

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 JUNE 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	CHILDREN'S CENTRE OFFER CONSULTATION RESPONSE AND FINAL PROPOSAL		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
SERVICE:	EARLY HELP SERVICES	WARDS:	ALL
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the consultation response from service users, partners, voluntary sector and the general public in regard to the Children's Centre Offer proposal that was set out in the 4 December 2016 ACE report.
- 1.2 This report builds on the proposal to achieve £400,000 savings as agreed at Policy Committee in July 2016.
- 1.3 The report details the Children's Centre Offer going forward taking into account the savings targets, in light of feedback and consultation results.
- 1.4 For the purpose of this report Children's Centre Offer relates to children under 5 years old and their families. The number of children under 5 years in Reading is 12571.
- 1.5 In the attached Appendix A there is:
 - Summary of the consultation responses
 - Equalities impact Assessment.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To agree the proposed changes to the Children's Centre Service Offer as outlined in Section 5 of this report.
- 2.2 To establish four fully integrated Children and Family Centre hubs and satellite delivery points.

- 2.3 To fully integrate the Health Visiting Service into the Children's Centre Offer to maintain universal contacts with young children.
- 2.4 To strengthen the partnership with RBH Maternity Community Services and support vulnerable pregnant women and unborn children.
- 2.5 To provide a targeted support offer to young children and their families in the town that ensures key outcomes for young children and their families are met as outlined in Section 5 of this report.
- 2.6 To build on the partnerships with Reading's Voluntary Sector to provide a wide range of universal activities and support for young children with undiagnosed/emerging needs.
- 2.7 That ACE committee receive a progress report in Summer 2018 on the establishment of an integrated children's centre and health visiting offer.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 As a result of a reduction in Government funding, Reading Borough Council estimates it now needs to save £51 million over the next three years. As part of a package of proposals to close this funding gap; the Council has planned to reduce spend by £1.5 million from Reading Borough Council's Early Help Service Offer. Included in the savings proposal are some direct management action as well as altering aspects of our offer to local families, children and young people.
- 3.2 The Childcare Act (2006) is the main legislation that continues to direct the Children's Centre programmes across England. A summary of this legislation places these duties on all Local Authorities and their key partners:
 - To improve the well-being of young children (0-5) in their area and reduce inequalities between them;
 - To secure that early childhood services in their area are provided in an integrated (particularly with Health and JobCentre Plus services) manner in order to facilitate access and maximise the benefits of those services to young children and their parents;
 - To ensure there are sufficient Children's Centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need, that includes an advisory board;
 - To ensure there is consultation before any significant changes are made to Children's Centre provision in their area.
- 3.3 More recently an all Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres (July 2016) recommends that the Government's Life Chances Strategy should be implemented and delivered through Children's Centres. The four pillars of service offer that have been recommended by this Parliamentary Group should be:
 - Health and Development;
 - Employment support and childcare;
 - Relationship support; and
 - Supporting families with Complex Needs.

- 3.4 It is recommended by officers that Reading Children's Centres embrace the All Party Parliamentary Group recommendations as the pillars or core outcomes to base the remodelling of the Children's Centre Offer.
- 3.5 Currently the Directorate is refreshing the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, to be completed July 2017. This will provide a clear direction and focus of the work of our own and partners Early Help Offer in Reading. The new strategy will be focused on the following areas:
- Secure ways to manage demand at all points of contact with families - built on a refreshed systems wide approach to Early Intervention and Prevention (a new model of EI&P integrated delivery);
 - Ensure clarity on all our roles, responsibilities and associated pathways to support children and families as early as possible, ensuring there is a stronger understanding and applications of thresholds;
 - Target resources to be as preventative as possible across the partnerships and agencies; and
 - Fully understand and develop the range of partnership offer in place that is preventative in intent.
- 3.5 Therefore the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention offer will continue to provide support to families in Reading but this needs to be a partnership led model of delivery. In particular, working and challenging partners to increase the Voluntary Sector and Health sector input to provision whilst Reading Borough Council moves to targeting its resources to meet vulnerable children's needs in the early years as a priority.
- 3.6 The Council must also ensure that entitled 2 year olds use their education offer and that the Borough is able to meet the increased 3 year old entitlement for eligible families to assist parents to prepare for work.

4A CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO CHILDREN'S CENTRE OFFER PROPOSALS

- 4a.1 On 4 December 2016, ACE Committee agreed to a public consultation on a range of proposals to alter the Children's Centre Offer to young children and their families in Reading. These proposals are driven both by the need to re-organise our service offer to ensure that we are targeting our reducing resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable as well as contribute to the overall Council budgetary savings targets.
- 4a.2 The Education, Children's Service and Early Help Directorate organised a public consultation which ran from 4 January 2017 to 29 March 2017. Throughout the period the consultation document was available on the RBC website and a paper copy distributed in Children's Centres, libraries and community centres. Tablets were also available in each Children's Centre cluster to enable completion of the survey. The consultation document was circulated to all Reading Schools and Early Years Childcare settings, partners and RCVYS for distribution to the voluntary sector. It was displayed on digital screens in GP surgeries and the Civic reception, promoted through Children's Centre websites and social media. In addition to this, it was presented to an Early Years Providers Forum. Five public consultation events were held in the five Children's Centre clusters, two feedback events held with the voluntary sector to facilitate discussion and open feedback on the proposals and presented at an Early Years Providers Forum.

4a.3 Responses received were:

- 235 responses to the online survey.
- 131 people attended the five meetings held in the Children's Centres.
- 4 responses were received from stakeholder groups.
- 12 email responses were received.
- 734 signatures from 2 petitions.
- 14 representatives from the voluntary sector attended two meetings held.

4a.4 A full outline of the responses received is in attached Appendix A.

4a.5 There were 400 responses received in total, with 39.6% of those with an RG4 postcode living in the North Reading/Caversham area. The majority of the respondents were female and aged between 25-34 years old. 42.6% had children under 2 years old and described themselves as service users (60.4%). The majority of respondents described themselves as White-British (66.8%).

4a.6 There was an acknowledgement through the consultation feedback that Reading Borough Council was obliged to undertake this action due to national Government reduction in local authority funding. Although the vast majority of respondents did not agree with cutting universal provision; there was general agreement from both the public meetings and stakeholder responses that the reduced resources available to the Children's Centre should be directed at the most vulnerable families through offering a more targeted service.

4a.7 The number and location of hubs received a high number of negative responses specifically regarding the hub locations and mainly from residents living north of the river including the petition submitted from North Reading parents. The location of the hub at Sun Street received the majority of comments - 41% of respondents citing unfair distribution across Reading with no hub in North Reading, the distance to travel to a hub and accessibility for families. 30% of responses attended centres that are proposed to close and expressed concern about the lack of future support and the value they place on the Children's Centre Service.

4a.8 91.5% of respondents considered that "mainly targeted support" would have a negative impact on those families that would not meet thresholds for that service. These views were echoed in all five of the consultation meetings. Responses raised concern that early identification of vulnerability and need for help would be missed for many families and there could be an escalation of social isolation and mental health and well-being issues. Under the new model families could feel stigmatised and not access centres leading to leading to underused services. Many stated that most new parents were vulnerable and in need of support.

