

## **CFE Quality & Performance: Children's Centre Services Consultation Feedback**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Children's Centre Services Consultation Feedback</b>		
<b>Author (s)</b>	<b>Deborah Wallis</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deborah Mahon</b>
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### **1. Background**

- 1.1. There is a statutory duty to consult on any major changes to Children's Centre Services provision.
- 1.2. The proposed budget reduction for 2017/18 will require significant changes to the services available and therefore consultation was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and was open for 7 weeks until 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.
- 1.3. The consultation consisted of the following elements –
  - 1.3.1 a Survey Monkey questionnaire
  - 1.3.2 an opportunity to submit comments by post or to a dedicated email address
  - 1.3.3 providers asked to arrange discussion by their Governance Group (Advisory Board).
  - 1.3.4 a meeting with Healthwatch to discuss the proposals at their request.
- 1.4. The consultation was promoted via –
  - 1.4.1 posters supplied to all universal and targeted Children's Centre service providers for display in their venues.
  - 1.4.2 universal and targeted service providers promoted the consultation on their social media sites
  - 1.4.3 NCC web site and twitter feed, at the start of the consultation and with reminders after the Christmas holiday
  - 1.4.4 promotional information sent to partners such as Health Visitors and Midwives
- 1.5 The consultation document noted that we were not consulting about the proposed budget changes, but only about how changes associated with the proposed reduction could be managed. People who wished to comment on the budget change were directed to NCC's budget consultation which was running concurrently. This may have reduced the number of respondents to the consultation as compared with previous years but ensured that the feedback was appropriate.

### **2. Consultation responses**

- 2.1 495 people accessed the Survey Monkey. One person had submitted a response by email which has been incorporated. See section 4 for an analysis of who these people are.
- 2.2 Organisational responses were received from Healthwatch, Northamptonshire Breastfeeding Alliance and Action for Children.

### **3. Responses to consultation questions.**

#### **3.1. Question 1**

- 2.1.1 In order to access the Children's Centre targeted service, it is proposed that all families (with children aged under 5 years) will be referred through a simple referral process which includes completion of an Early Help Assessment or as a result of a 'step down' from Social Care. All agencies, including Health Visitors, can make referrals through the existing Early Help process.
- 2.1.2 52% of respondents agree or strongly agree that this is the right criteria to use to identify families who will be eligible for targeted children's centre services.
- 2.1.3 34% disagree or strongly disagree with these criteria. Responses to later free text questions suggest that people feel that these criteria would mean there would be no services for people with a low level of need and no universal services through which people in need of targeted support are identified. Concerns were also expressed about the Early Help Assessment and families who refuse to engage with this.

#### **2.2 Question 2**

- 2.2.1 Three areas of activity were described which have been identified as the focus of services delivered in the future.
- 2.2.2 75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that these three elements are the right range of targeted services.

#### **2.3 Question 3**

- 2.3.1 152 respondents have indicated other elements that they believe are essential and/or more important to consider as part of any future part of Children's Centre targeted services. These include –
  - support for those for whom English is the second language
  - support for mental health issues
  - breastfeeding support
  - universal services such as stay and play and messy play which reduce isolation and also build the relationships that will identify parents in need of early help
  - children with special needs and disabilities
  - young parents
  - healthy lifestyles
  - ante-natal groups

#### **2.4 Question 4**

- 2.4.1 It is proposed that all buildings currently designated as offering Children's Centre services, whether these be for universal or targeted activity, will be retained to deliver activities to families with a child under 5. Where possible NCC are considering co-locating other services and organisations in order to develop these locations further as community hubs as well as keeping them financially viable. This would mean other services would be available throughout the week from these venues.

2.4.2 The table shows the percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that each service/activity could benefit from being based at Children’s Centre buildings or using the venue to deliver activity to the local community.

		ranking
PCSO	65%	
Wellbeing advisors	89%	
Childcare	75%	
Paid for 0-5 services e.g. baby massage and baby yoga	72%	
Community / Parent run groups e.g. new mums group, breastfeeding support, parent and toddler groups	92%	
Youth provision / clubs	59%	
Housing information and support	80%	
Financial and employment information advice and support e.g. job clubs, debt advice, skills training	81%	
Health Visiting	94%	
Other health activity e.g. oral hygiene advice, occupational therapy, ante natal classes	88%	
Volunteer recruitment and development	60%	

