focussed discussions around people's experiences of accessing and delivering Early Years services. We gathered feedback from service users, staff members and volunteers on how things are currently, as well as facilitating idea generation around how Early Years services could evolve in the future.

Where possible we asked participants to self-document their comments, stories and ideas, adding these to post-it notes and creating posters to reflect their journeys. Where facilitators documented the outputs, participants' comments were recorded as direct quotes as much as possible in order to ensure that feedback was captured in their own words.

a. Summary

The following section outlines how the feedback from the workshops relates to the early years vision;

A more flexible model of support - "In the new model services could be more flexible to best meet the needs of local families – for example by varying opening hours, locations of sessions or the type of services provided by children's centres to meet demand."

- An early years service that supports people to pursue their aspirations as well as meeting their immediate needs

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- Children's centres that seek to build a deep intelligence of the needs, aspirations and preferences of local parent's families.
- Children's centres with the freedom to design new interventions based on this intelligence

More targeted support for children under five and their families - "Barnet will continue to deliver early years advice and information to all families with young children and there is a strong commitment to improving the universal health service. Yet, a key focus of the new early years model will be to better target resources at families who need the most support as early as we can, helping them deal with issues and support their child to grow and develop."

- An early years service that recognises the importance of a universal service
- Children's centres that are given the freedom to set their own targets, but don't feel constrained by them

A more collaborative model - "In the new model we aim to work closer with all partners including health visitors, community midwives and childcare settings to better support families."

- An early years services that is valued and respected by others in the system (in particular social care)
- An early years service that sits at the heart of the broader system of family support
- A system of family support that is complementary rather repetitive
- Children's centres that are limited in their administrative burden and can deploy resources towards supporting families
- An early years service that works effectively together to create smooth transitions between different settings and shares their knowledge to provide holistic support to the family.

A family based approach - "While all early years services will take a family-based approach, this is even more significant where there are identified needs for more intensive support. Early years and adults services need to work together closely with families where a parent has high risk needs to ensure the child's well-being and development is considered."

- Children's centres that welcome, and provide support for, whole families
- Children's centres that break down intergenerational boundaries
- Children's centres can offer support and development opportunities to families that aren't in vulnerable situations

Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in children's centres - "We will design a model that means parents and local communities can be more involved in children's centres. We will encourage more people to volunteer – supporting better services and giving local people the chance to develop their skills. Increased engagement with our local communities will also improve the reach of early years services, ensuring more people access support when needed."

- Children's centres that respect and draw upon the skills, knowledge and experience of their parents and communities
- Children's centres that provide parents with real and meaningful opportunities for ownership and decision making

Feedback from participants

Initially some participants were sceptical about the consultation process, and some expressed doubt that they could really have a meaningful input into the development of the Early Years model:

"There is no feeling of being in this together [Children's Centre and Barnet Council]."

"[The consultation process is] hypocritical and a contradiction. The aim is to protect vulnerable people, but at the end of the report it says that savings will be made from funding for services for vulnerable people."

Some participants were also confused about the consultation process - some thought that they were there to be informed about the new model, rather than give their input, and others expressed confusion about how the model would affect them:

"The consultation is making us feel anxious and unsettled. We don't know what this means [for our jobs/future]."

"[There is a] general feeling of not knowing what is happening."

"I don't understand what they are making decisions about."

However, as the consultations got underway, participants gave an overwhelmingly positive response to the methodology used, and there was a sense of great value in simply having a forum to express their concerns and feel like someone is listening:

"No-one has ever asked us [what we think] before."

"Barnet should do more consultations like this with staff."

"It's really good to see all our comments and ideas laid out."

Moreover, the importance of long term, meaningful engagement came through in participants' feedback:

"We had a team consultation but we don't know what happened after that. There was no feedback on how it affected the process."