4a.9 There was a higher level of agreement to the proposal to realign the offer to focus on children pre-birth-3 years with 44.7% of respondents agreeing with the proposed change. However, concern was raised about children over three years old with additional needs.

4a.10 There was a wide array of views expressed as to minimising the negative impact of the proposals with more than half the responses making some suggestions. These included efficiencies to the service, co delivery, income generation/charging and clear communication of changes.

- 4a.11 There was a selection of ideas for the wider Council to deliver savings including rental of buildings, sharing services, charging/donations. These suggestions will be shared with colleagues across services.
- 4a.12 All the responses to the consultation were taken into consideration and analysed to help shape and refine the future Children's Centre Offer for Reading families.

4b SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM RBC TO CONSULTATION

4b.1 The main issues raised through the consultation related to:

- number and location of proposed hubs;
- loss of universal services/focus on targeted support ;
- realigning the Children's Centre Offer to focus on pre-birth to three years; and
- the negative impact of the proposal.

Hubs and buildings

4b.2 In response to the many negative comments regarding developing Sun Street as the hub for East and North Reading, the Caversham Children's Centre building will feature heavily in the Children's Centre Offer with universal Maternity and Health services being delivered from this site. The Lilypads Activity Group run by the voluntary sector will also continue from this site. The Katesgrove building will be available for community use and accommodate such groups as The Twins Support Group. The needs of families are not static and often fluctuate over time and the needs of families within areas are also varied. It is therefore essential that the Children's Centre Offer is developed to respond to these needs in a more flexible way rather than being confined to a particular building. Children's Centre services will be delivered from a variety of sites across Reading and not just from each hub building.

Loss of universal services

4b.3 We have taken account of the high levels of concern in the consultation responses with the proposal for Children's Centre Offer to move to a mainly targeted support. Many respondents considered there would be a negative impact felt in particular by new parents. Therefore RBC will include an open access service for new parents and babies in the Children's Centre Offer. It should also be noted that the Health Visitors will provide a universal service and the voluntary sector have expressed interest in being more involved in a universal 0-3 offer for Reading families.

0-3year old Offer

4b.4 There was general support for the proposal to move to a pre-birth to three year focus that will be adopted within the new Children's Centre Offer.

Mitigation of the potential negative impact of the proposal

4b.5 The suggestions made to mitigate the negative impact of the proposals have been considered with some of these already implemented such as collaborating with health and maternity services, voluntary groups, libraries and sharing space in community centres. There is a commitment for Children's Centres to support the

voluntary sector to deliver universal services from the Children's Centre buildings, where appropriate.

Summary

- 4b.6 Officers have searched for alternative ways of savings money but no viable alternatives in the consultation process have been identified and so to save £400k from the Children's Centre Offer continues to be the proposal. As a consequence there will be significant service and staffing implications.
- 4b.7 33 family activity groups run by the Children's Centre will cease from September 2017.
- 4b.8 There will a reduction in Children's Centre posts of 33% from 32.8fte to 22fte resulting in redundancies from the workforce.

5 READING BOROUGH COUNCIL RECOMMENDED FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY - CHILDREN'S CENTRE OFFER

- 5.1 Reading Borough Council has listened to the views expressed through the public consultation. The proposed delivery model is predicated on offering families a more targeted and responsive Early Help service, within the current financial constraints.

Priority Outcomes

- 5.2 RBC will prioritise the retained Children's Centre Offer resource on meeting the needs and specific outcomes for vulnerable young children pre-birth to under three years and their families. The priority outcomes are confirmed as follows:
 - Children have strong social skills;
 - Children are safe and have family routines and boundaries;
 - Children are healthy - physical and emotional well-being;
 - Parents' physical health and emotional well-being support children to thrive;
 - Positive family relationships and attachment enable children to become relatively independent in their personal care; and
 - Reduce child poverty and prevent homelessness.

Hub and Satellite model

- 5.3 The Council will establish four fully integrated Children and Family Centre hubs in the areas of highest need that will deliver the core Children's Centre Offer and provide space for additional family services. The hubs will be Ranikhet Children's Centre, Southcote Children's Centre, Sun Street Children's Centre and Whitley Children's Centre. The hubs will reach into their local communities across Reading and use satellite buildings to accommodate staff as well as deliver some of the Children's Centre Offer. The Health Visiting Service will be fully integrated within the Children's Centre Offer to ensure all children under 5 years have universal mandated contacts to enable early identification of additional needs and secure positive health outcomes. It is our intention Health Visitors will be sited in Children's Centre hubs or satellite buildings along with Midwifery Services to provide seamless and accessible services for families.

Satellite Buildings and Community space

- 5.4 Satellite buildings will be situated at Caversham Children's Centre, Battle Library and Coley Children's Centre. There will be access to universal Health services and targeted support activities available from these buildings. Current groups run by the voluntary sector will continue to deliver from these sites - an example being the Lilypads groups at Caversham Children's Centre.

Co-Production of Universal Service Offer

- 5.5 The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide universal services directly. Although it would not choose to remove these services it has taken the view that given the reduced resources available, targeted group and one to one support should be the priority for future spending in this area. The Children's Centre Offer will, however, include a universal provision for supporting babies and new parents. A review of Health Clinics will be undertaken with Health partners in order to continue to provide universal new parent provision.
- 5.6 There are a high number of existing toddler activity groups available for families with children under 5 years old in Reading and as such the Children's Centres will cease their universal programmes from September 2017 for children over one year old. RBC will work with partners/agencies/faith groups and the community to explore and develop a model of co-production and provision in our buildings. Initial discussions have been held with the voluntary sector to explore collaboration to continue as much of this provision within our buildings as possible. Further meetings will be held in July with interested stakeholders to further shape a model of co-production on a cluster by cluster basis.

Improved Information and Communication

- 5.7 As a direct response to consultation feedback, there is a need for a robust digital plan to provide families with up to date and easy to navigate on-line signposting support. The Children's Centres will ensure that information is made available on the wide range of services on offer through the Family Information Service. In response to the request for clear and easy communication made in the consultation the development of a social network application will be explored in order to provide an accessible source of information and menu of services for parents. Through this information we are confident the majority of families will be able to access the wide range of local provision to meet our sufficiency duty.

Right service for the right children and families

- 5.8 The Children's Centre Offer will focus on three tiers of support tailored to the needs of families and a specialist service for children with additional needs. Interventions will occur at the earliest stage possible to identified families to prevent escalation to more intense high cost services.
- 5.9 In response to the concerns raised in the consultation regarding missing the early identification of need and vulnerability of families the Children's Centres will support the voluntary sector to access referral pathways into Early Help for families. In order to meet these needs and outcomes, RBC will therefore:
- Ensure that Children's Centre workers continue to take case work from the Early Help pathway and maternity referrals. One to one support as well as work in

groups will continue to be used with these targeted young children and their families.

- Support vulnerable pregnant women and unborn children.
- Support new parents and young babies through an open access provision.
- Support children with undiagnosed/emerging additional needs.
- Enable eligible 2 year old children to access the early education offer.
- Provide adult education classes with a dedicated crèche.
- Deliver evidence based parenting courses.
- Support vulnerable children to be ready for nursery.