This could suggest respondents desire for broadening service offer via any building to have an emphasis on 0-11 rather than 0-19 / 25 (SEN)

2.4.3 55 respondents offer additional comments. Whilst there was broad support expressed for the idea of co-located services, there was also some scepticism as to how the proposal would work and some suggestions that some of the listed services would be better located in libraries. There was also support noted for working in partnership with Nursery Schools and other good quality early years provision. Additional suggestions for co-located services were made including –

- adult learning
- counselling
- contact centre
- social workers
- Citizens Advice Service / Community Law
- Midwifery

## 2.5 Question 5

2.5.1 68% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the ideas and proposals indicated in the previous four questions are appropriate for the future delivery of targeted children’s centre services within the proposed budget.

## 2.6 Question 6

2.6.1 135 respondents offer additional comments which include –

- Support for the concept of a community hub which would include a wide range of services and avoid the stigmatisation of Children’s Centres being seen as a place for problem families.
- Strong support for the need for universal services within the community hub to support all families as well as provide a ‘way in’ to more targeted services

- Concern that by reducing the duplication of Children’s Centres supporting families also supported by Social Care, there would be increased pressure on Social Workers which would carry risks for that service.
- Promotion of the Home Start service
- Criticism of the changes that have already been made to Children’s Centres over the past years and much concern about the long term impact of further cuts to early intervention services

#### 4. Analysis of the respondents

4.1. 336 respondents gave their main reason for interest in the consultation as follows –

I am a current or prospective parent / carer of a child under 5.	38%
I am a parent / carer and I used Children’s Centre services when my children were younger.	10%
The work of the Children’s Centres impacts on the service in which I work.	34%
I have a role which involves representing the view of a particular group of people	5%
Other (this includes grandparents, childminders, volunteers, councillors and family support workers and a significant number of respondents who seem to describe themselves in ways which would meet the categories above)	13%

4.2. 369 respondents indicated which part of the county they were interested in as follows –

Corby	24%
Daventry	2%
East Northamptonshire	13%
Kettering	11%
South Northamptonshire	9%
Wellingborough	8%
Northampton Central (Spring Lane Children’s Centre and Far Cotton and Northampton Central Libraries)	9%
Northampton East (Abington, Blackthorn, Ecton Brook and Thorplands Children’s Centres)	9%
Northampton North (Kingsthorpe and Penfold Children’s Centres)	5%
Northampton West (Kings Heath and Upton Meadows Children’s Centres and Duston and Hunsbury Libraries)	9%

Staff operating in the Daventry area were contacted to highlight the low response rate and asked to ensure the consultation was promoted further.

4.3. 318 respondents were willing to give demographic monitoring details as follows –

- 4.3.1 95% of the respondents were female.
- 4.3.2 The majority of respondents were aged between 20 and 64, with 65% being between 30 and 49.
- 4.3.3 93% described themselves as heterosexual, with bi-sexual and gay women and men also represented.
- 4.3.4 98% described their gender identity as the same as assigned at birth.
- 4.3.5 64% were married with 20% describing themselves as co-habiting and 13% single.
- 4.3.6 14% were currently pregnant or have had a baby in the past six months.
- 4.3.7 8% described themselves as having a disability, with these being distributed as follows

Mental health	14
Physical disability	9
Hearing impairment	4
Learning disability	2
Sight impairment	7
Other	4

4.3.8 48% described themselves as being Christian with a further 45% having no religion. Other religions represented are Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Humanism and Paganism.

4.3.9 95% described themselves as being white, with 91% of those being English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish. Other groups represented are mixed white and Asian, Indian, Caribbean and African.

## 5. Summary

5.1 It can be noted that there is broad support for the proposals outlined in questions. However it is important that consideration be given to the following issues which have been raised throughout the free text questions.

- Strong support for universal services which provide support for all families and build parents confidence in the professionals, thus enabling identification of vulnerable families.
- Identification in answers to question 3 of a number of areas of essential activity over and above the three initially proposed
- Support for the idea of a 'community hub' with co-located services but with the proviso that it should include universal services in order to avoid stigmatisation
- Significant cuts have already been made to Children's Centre services and there are concerns that further cuts to early intervention services will have a long-term impact on vulnerable families and result in an increased need for higher levels of intervention.
- Concerns about the impact on the Social Care Service of Children's Centre service providers no longer working alongside them with Level 4 families.