"We have put our blood, sweat and tears into this and the idea that people sat in offices could tear up what we have done is terrifying."

b. Responses

The next section includes the feedback provided by families, staff and volunteers and has been broken down into the following sections;

- A. What People Value
- B. What works
- C. System insight

D. Looking Forward

I. What People Value

	Parental development	Parenting	Child development and wellbeing
Insight	Parents value the opportunities provided by children's centres to support their own learning and development	Parents value the support they are given to develop as parents	Parents value the development opportunities provided for their children by children's centres
Evidence	<p>'I'm doing courses so Lily can be proud of me'.</p> <p><i>A group of recent immigrant mothers at a 'conversation cafe' were desperate to learn English and really valued the support they were being given by the children's centre to do so. The more support to learn English the better!</i></p> <p><i>One mum used to be a chef in Poland but when she moved to the UK she could only find work as a house cleaner. She wants to improve her English so that she can be a cook again. Another Mum used to be a social worker in Hungary but now she works part time shifts in a Hotel, three hours per evening. Both have aspirations to return to a job that makes the most of the skills they have.</i></p>	<p>'I've done all the things that men do. I manage people, I've stood up to people, but with kids... I know nothing'.</p> <p>'The child first aid was so helpful. One time my daughter was choking and my mum had to help her while I stood there panicking. I would know what to do now'.</p> <p><i>One Mum with an 18 month old son had her first child 15 years ago. With her first born she had the support of a close group of friends that were all pregnant. Now she hasn't got any friends with young children and needs somebody to talk to for advice. She feels like she has forgotten a lot of the things that she picked up with her first child and is also concerned that some techniques may be outdated.</i></p>	<p>'Things change so much. He says hello to other children now and has learned how to share toys'.</p> <p>'It's a learning journey for my child'.</p> <p><i>One mother described how the staff at the children's centre had helped to settle her child into the new routine of the centre. She described the insects on the fence along the entrance that help him recognise where he is going and when he arrives he knows where to store his coat. They help create routines for him by having times for snacks, and at the end of the session there is tidy up time and the goodbye song. She would have once described her son as clingy, but now, as soon as they get to the gate he knows where he is and can't wait to see his friends.</i></p>

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Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents with English as a second language value English language supports above all as it enables access to further support and better life opportunities. ● Confidence building classes have proved extremely valuable. ● Getting back to work is really important but not as simple as amending a CV. ● Parents appreciate crèches to give them space and time to develop their skills and focus on their own needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's centres help set expectations for parents. ● They also provide opportunities for parents to build skills and competencies related to parenting. ● Personalised learning journeys in the form of a customised book provide a practical guide for parents, allowing them to track their child's progress and think about what comes next. ● Parents can speak to other parents for advice, particularly helpful when they are isolated. ● Parenting courses give practical advice and boost confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's centres provide children with development opportunities that they otherwise would not be able to access. ● For example, parents really value the opportunities presented to socialise with other children (particularly when children are encouraged to eat together). ● Having feedback about child's development gives parents tips on things to practice at home. This builds continuity between the two settings. ● Parents value the reassurance they get about the development of their child. ● Parents feel that specialist support is out of reach because of costs and waiting times. This leaves some feeling like they have to make do with the support the children centre can offer.
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Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should help parents develop their own aspirations, as well as plans for how they might achieve them. • Children’s centres should support parents from abroad to translate their skills and qualifications into the UK context. • Children’s centres should help link parents together around their professional aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical planning and expectation setting with parents, which includes other agencies and services where needed, might help parents take ownership of their child’s journey. • Children’s centres and other agencies should develop a planning tool that helps parents get to grips with their child’s development journey (and identifies opportunities and challenges), as well as a process for using the tool with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should provide more specific developmental interventions in stay and play sessions • Children’s centres and other agencies should develop a planning tool that helps parents get to grips with their child’s development journey (and identifies opportunities and challenges), as well as a process for using the tool with parents.
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	Emotional support	Friendships and social networks	Universality
Insight	Parents value the emotional support and guidance they receive from children’s centre staff	Parents value the opportunities provided by children’s centres to meet other parents and make friends	Parents value the accessibility of children’s centres and the lack of judgement this implies