6 NEXT STEPS

6.1 If the recommendations in this report are agreed:

- This will result in staff redundancies and therefore a 45 day staff consultation will be launched from 12 June 2017 until 26 July 2017.
- We will provide public information on the consultation responses and the new Children's Centre Offer by 12 June 2017.
- The phased implementation of maternity community services in Sun Street, Ranikhet and Caversham buildings by September 2017 and Whitley Children's Centre by early 2018.
- Work with Health Visiting Service to ensure a smooth transition into a fully integrated Children's Centre Offer. Our intention is to base Health Visiting staff in Sun Street and Caversham from September 2017 and from Whitley in early 2018 and Ranikhet from 2019.
- Meetings will be held in July 2017 with the voluntary sector to develop a model of co-production for universal services.
- All information and signposting relevant to the Children's Centre Offer will be rationalised and collated into a clear communication package will be developed by July 2017 and implemented from September 2017.
- Co-location of Southcote library into the Community Centre by Spring 2018.
- Relocation of Whitley Children's Centre into the Youth centre building Spring 2018.

7 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

7.1 This report and its content is an important contribution to these Local Authorities corporate priorities:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
- Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living;
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities;

7.2 The decisions request here contributes to the Council's strategic aim to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all by ensuring that public money is being targeted on achieving key outcomes for the most vulnerable in the Borough.

8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 8.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 8.2 This report outlines our consultation process that was committed to at the 6 December 2016 ACE Committee to meet our statutory consultation duty to involve the public.
- 8.3 Responses to the consultation will be made available to the public along with the details of the Children's Centre remodelled Offer.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 9.2 Officers have updated the previously shared Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in the 6 December 2016 ACE Committee report.
- 9.3 There were negative impacts identified through the public consultation which have been mitigated through changes made to the previous proposal that will include a universal provision for children under 1 year and their families.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS -

- 10.1 The legislative requirements which underpin the arrangements for the provision of early childhood services (including Children's Centres) by local authorities, are set out in Part 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 - 'The improvement of young children's well-being'. A summary of the key provisions appears at Para. 3.2 above.
- 10.2 In order to assist young children and their families to access services, the local authority will need to provide a comprehensive, accurate and accessible information service for families regarding existing local provision.
- 10.3 Currently Reading Borough Council meets this duty with the online directory, named the Reading Service Guide, with specific services for children under 5 years and their families.
<http://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/youth.page?youthchannel=0>

11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 When both financial years savings (of £400k) are taken out of the current overall spend our budget amount reduces to £868,000 of Council spend on the Children's Centre Offer.

11.2 The figures below are therefore an outline of spend from the start of 18/19 with full effect of savings having been reached.

Financial Year	Reduction in budget	Total RBC spend on Children's Centres
17/18	100,000	1,168,000
18/19	300,000	868,000

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None

APPENDIX A

Children's Centre Consultation Responses

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Introduction

Cuts to local government funding and increased demands on services mean that the Council must make a further £40million of savings by 2020. Of these savings, £400,000 must be met from the Children's Centres budget. It is proposed that the total amount would be saved by implementing the remodelled Children's Centre service. A summary of how the Children's Centre service will be remodelled under this proposal is to:

- Establish 4 fully integrated *Children and Family Centre* hubs. These will be in areas of highest need to deliver the core Children's Centre Offer and to provide space for the provision of additional family services;
- Deliver some services or activities from satellite buildings;
- Fully integrate Reading's Health Visiting Service within the remodelled offer to ensure all children under 5 have universal contacts and early identification of additional needs;
- For families in need of support, re-focus the work on targeted support in group and 1:1 sessions for families;
- Realign the Children's Centre Offer to focus on pre-birth to three years old; and
- Reduce the current spend by £400k by start of the financial year 18/19.

(See <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6486/Item16/pdf/Item16.pdf> for further details).

The Council asked for the views of service users, members of the public and stakeholders on the proposed remodelling of Children's Centres. This report shows the results of the public consultation, and gives a brief summary of meetings, responses, petitions and questions on this proposal.

Methodology

The public consultation was conducted from 4 January 2017 - 29 March 2017. The online survey consisted of five questions and was available on the RBC website. Links were provided on each Children's Centre website and Facebook. Information on the consultation was placed in school bulletins to encourage response. Five events were held at the following Children Centre's:

Southcote Children's Centre	24 January 2017
Ranikhet Children's Centre	10 February 2017
Surestart Whitley Children's Centre	16 February 2017
Caversham Children's Centre	20 February 2017
Katesgrove Children's Centre	1 March 2017

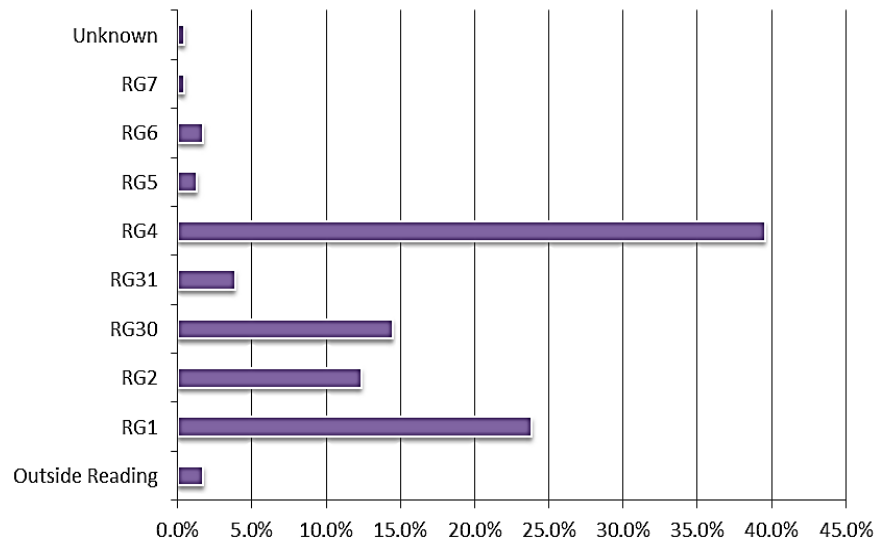
Access to tablets was made available at each Children's Centre Cluster to encourage people to fill in the online survey. Paper copies of forms were also provided.

Two meetings were held with voluntary organisations and the consultation was shared at an Early Years Provider’s Forum. The Council received two petitions, 12 emails and four stakeholder letters regarding the proposal.

Demography of online survey respondents

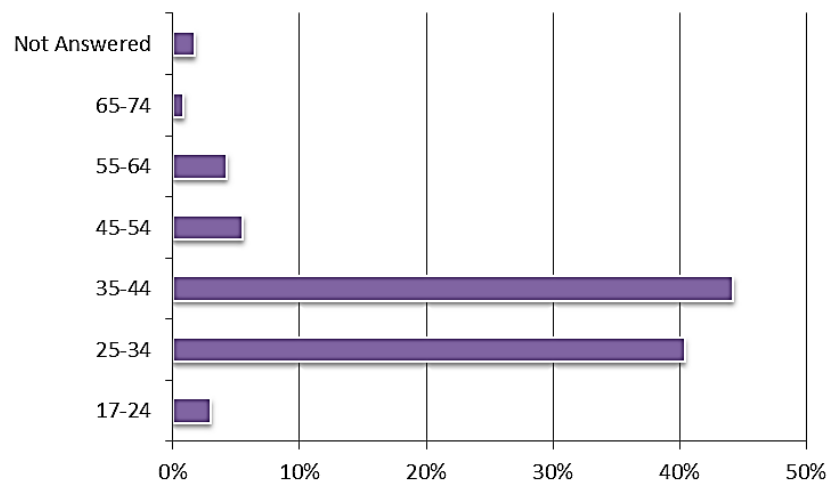
235 people responded to the online survey. 98% had Reading postcodes. Most respondents had an RG4 postcode.

Postcode	Percentage
Outside Reading	1.7%
RG1	23.8%
RG2	12.3%
RG30	14.5%
RG31	3.8%
RG4	39.6%
RG5	1.3%
RG6	1.7%
RG7	0.4%
Unknown	0.4%



88.9% of respondents were female, 7.7% were male and 3.4% did not answer. Most were aged 25-44 years.

Age range	Percentage
17-24	3.0%
25-34	40.4%
35-44	44.3%
45-54	5.5%
55-64	4.3%
65-74	0.9%
Not Answered	1.7%



When asked about a disability, long-term illness or a health problem: 3.8% said yes, 93.6% said no and 2.6% did not answer.

When asked about sexual orientation, 0.4% were bisexual, 0.9% were gay or lesbian, 83.4% were heterosexual, 0.9% were other, 9.8% preferred not to say, and 4.7% did not answer.

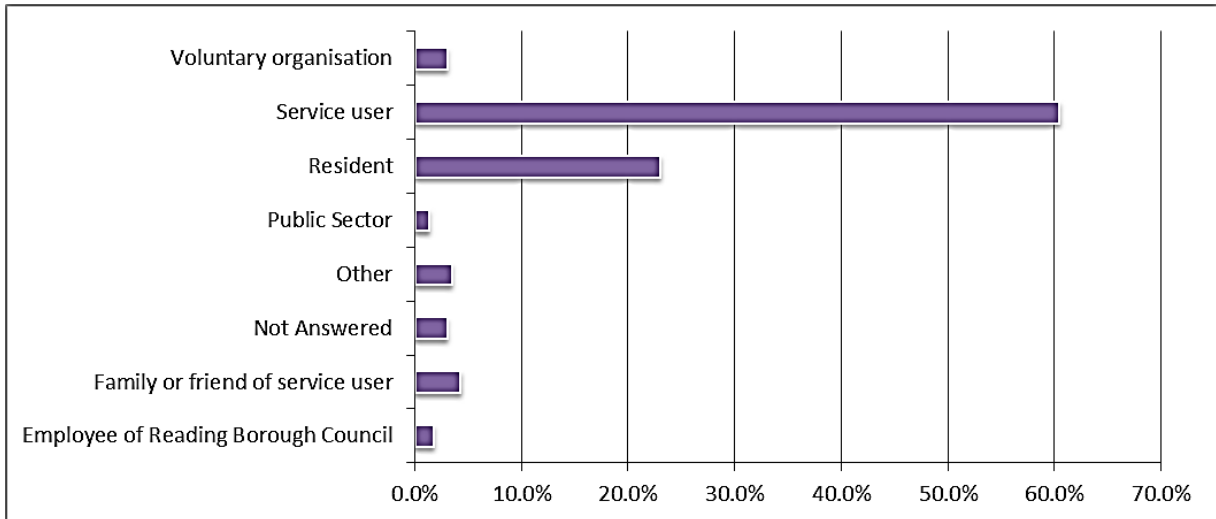
When asked about their religion, 40% were Christian, 3% were Hindu, 0.4% were Jewish, 2.6% were Muslim, 35.3% have no religion, 2.1% were other, 11.5% preferred not to say and 5.1% did not answer.

The percentages of ethnic groups of respondents are as follows:

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background	1.3%
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	1.3%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3.8%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1.7%
Black or Black British - African	0.4%
Black or Black British - Any other black background	0.4%
Don't know	0.4%
Mixed - Any other Mixed background	1.3%
Mixed - White & Asian	0.4%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0.4%
Not Answered	3.0%
Prefer not to say	6.4%
White - Any other White background	0.9%
White - Any other White background	9.8%
White - British	66.8%
White - Irish	1.7%

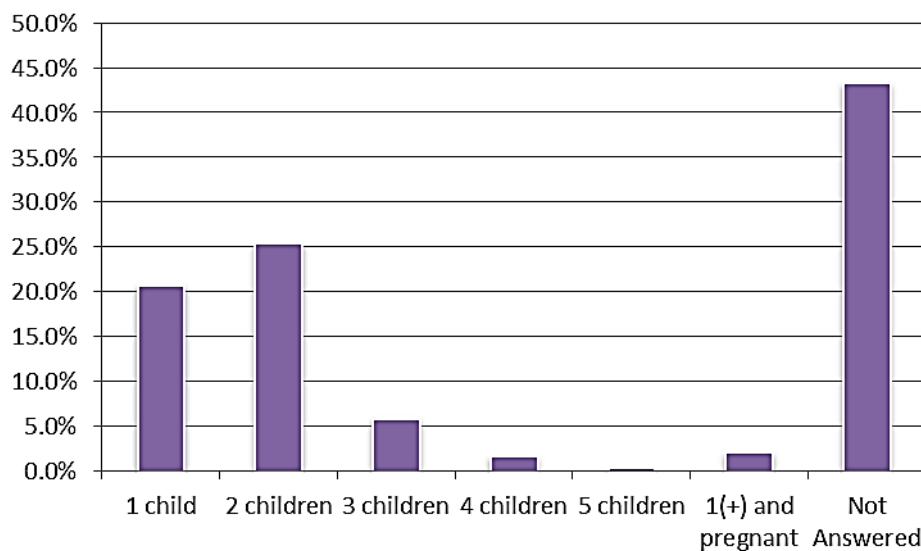
Most respondents described themselves as service users at 60.4%:

<u>Type of respondent</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Employee of Reading Borough Council	1.7%
Family or friend of service user	4.3%
Not Answered	3.0%
Other	3.4%
Public Sector	1.3%
Resident	23.0%
Service user	60.4%
Voluntary organisation	3.0%



Most had 1-2 children, and most of the children were at an age range of 0-2 years old.

	Percentage of respondents with children per age range	Number of children	Percentage
No Children	3.4%	1 child	20.9%
Children aged 0-2 years old	42.6%	2 children	25.5%
Children aged 2-3 years old	17.4%	3 children	6.0%
Children aged 3-5 years old	20.4%	4 children	1.7%
Children aged over 5 years old	18.3%	5 children	0.4%
		1(+) and pregnant	2.1%
		Not Answered	43.4%



Online survey responses

The online survey consisted of five questions:

Q1: Do you have any comments on the number and location of the proposed Children's Centre hubs?