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<p>Evidence</p>	<p>'I was more emotional than most after she was born, and they picked up on that.'</p> <p>"If they weren't here I don't know who else I would have spoken to. They're more like friends".</p> <p><i>One mother described how the centre helped her after she was diagnosed with postnatal depression. She credits them for stopping the whole family from sinking with her. She also notes how they continued to help her even when she relapsed and that they continued to check in on her progress when she had recovered.</i></p>	<p>'I didn't have any friends in this country, it was just me and my son'. 'You realise you're not the only one going through these things'.</p> <p><i>Jane was going through an extremely tough time when her relationship with her partner broke down. The centre gave her a space to get away from the stress and a way to meet other mums. Through a confidence building class she realised that her trust in people and relationships had been damaged. The course gave her the opportunity to speak to other mums that had been through similar things and she didn't feel quite so alone.</i></p>	<p>'They encourage and nurture. There is advice on all levels. Not just for children or for me, but all of my family.'</p> <p>'Many parents see the children centre's as a safe haven, you notice that they come to the sessions early and stay behind late'.</p> <p><i>A mother suffering from post natal depression had been trying to avoid all contact with support services because she was scared that she was going to lose her child. She liked that the children's centre wasn't connected to social services, and helped broker contact with them when she felt ready.</i></p>
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Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emotional wellbeing of parents and families is often under serious strain. • Children’s centres are providing a great deal of formal and informal mental health and wellbeing support. • Children’s centre staff are highly skilled when it comes to dealing with parents on an emotional level. They are adept at recognising the early signs of mental health conditions. • This often prevents escalation and crisis, but is not formally recognised as being part of a children’s centres remit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres are ideally placed to support parents to connect with other parents, and build friendships. • This is particularly important for parents from other countries who have little or no family or friends that live close by. • But it is also important for socially isolated families who tend to be at greater risk of crisis • When friendships do develop at children’s centres, it tends to be incidental rather than intentional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents often feel more comfortable accessing children’s centres than they do more formal social care, which they often see as punitive. Many families self-refer as a result. • Non-judgemental support from trusted individuals is incredibly valuable to parents • Parents like that children’s centre buildings are a “one stop shop” for all of their needs. It is helpful to have lots of things in one place so they don’t have to go from place to place with their children in tow. • Staff know how to explain systems and entitlements in a language that is relevant to parents.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centre staff should be given supervision opportunities with mental health professionals to allow them to work through issues and develop their practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should provide specific opportunities for parents to connect with each other, around their interests or their issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council should create other “safe places” in the community from which people can get support and guidance. • Children’s centres should be encouraged and incentivised to keep providing universal services.

II. What works

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	Building trusted relationships	Early intervention	Outreach and local intelligence
Insight	The strength and consistency of relationships between children's centre staff and parents is the most effective agent of change	The earlier parents can be encouraged to engage with children's centres, the more effective they will be.	Outreach is most effective when directed by local intelligence
Evidence	<p>'Staff at the children centre are the only professionals who are consistent. All the others make false promises'.</p> <p>'When a staff member went on holiday for a month I went completely downhill'.</p> <p>'It's like my second home'.</p> <p>'Once families get to know you there is a constant stream of people to your door asking for help'.</p> <p>'8 weeks building up a relationship, and you're just about getting somewhere, then "see you later" '.</p>	<p>'I was more emotional than most after she was born, and they picked up on that.'</p> <p>'We're the prevention rather than the cure'.</p> <p><i>One parent lived next door to the children's centre but didn't know what it was about. Although she knew that her daughter's behaviour was starting to get unmanageable, she didn't think they would be able to help. Social services became involved when her older son was often late to school and was tired and distracted in lessons. The tantrums were disrupting the whole family's routine, and the involvement of social services further increased the tension. The centre has now helped her access parenting classes and speech and language support, as well as CAMHS for her daughter. She wishes she had used the centre much sooner.</i></p>	<p>'The children centre is meant to be a non-judgemental environment, and targets don't seem to correspond to that. We are seeking out certain types of people and think others aren't so in need'.</p> <p>'We need to target the most vulnerable, but we should have some say in defining what vulnerability means. We are all experts in our own little area'.</p> <p><i>One mother credits the outreach work of a family support worker as having saved her life. She was too anxious to leave her house and didn't understand that she was suffering from severe postnatal depression. The outreach worker visited her at her house until the time came when she felt confident enough to go with her to the centre. If it hadn't been for the outreach worker she would never have made it.</i></p>