Out of 235 respondents:

- 93.6% gave comments
- 3.4% responded 'No'
- 3% gave no comment

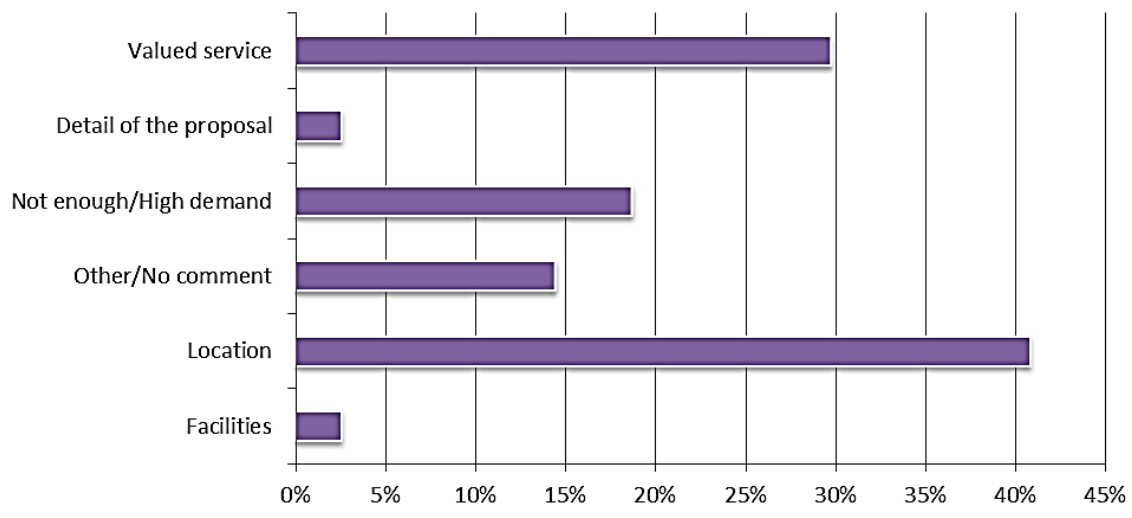
In response to the proposed number and location of Children's Centre hubs:

- 4.7% agreed
- 83.4% disagreed
- 11.9% made other or no comments

Percentages on the types of concerns are as follows:

<u>Raised concern(s)</u>	<u>Example Comments</u>
Some gave more than one response	
Location (41%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hubs nearby respondents that are proposed to close• The unfair distribution of proposed hubs around Reading (particularly North Reading)• Difficulties of being able to travel to the nearest proposed hub
Facilities (3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sun Street was not considered the best hub based on facilities
Valued service (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service users regularly attend hubs that are proposed to close• The benefits and value of the service, especially for those who are isolated, suffer from mental health, need social interaction etc• Concerns that there may be a lack of support in the future for users• Hubs being an important part of the community
Detail of the proposal (3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsure of the detail of the proposal• Lack of clarity of the proposal
Not enough/high demand (19%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed amount of hubs are not enough for demand• Concerns that there may be an increasing demand in the future
Other/no comment (14%)	

Raised concerns on the number and location of the proposed Children's Centre hubs



Q2: It is proposed to mainly offer targeted support. What impact do you think this proposal would have?

Out of 235 respondents:

- 97% gave comments
- 0.1% responded 'No'
- 2.6% gave no comment

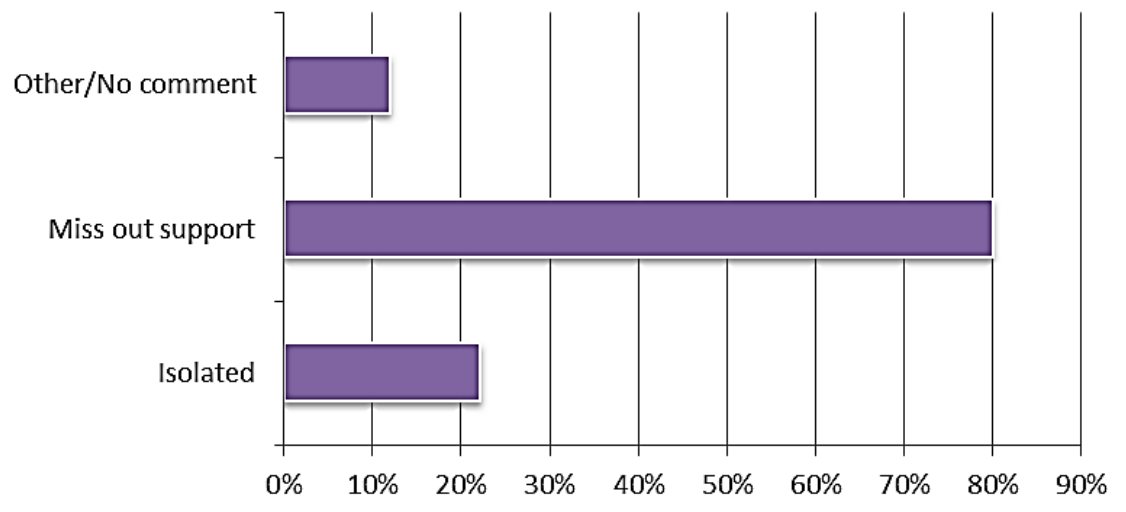
In response to the impact in mainly offering targeted support in this proposal:

- 3.8% commented on the positive impact of offering targeted support
- 91.5% commented on the negative impact on those who would not be eligible for targeted support
- 4.7% gave other or no comments

Percentages on the type of negative impact are as follows:

<u>Negative impact(s)</u> Some gave more than one response	<u>Example Comments</u>
Isolation (22%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That those who may not be eligible for targeted support may be isolated as they may not be able to access the service • This having an impact on mental health for those who rely on the service but may not be able to access them anymore
Miss out support (80%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns for those that are not eligible under the targeted approach, particularly those that are vulnerable (e.g. have additional needs, safeguarding, domestic abuse) • The long-term effect of children who won't be able to access these services • A stigma that may be attached with the targeted approach, leading to less usage
Other/No comment (12%)	

Negative impact responses on mainly offering targeted support



Q3: It is proposed the Children’s Centre offer focuses on pre-birth to three years old. Do you have any comments?

Out of 235 respondents:

- 80.9% gave comments
- 6.8% responded ‘No’
- 12.3% gave no comment

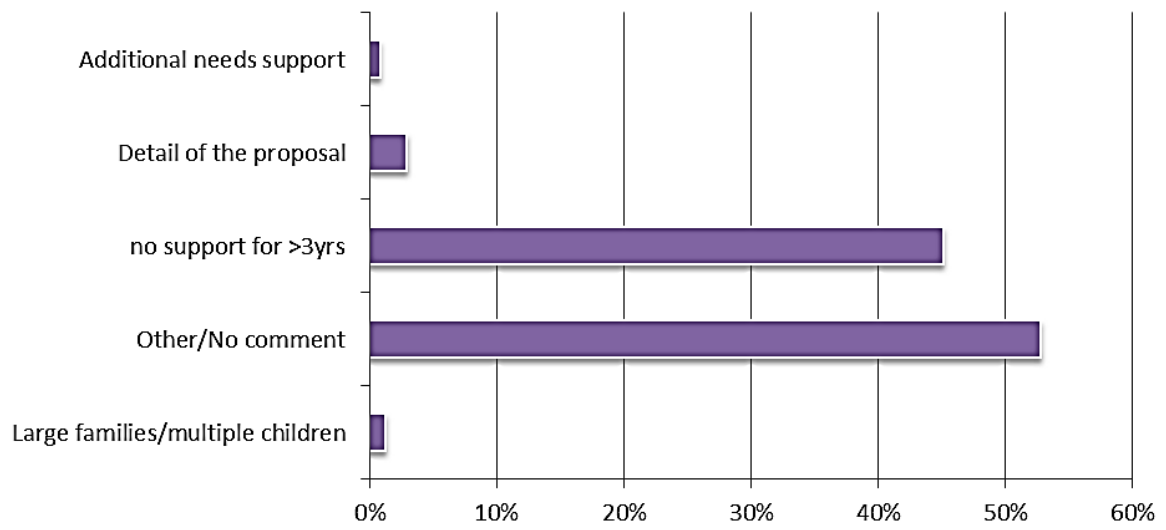
In response to a proposed focus on pre-birth to three year old children:

- 44.7% agreed
- 31.9% disagreed
- 23.4% made other or no comments

Percentages on the types of concerns are as follows:

<u>Raised concern(s)</u> Some gave more than one response	<u>Example comments</u>
Large families/Multiple children (1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with large families who may have children that are eligible or not eligible to access services
Miss out support for children >3yrs (45%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite acknowledgement of a targeted approach in helping the most vulnerable, there were concerns that support will not include children over 3 years old • Reconsider the focus to include children up to school age • Consider alternative services that could be used by children outside this proposed age range
Miss out support for children with additional needs (1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the proposal and access to hubs for children with additional needs
Detail of the proposal (3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity/detail of certain aspects of the proposal
Other/No comment (53%)	

Raised concerns on a proposed focus on pre-birth to three year old children



Q4: What else could be done to minimise any negative impacts of this proposal, if adopted?

Out of 235 respondents:

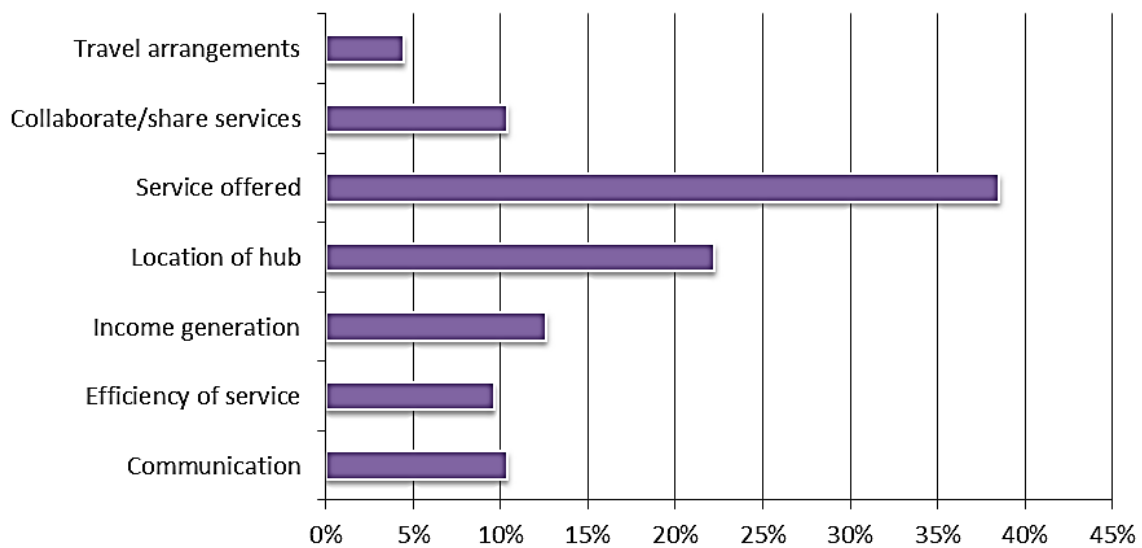
- 84.7% gave comments
- 15.3% gave no comment
-

Responses to ways of minimising the negative impact were as follows:

- Cannot say (4%)
- Other/No comment (17%)
- Accept proposal (1%)
- Don't change the service/don't implement proposal (20%)
- Comments on minimising impact (57%) (see table below)

<u>Comment (s) on minimising impact</u> Some gave more than one response	<u>Example comments</u>
Location of hub (22%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider the location of hubs
Efficiency of service (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers, voluntary groups • Parent-led groups • Reduce opening hours • Funding from charities or local business
Communication (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep families well informed of the changes • Provide details of alternative services that can be accessed for those who are not eligible under the proposed targeted approach
Collaborate/Share services (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate/share services with libraries, GPs, CAHMS, schools, community centres, neighbouring local authorities
Income generation (13%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charge/pay a fee • Donations • Rent space/building
Travel arrangements (4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation to the proposed hubs • Consider parking spaces in hubs with limited space
Service offered (39%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative services for children outside the proposed targeted approach • Reconsider targeted approach • Reconsider the proposed services that will be offered

Comments on minimising impact of the proposal



Q5: Do you have any other ideas of how the Council might deliver savings?

Out of 235 respondents:

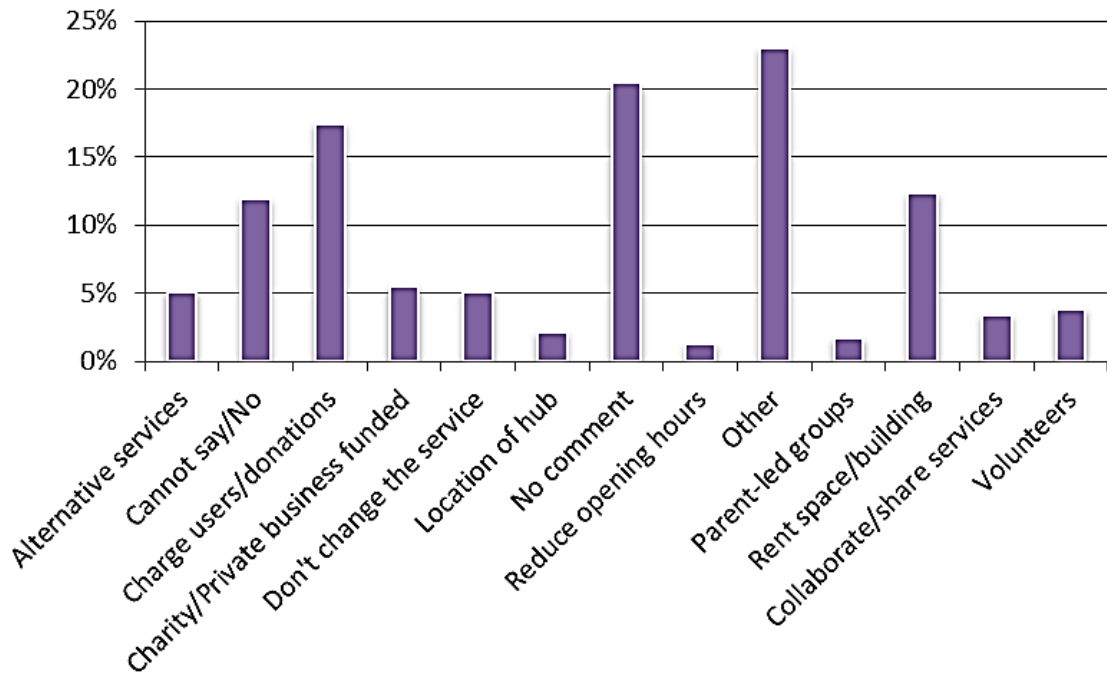
- 71.9% gave comments
- 7.2% responded 'No'
- 20.9% gave no comment

Ideas that were suggested were*:

- **Location of hub (2%):** Reconsider the location of hubs
- **Volunteers (4%):** Volunteers, voluntary groups
- **Parent-led groups (2%)**
- **Reduce opening hours (1%)**
- **Collaborate/Share services (3%):** Collaborate/share services with libraries, GPs, CAHMS, schools, community centres
- **Charge users/Donations (17%)**
- **Charity/Private business funded (6%)**
- **Rent space/building (12%)**
- **Alternative services (5%):** Alternative services for children outside the proposed targeted approach
- **Other (23%)**
- **Cannot say/No (12%)**
- **Don't change the service (5%)**
- **No comment (20%)**

* Some gave more than one response

Ideas on delivering savings



Consultation events

Feedback from the events that were held in conjunction with the online survey was as follows:

Katesgrove (East Cluster)

Held on 1 March 2017, this event was attended by 40 parents, one local resident, two voluntary groups and one Councillor. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Gavin.