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Opportunity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The fact that children’s centres staff are ‘placed based’ (located in one children’s centre) means families experience a great deal of consistency in the relationships they develop. ● This consistency, combined with the fact that children’s centres often get to know families over a long period of time (5 years or more), allows for the development of highly trusting relationships. ● As a result families often turn to children’s centres in times of crisis, not just in relation to their younger children, but in relation to the whole family. ● Family support workers based in children’s centres in particular are often trusted more than representatives from other agencies (including social work). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early intervention does not just mean reaching families early in the life of their child, it means recognising patterns and behaviours that might become damaging in the long run. ● The exposure children’s centre staff have to families over an extended period of time means they are uniquely placed to identify such behaviours, and their skill and experience means they often do. ● The behaviours they observe tend to have implications for the wellbeing of whole families rather than just parents or children. As a result children’s centre workers provide a critical source of early intelligence, and a potential route to early intervention, in broader family related issues. ● New birth data and telephone calls aren’t as successful as outreach visits because many parents don’t answer the phone and confuse the children’s centre with social services. ● Midwife and health visitor appointments in the children’s centre are a good way of introducing new parents to the space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff want to have their expertise in their local area valued, allowing them space to shape their own targets based on their own local intelligence. ● This intelligence is often built by having regular conversations with local people (from shopkeepers to religious and community leaders). ● Staff recognise the value of targets but want the value added to parents lives measured in some way too. ● Children’s centres want to be able to adapt their targets if an area changes (particularly true for regeneration areas). ● Staff feel that targets put immense pressure on them and can lead them to make decisions they wouldn’t normally take.
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Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children’s centre staff should play a more central role in the system of support that sits around families. ● Children’s centres should be encouraged and incentivised to work with whole families in order to make the most of the trust they have worked so hard to gain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The more families that children’s centres are able to reach, the more they will be able to spot, and the more the whole system will benefit. ● One centre uses a new birth celebration as way to encourage more parents to come along to the centre. ● All children’s centre should have facilities for midwifery and health visitors. ● Children’s centres should use local networks of parent volunteers to increase early access to the most vulnerable families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children’s centre staff should play a more proactive role in defining their own targets, based on their knowledge and understanding of the local area. ● At the same time, parents should play a much more proactive role in outreach (as ambassadors or champions) thus breaking down some of the cultural barriers that prevent people from attending. ● Children’s centres staff should develop systems for gathering local intelligence from non-formal sources, so they are sure they are reaching the right people.
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	Start with the person	Staff are your greatest asset	Information and communication
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Insight	<p>Children’s centres should design interventions that reflect the real needs and preferences of parents and families</p>	<p>Children’s centre staff are highly skilled and deliver a wide range of complex interventions. This expertise and experience is highly valued by parents</p>	<p>There is a great deal of inconsistency in the extent to which Children’s Centres successfully communicate their presence and purpose to local families</p>
Evidence	<p>‘As a Dad I’m a duck out of water here’. ‘The staff at the other nurseries didn’t pick up that I needed more support as a single Dad. I wanted some advice about how to communicate with children because I didn’t know what to say or how to say it’.</p> <p><i>One mum said that the family support worker asked her what things were causing her problems, how she was feeling and how she wanted things to be different. They then went on to design the support that she would need around getting her back to feeling the way she wanted to feel.</i></p>	<p>‘This place wouldn’t be what it is without the staff’. ‘It’s the staff that make it, it’s not just about the activities’. ‘To care so much and put all the work in and not even get a thank you (from the council)... it’s soul destroying’ <i>At one children’s centre in a particularly Jewish area, Kosher cups and snacks were made available even though they weren’t requested. Although the space is small staff are inventive with the toys and spaces to create imaginative and engaging things for children to do.</i></p>	<p>‘The children’s centre... It’s not what people think’. ‘I lived next door and I had no idea what was going on in the children’s centre’.</p>