- There was a consensus by parents that support provided to parents in the first year of their child's life is critical to providing support to new parents as well as identifying those parents with Post-natal Depression or Additional needs. This is done in an open and non-judgemental way through new parents groups. Parents were not convinced this would be supported as effectively through the universal health visiting service unless it was radically improved. It was suggested that health visitors would need to be better equipped with knowledge of support available and better at promoting and signposting services.
- Parents valued the universal services and the high skill level of the Children's Centre staff.
- Many spoke about enjoying the centre environment being welcoming, clean and inviting for parents and small children. The point was made that sharing resources with other organisations could mean toys are not cared for and become broken and dirty. The twins groups mentioned this as a major issue for their group as the environment plays a big part in their success in attracting local parents of multiple births to Katesgrove, as well as having supportive staff on site.
- Questions were raised on the necessity of moving the hub to Sun Street, concluding that they would not access services due to the distance.
- There was discussion about the possibility of local residents and parents continuing universal groups with some help from Children's Centre staff. This would ensure there were activities for young children and parents. It was noted this would require organising, training and commitment. A parent pointed out the changeover would be high as parents went back to work after maternity leave and as their children grow their focus moves with them.
- The strength of feeling was the proposal would be detrimental to babies and young children's development and that future problems could arise once children got to school which would be costlier and more impact on public services.

Caversham (North Cluster)

Held on 20 February 2017, this event was attended by 38 parents, one local resident, one head teacher, and one representative from a voluntary organisation. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Gavin.

- Discussion about the value was placed on universal services. There was a consensus that universal services are vital in identifying issues for families and preventing escalation to higher cost services.
- The group agreed that the most vulnerable families needed support however, the point was made by several individuals that although North Reading is more affluent compared to other areas of Reading there is hidden need. Social isolation and mental health issues were discussed and the support Children's Centres provide that parents can attend without judgement or stigma. They also said that staff were approachable and skilled at recognising family issues facilitating help for especially new parents.
- There were several parents who suggested parents could volunteer and run some groups although other parents highlighted the difficulty of training, reliability, skills and availability of parents with young children. This discussion expanded to include possible links with private business and the possibility of attracting sponsors as in some local primary schools to maintain services.
- Parents objected to having to travel to Sun Street which would be their hub. It was explained that Caversham would be a satellite building with maternity, health and some targeted provision under the proposal.
- Discussion was held about the communication of services and how this could be improved through the use of Apps, FIS and Facebook so that parents had one place to find out information and groups that were running.
- It was pointed out that currently many toddler groups in the area have a strict entry policy where they have to book spaces or queue to access. They considered that if the Children's Centre groups closed this would put even more pressure on the voluntary groups, and most vulnerable families could miss out.

Ranikhet (West Cluster)

Held on 10 February 2017, this event was attended by 14 parents and one childminder. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Gavin.

- Parents were supportive of children's centres in general, specifically the universal provision. They spoke of individual situations where the centres have been a vital link for new parents and parents who may have more than one child. Activity groups allow children to experience a wide range of activities that they may not get at home such as messy play, cooking, and physical activity.
- Some parents felt if the proposals were to go ahead then families that are not typically vulnerable and did not meet thresholds would be excluded.
- Although the Health Visiting Service is universal they did not consider this would provide opportunity and support that the Children's Centres currently do.
- There was a suggestion for parents to pay for services either on an attendance basis or an annual subscription. This could be as a registration fee or voluntary contribution. They considered this would be preferable to using voluntary groups as it would maintain the expertise of the Children's Centre staff.
- They highlighted that the support Children's Centre provide around perinatal mental health, and the benefit of running the bumps and babes groups to ensure vulnerable parents were identified and supported/signposted to the right help. It was suggested that for many parents just accessing the group when a new baby is very small is enough to stop escalation of need and social isolation which can lead to increased mental health issues.
- Parents valued the universal services and the high skill level of the Children's Centre staff.
- One parent spoke of the centre being a lifesaver for her as a parent with two children under two years old and she was unsure how she would have coped without the services.

Southcote (West Central Cluster)

Held on 24 January 2017, this event was attended by 6 parents, two professionals from Health Visiting Service and South Reading CCG, two members of staff, one representative from a community group.

- There was a consensus that universal services are vital in identifying issues for families and preventing escalation to higher cost services.
- There was also acknowledgement that the most vulnerable families needed to receive support.
- Parents spoke about the experiences of mental health and how they found the Children's Centre to be supportive and invaluable in both helping the individual to recognise symptoms, seek help and offer support. They expressed that without universal groups this would go unnoticed and therefore untreated causing potentially more serious issues at a later stage.
- There was little enthusiasm for voluntary sector groups as the opinion was they would not have the expertise of the Children's Centre staff to offer advice or signpost to relevant services.
- References were made to the consultation paper of the APPG recommendations to Department for Education when these had not been adopted to date.

Surestart Whitley (South Cluster)

Held on 16 February 2017, this event was attended by 19 parents and a chair of the Children's Centre Advisory Board. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Gavin.

- Parents felt that support for keeping universal services was important for young children in building the skills for school and nursery. Parents also spoke of the opportunities for families that are new to the area to meet other parents and prevent social isolation.
- It was understood and agreed that targeting the most vulnerable families was a high priority for Children's Centres.
- There was discussion about the value placed on universal services, with a consensus that universal services are vital in identifying issues for families and preventing escalation to higher cost to services in the long term.
- Concerns were raised on the identification of vulnerable families without family groups. This may include cases of post-natal depression for new mums.
- There was a high regard for children centre services, with examples of the good support given to families. It was also acknowledged that the staff running the groups are experienced and skilled and parents would approach with any problems.
- Families enjoy coming to groups and their children interacting with other children. Any changes to services should be well advertised so families don't get confused about who can attend.

Stakeholder's responses

Four letters were received from the stakeholders with the following comments:

North & West Reading and South Reading CCG:

- Recognition of the Council's financial situation.
- Comments on the timeliness and strategic fit of the proposal.
- Future developments for early intervention and prevention strategy that may be affected by this proposal.
- Concerns around the targeted approach and strategic direction of the SEND reform.
- An anticipated increase in demand on Children's Centre services.
- Clarity on some aspects of the proposal.