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Opportunity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents with school aged children prefer session times that happen outside of school drop off hours (late morning/early afternoon) ● Dads want relevant sessions for them, for example that include physical activity ● Parents want opportunities for older children to join sessions at holiday times ● Parents value the physical spaces of children centres, which are familiar and provide routine. ● Weekend and evening sessions have mixed success. Many see this time as designated family time and not time for the children's centre. ● Children's centres do their best to work with the resources they have got to tailor their services to meet the differing needs of parents ● Children's centres that adapt their programmes to the needs of parents are proactive, creative and agile. The capacity and propensity to do this varies across children's centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The development of trusted relationships and the provision of emotional support are contingent on staff with high levels of empathy and emotional intelligence. ● The provision of tailored support often with limited resources requires high levels of creativity and ingenuity. ● The design and facilitation of development opportunities for both parents and children requires a high level of technical skill. ● At the moment, staff often feel like they receive very little support in the delivery of their duties, which can often be emotionally and physically draining. ● Staff feel they have to sacrifice training opportunities because agency workers are ill-equipped to deliver the standard of care parents and children are accustomed to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents often don't know what is on offer at children's centres, and don't know where to look for information. ● Many parents, particularly those from other countries, don't understand what they are entitled to or what is available. ● This is partly because signposting systems vary in quality, and are dependent on the knowledge or good will of individual professionals to make them work well. ● It is also partly because children's centres can struggle to create communications that translate the language of professional services into one that parents from all backgrounds can understand, or materials that can travel. ● Parents trust word of mouth, but many are keen to try out services if they notice that they are there. Visibility of centres is fundamental.
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Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Children's centres should be encouraged to capture and codify the deep understanding of their families' needs they have managed to build over time.● Registration forms should be supplemented by more holistic intelligence gathering processes (case study development for example, which has previously proved popular).● They should use this intelligence to encourage staff to exercise their creativity and imagination in designing interventions that meet the real needs of families.● Children's centres should be much more systematic about gathering parent feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The council should create communities of practice around children's centres in Barnet that combine the sharing of best practice and professional development opportunities with emotional support in a regular, designated time.● Staff should be given greater recognition from the council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Children's centres should become better at using communication channels that people are familiar with. For example one children's centre sends out text messages to parents to remind them of what is on offer and what they have signed up to.● Children's centres should also find ways to encourage parents to act as champions, helping communicate what is on offer to their friends and neighbours.
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VI. System Insights

	Relationship with agencies	Vision for Children's Centres	Admin
Insight	Children's centres support families best when there is a close network of responsive agencies to refer them to	Children's centre staff need a clear vision of the role they are to play in the support of families and this needs to be communicated to the other agencies working to support families	Staff feel a great deal of pressure to maintain rigorous records, collect data and report to targets
Evidence	<p>'You feel helpless when you have to rely on other services and they aren't responding'.</p> <p>'It feels like there is something waiting to happen. If we can't sign post or refer it will get missed'.</p> <p>'It's a one way street with the school. You're giving things to them but they're not giving anything back'.</p>	<p>'They don't recognise the sophistication of the services that we provide. It's more than just play'.</p> <p>'The schools sometimes look at us like we are aliens'.</p>	<p>'Huge bureaucracy around operating under the Local Authority. 6 weeks without loo roll is ridiculous.'</p> <p>'It would be amazing to have protected admin time. We could spend some time spotting trends and mapping data'.</p> <p>'The Local Authority slows us down. We're trying to be reactive'.</p>

EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Opportunity

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrated support is important for families. Some safeguarding and housing issues are beyond the influence of children centre staff, so it is critical that they are in easy reach of the right people. ● Successful transition meetings from early years through to school happen when school, support work and new transition worker are all present in the meeting and insights can be shared face to face. ● Children centre staffing structures are horizontal compared to hierarchical structures of other council services. This means that children centre staff share insights about families and work together in a way that others don't ● Relationships between services are mixed. There are some strong relationships, but these mostly exist on a personal level, dependent on the inclination of the individual. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff are concerned that many agencies don't know what children centres do. At best this means confusion about their remit, at worse their contribution to families' lives is completely undervalued by other agencies. ● Staff wonder whether this is partly because it is extremely difficult for anyone to keep up with the amount of change that children's centres have experienced in recent years. ● The remit and scope of what is offered has changed, but the perception of other agencies and the available resources haven't caught up. ● For example staff feel that they are handling cases that previously would have been in the remit of social services. They want to support these families, but think that the role they play isn't recognised, encouraged or incentivised. ● Children's centre's act like a sponge, absorbing the support needs of many families when there are changes in provision elsewhere. Staff cite welfare reform, changes to ESOL courses and provision for special educational needs as areas where need is rising but support is diminishing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The admin process feels inefficient, for example making two copies and updating two different records with the same information. ● Tracking families is a strain on staff time and can conflict with strong relationships built up over time. Cold calling about progress after a course or to check if they have weaned their child feels like an invasion of privacy and families often don't respond well to it. ● Staff felt that the recruitment process was more agile when they could manage it themselves. There is more admin involved and the posts now sit empty for longer periods of time and this causes disruptions for families. ● Staff have to log each contact made with families, even if they weren't successful. It gets in the way of doing more work with families directly. ● Staff feel that measuring the success of children's centres by attendance at sessions and consecutive visits is a blunt tool. It doesn't measure the quality of interactions or the impact on families. ● . |
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Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from different agencies should be provided with regular opportunities to get to know each other and share best practice and professional development opportunities. • The council should seek to engage with the early years community as a whole rather than individual services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centre staff should be involved in the strategic planning of early years provision in Barnet. • The council should work with the early years community to clearly define roles, responsibilities and expectations, and should communicate these clearly to everyone involved. • Children’s centres should be encouraged and supported at the earliest possible stage to manage the support needs of families when other local services change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children centres’ should have greater autonomy when it comes to managing parts of their procurement and recruitment. • Staff liked recording case studies to demonstrate the impact of their work alongside data. The council should value both qualitative as well as quantitative data.
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III. Looking Forward

How to develop the offer			
	Whole family support	Whole family learning	Spaces

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Insight	<p>Could children’s centres receive more support and encouragement to work with whole families, rather than just young children and their parents?</p>	<p>Could children’s centres see it as their role to provide learning opportunities for the whole family?</p>	<p>Space is often at a premium for children’s centres, despite its importance to both children, parents and staff</p>
Evidence	<p>‘Before the centres began it was the mothers who built their own little community... I think we need to create more of that community feel’. ‘We want to achieve universal support so that everyone is in the same place’ <i>One staff member who had worked in the area for a number of years was concerned about the lack of places for young people to go. Many of the youth centres had closed down and she felt that there was a cliff edge for many of those young people and their families who could still do with the community based support. ‘It’s after the children centre and then it disappears at school, the next time we might know about them is through probation or they are needing our help as a young parent at the children’s centre’.</i></p>	<p>‘Trips give you something to look forward to if you’ve got nothing planned and you’re feeling a bit lost... even if it’s just a museum.’ ‘I’ve been to the RAF museum so many times, he does like it but I can see he is getting a bit bored of it. I just don’t know where else there is to go’.</p>	<p>‘Want to have a garden, some fun space, not just somewhere you go if you have family problems. We want more rooms, more space more sessions!’ ‘Sometimes there is a queue out of the door, and they can’t let everyone in as that wouldn’t be safe. It’s so disappointing for us both when we have to be turned away’. <i>One parent described how much the children centre was needed in the holidays. The nursery was only term time so they got to use those rooms too. The extra space meant that more people could come and the children had a bit more space to play in. She said it showed how much potential the centre had only if it was given room to expand.</i></p>

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Opportunity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff think children’s centres could work with teenagers, young people and youth services more broadly. ● Children’s centres recognise that they could do more to appeal to dads, not just by providing dad focused activities, but through making use of the skills and experiences that dads have to offer in sessions. ● Children’s centres could provide activities for older carers and older people, as well as opportunities for intergenerational play and learning. ● It would be helpful for parents to bring along older children to stay and play sessions - particularly in the holidays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff are aware that extended family often play integral roles in the upbringing of children. ● There can often be conflicts between the methods used between older and younger generations in raising children. ● Inviting families into the children centres to learn together and discuss different methods could build trust and consensus. ● Parents can feel that they exhaust the local play and learning opportunities and find it repetitive and un-stimulating going to the same places. They would appreciate being introduced to new learning and development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children’s centres provide safe spaces for parents and children. ● Parents feel that there aren’t enough family friendly spaces in the community. Spaces such as parks are often seen as being ‘for’ others such as teenagers. ● Lots of parents talked about wanting access to more outdoor space so that children could run around. Most sessions are indoors. ● Lots of staff described wanting access to more space so that they could run more sessions.
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EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should become community hubs, in which whole families receive support and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should be places that the whole family come to try new things, and have stimulating learning opportunities. • This might include more opportunities to go on trips, to different, exciting places; to listen to interesting speakers; or to watch great movies. • It might also include adult learning opportunities, led by experts or local learning institutions, or by parents themselves with particular skillsets. • This might not require additional resource, but new forms of partnership with local people and institutions, as well as a new way of viewing the role of children’s centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s centres should find ways to exploit existing spaces in the community, both indoor and outdoor. • The council could broker relationships between the children’s centre and local organisations with space to offer. • The council should use existing provision, such as estate wardens to make unsafe spaces feel family friendly.
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	Potential role for parents	Meaningful engagement
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Insight	<p>Parents have a wealth of skills and could share them to the benefit of themselves, other families and the broader children's centre community.</p>	<p>Parents could make a valuable contribution to setting strategic direction for children's centre and the wider system.</p>
Evidence	<p>'I was in a dark hole with mental health problems, my life now is like a dream since volunteering'. 'It's taking off some of the social pressures... when people ask me if I'm working I can say yes'. <i>One parent reflected how volunteering has given them a chance to become something other 'than a stressed out single mum'. She could have an identity that was part of something bigger than herself and her son and she felt proud because of it. The boost in her self-esteem means that she feels more able to face other challenging times.</i></p>	<p>'I raised an issue about safety at the parent forum, about how we would say our password in public and anybody could hear it. We discussed a solution to the problem and sorted it. It was a much better way to handle things'. <i>One children's centres described how difficult it was getting parents to attend parent's forums. Although there were some regulars, many people would come once and then wouldn't come back.</i></p>

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Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Parents provide a resource that is currently underexploited by children's centres.● Volunteering is of real benefit to parents. It can help them build confidence and skills. It is also of real value to children's centres. Parents have a wealth of skills and experiences that children's centres could make use of.● Many parents find the thought of getting back to work daunting and volunteering could be a way to build transferrable skills and experiences.● Many parents are more than willing to contribute but are nervous about doing so. They would feel more comfortable if the children's centre asked to make use of their existing skills rather than having to learn new ones.● Current volunteering opportunities are limited in scope (focusing primarily on supervising sessions). Children's centres don't start by asking what skills parents have and thinking about how they might deploy them. For example entry forms tend to focus on deficit based questions.● Staff and parents want stability and the same high quality of care they are used to from children's centre staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● It can be really difficult to engage with parents on a meaningful level. Some coffee mornings have been successful but some are poorly attended.● Similarly parent forums have low attendance and many parents that come along also volunteer in the centre.● Staff have acted on parents requests to try and get some outdoor gym equipment or some bikes for families to hire at the weekend but it was rejected by the council. If parents don't see the impact of their contribution, it can feel disempowering.● Parents have a lot of things to say about the sessions that they value. They know what works well.● Where parent's forums are successful they have made a significant contribution to the success of the children's centre.
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Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Children’s centres should be much more proactive about investigating not just the needs of parents, but what skills and experiences they might contribute.● A first step might be designing an entry form that asks asset based questions.● They should also be much more creative in thinking about how these skills are deployed, designing programmes that might be run by parents based on their skills and experiences.● The council should offer formal accreditation to people who are involved in volunteering at children’s centres.● These ideas should form the foundation of a radical new approach to community engagement and participation across children’s centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● As well as using the skills of parents in the provision of services, children’s centres could be much better at involving parents in decision making and direction setting.● Existing parent’s forums should be repurposed and given new responsibility, as part of a broader commitment to new forms of community engagement and participation
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