Tilehurst Methodist Church:

- Objections to the proposal due to concerns on capacity.
- The need for Children's Centre service in promoting social interaction, and identifying early developmental difficulties.
- Concerns that some families may miss out.
- A request to consider other ways of offering current provision.
- Questions on resourcing of the proposal.

NHS Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust - Maternity Services:

- Uncertainty on Maternity Services with the proposal.
- Acknowledging the value of service in providing family centred care to the local population.
- Offerings of services in the future that may be affected by the proposal.

Reading Children's & Voluntary Youth Services

- An analysis of two focus groups that they conducted using the same questions from the online survey.

Email responses

12 emails were received from seven service users, one speech therapist, a community group, a local forum, a health organisation, and a youth service. These consisted of:

- Organisation and engagement queries and comments regarding the public consultation.
- Concerns for service users who speak English as an additional language and how this may be affected by the proposal and response to the consultation.
- Concerns on access to service for those who may not be eligible for targeted support, particularly for vulnerable people.
- Children's Centres being a valued service, and appreciating the work of members of staff.
- Concerns that the proposal may affect the social interaction of service users and the local community.
- Concerns of an increasing high demand.
- Concerns of the location and lack of facilities of proposed hub.
- Concerns on safeguarding of children.
- Concerns on the negative impact of maternity care and early help.

Petitions

Two petitions have been submitted to the Council. One was submitted by Reading Twins Plus Club with 25 hand written signatories. Members requested that Katesgrove Children's Centre remain open under the proposal.

The second petition was submitted by Wendy Thompson and the petition named 'Save Our Children's Centres'. To date the petition has 709 supporters (13 April 2017). This petition was raised at the Council Meeting on 24 January 2017, citing the proposed closure of Caversham and Emmer Green Children's Centre in North Reading. A response was provided by Councillor Lovelock (please see <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6709/item04/pdf/item04.pdf>).

Questions

Two questions were submitted by Councillor White to Councillor Gavin. The first was raised at Policy Committee on 16 January 2017 regarding an additional consultation meeting at Hamilton Road Children's Centre (please see <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6704/Item-8/pdf/170116questions.pdf>).

The second was raised on 13 March 2017 regarding the budget on stay and play activities, and the approximate level this will be reduced to (please see <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6978/Item-7/pdf/170313petitionquestions.pdf>).

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Directorate: Children, Education & Early Help Services

Service: Children's Centres service

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Corinne Dishington

Job Title: Children's Centre Team Manager, Early Help

Date of assessment: 4 /4/2017

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Over the last three months RBC has undertaken a public consultation on the Children's Centre service for 0-5 year olds and their families. The proposal aims to

- Establish 4 fully integrated Children and Family Centre hubs and satellite delivery points to deliver the core Children's Centre offer and to provide space for the provision of additional family services. Each hub would deliver targeted services from satellite buildings across their geographic reach area depending on level of local need.

- Integrate fully delivery with the Health Visiting service sited where practicable in the Children's Centre hubs.

- Reduce the current universal activity and focus on targeted work within a stepped care approach.

- To realign the Children's Centre offer to focus on pre-birth to three years old.

- To reduce the current spend by 400k by start of financial year 18/19. This will include a reduction in staffing.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The consultation provided the opportunity for views and opinions and to inform the future service delivery of the Children's Centre offer for service users, partner organisations, voluntary sector, staff and the wider community. The Children's

Centre offer will be based on assessment of need and the availability of alternative provision. The Children's Centre offer will focus reduced resources on the most vulnerable families in Reading.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The review of the Children's Centre offer has been designed with the aim of

- focussing on targeting and aiming service delivery at children and families who require more targeted and intensive intervention from council resources and thus higher cost services.
- fully integrating the universal Health Visiting service with the Children's Centre service in Reading.
- develop a model of co-production and provision with partners and the voluntary sector.
- to provide and communicate a consistent Reading wide service for young children and their families.
- Contribution to saving targets for the directorate.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Young children and their families - access to activities and support when required in order that they can be ready for school/nursery, employment or training, be healthy (both mentally and physically), be safe (both within the home and in the community), enjoy positive family relationships and attachment.

Staff - to support families so that their outcomes are improved.

Partner organisations - To work in partnership with Children's Centres and other providers of activities for young children and their families to improve outcomes.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

YES

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

YES

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Signed (completing officer)

Date

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Over the last 6 months a number of tasks have been completed in order to inform the remodelling of the Children's Centre including a public consultation		
	Families (300), staff and advisory boards were consulted informally to explore future outcomes from a remodelled children's centre offer and the priorities going forward. These discussions have informed the initial proposal. Further consultation with staff will follow after the proposal has been finalised and a delivery model agreed upon.	Sept/Oct 2016

<p>Service Users/Wider Community/Partner organisations</p>	<p>A series of six public consultation meetings were held in each of the current cluster areas to gather comments on the proposal.</p> <p>They were asked for comment on alternative delivery models for universal services and proposed targeted approach for the children's centre offer.</p> <p>Two meetings were held for voluntary organisations who were asked to discuss alternative delivery models for universal services.</p> <p>The proposal was presented to Early Years childcare providers for comment on the proposal.</p> <p>The consultation document was shared with schools, early years providers, partners including CCGs, Health, Maternity services (RBH)</p>	<p>Jan-March 2017</p>
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Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups

The universal provision delivered by Children's Centres will reduce to new parent/baby groups only. However there are over 60 activity groups for families to access run by the voluntary sector and RBC will explore access to key community spaces to deliver activity sessions.

The representation of BME groups registered with Children's Centres is broadly in line with the general population in the localities.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

The majority of parents accessing the Children's Centres are female and a negative impact was highlighted through the consultation regarding parental mental health and well-being and social isolation for new mothers. In order to mitigate that negative impact the children's centre offer will include a universal service for parents with children under 1 year old to continue to identify and support new mothers with mental health and isolation issues. There are over 60 activity groups for families to access run by the voluntary sector and RBC will explore access to key community spaces to deliver activity sessions.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

It is proposed to continue the support groups for children with undiagnosed/emerging additional needs.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

The universal provision delivered by Children's Centres will reduce to new parent/baby groups only. This will be open and inclusive to all new parents

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

The universal provision delivered by Children's Centres will reduce to new parent/baby groups only. The Children's Centre offer will focus on children pre birth -3 years. Currently the offer is available to children 0-5 years.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

Children's Centre groups are accessible for all religious beliefs. We do not monitor the religion of service users.

Is there a negative impact? No

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

1. **No negative impact identified** Go to sign off

2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

Reason

Whilst RBC will not deliver a universal programme for children over 1 year old it was identified during a review of the existing offer of under 5 provision within the town that there were over 60 provisions that were available to young children and their families.

3. **Negative impact identified or uncertain**

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

As a direct result of the feedback received in the consultation the children's centre offer will now include a universal provision for children under 1 years old and their parents. This will mitigate the negative impact of identifying and supporting mothers with mental health/isolation issues.

RBC have had initial meetings with the voluntary sector to explore access to key community spaces to deliver activity sessions. Further meeting will take place in July 2017 to develop a model of co-production and provision for families with children under 5 years.

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The Children's Centre performance data will report on those families and young children it supports.

Signed (completing officer)

Date

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date