

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents Cabinet with the feedback received through the extensive, inclusive and comprehensive consultation exercise undertaken in regard to the redesign of Early Years' services within Wirral.
- 1.2 This feedback has been analysed on an ongoing basis throughout the consultation process. The feedback has further been used to inform and redevelop the original proposal for how the service would be delivered in the future, with a re-worked proposal provided to Cabinet within the substantive report.

2.0 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Extensive consultation with all stakeholders was undertaken from 16 February to 27 March 2015. In summary, stakeholders were able to feed into the process through the following methods:
- Meetings: a programme of 29 open consultation events plus four structured stakeholder events were held throughout the borough. These meetings were held during afternoons, evenings and weekends to ensure the highest level of accessibility.
 - Online: the proposals and feedback channels were available on the Council website, promoted prominently from the home page, throughout the consultation process. Emails were also sent direct to children centre stakeholders.
 - Questionnaires: paper copies of consultation questionnaires and a report explaining the proposals were distributed through all children centres across Wirral, where they were promoted to people using the services. Support was offered to complete the forms where necessary.
- 2.2 The local and regional media also promoted the consultation. This promotion was supplemented through consistent advertising across the Council's network of LCD screens at 31 locations throughout Wirral. In addition information was promoted in other prominent community buildings such as GP surgeries, libraries and local shops.
- 2.3 This engagement activity resulted in 934 consultation questionnaires being received, in addition to participation from over three hundred service users,

residents and other stakeholders attending and contributing to consultation events.

3.0 RESPONSE ANALYSIS

3.1 Of the 934 consultation responses, 88.16% (648) were from female stakeholders and 10.07% from male. 68.85% (495) of the responses were from people aged 25-44 and 15.99% (115) were from people aged 45-64. The consultation questionnaire further asked people to indicate their relationship to the service. The chart below provides the data associated with this question, and demonstrates that the majority of responses (60.4%) came from parents or carers of children under 5.

Relationship to the Service	Per Cent	Count
I am a parent/carer of children aged under 5	60.4%	541
I will be a parent soon	3.7%	33
I am a provider with education and caring responsibilities for children under 5	3.9%	35
I am a child minder with education and caring responsibilities for children under 5	1.2%	11
I provide out of school activities for children up to 8	0.7%	6
I am responding on behalf of a community, voluntary or faith organisation	2.2%	20
I am responding on behalf of a school	1.3%	12
I am a professional who uses Children's Centres to work with children and their families	7.7%	69
I am a volunteer at a Children's Centre	1.7%	15
I am a local resident interested in the future of Children's Centres	11.3%	101
None of these	5.9%	53

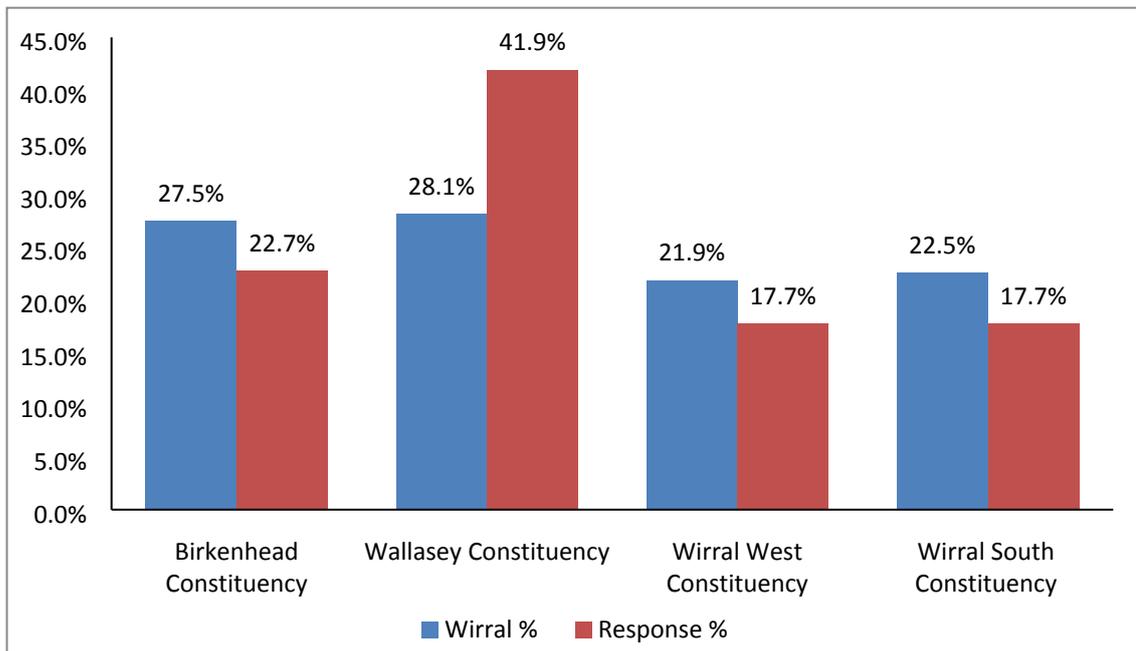
3.2 The consultation respondents were also asked to indicate how often they used children's centre services. The chart below provides this data, and demonstrates that over 70% of respondents use the services at least once a week. 12.69% of people responding never use the services involved.

How often the service is used	Per Cent	Count
Once a week	33.3%	289

Two or more times a week	39.6%	343
Once a month	6.2%	54
Less than once a month	8.2%	71
Never	12.7%	110

3.3 Geographic analysis was also performed on the consultation response levels. This analysis showed that Wallasey constituency is significantly over-represented in the sample data, demonstrated in the chart below. This has therefore skewed the percentage response figure from Birkenhead. Birkenhead is often under-represented in consultation exercises, and extra effort was taken to ensure every person with an interest in the proposals, across all constituencies, was provided with an opportunity to take part. The source of this over-representation in relation to Wallasey, is the level of response from two particular wards:

- Leasowe and Moreton East: This ward represents less than 5% of the total population of Wirral, but provides 10.9% of the consultation response data.
- Seacombe: This ward represents less than 5% of the total population of Wirral, but provides 9.8% of the consultation response data.



3.4 Within the chart above, the 'Wirral %' represents the percentage of the total Wirral population living within the constituency, with the 'Response %' representing the percentage of the consultation response coming from that constituency. It is important to note within this data that 177 responses did not provide a valid or complete post code and are therefore not included within this section of the analysis.

- 3.5 The consultation questionnaire also sought to determine which children’s centres, or other venues, people accessed services from. 86% of people responding said they accessed services through a children centre, 24% through a school and 16% through a community or other outreach centre. People were able to select more than one option, which is why the percentage figures quoted do not total 100%. When people were asked to name the centre they used most often a wide variety of centres and locations were highlighted, including: Ganneys Meadow, West Kirby, Pensby, Bromborough, Bebington, Seacombe, Brassey Gardens, Rock Ferry, New Ferry, Leasowe, New Brighton, Liscard and Greasby among others.
- 3.6 Other questions were asked to gather feedback on other demographic and ethnographic aspects of the respondents. This data demonstrated that the response sample was broadly representative of the groups currently accessing the service.

4.0 FEEDBACK ON SERVICE DESIGN PROPOSALS

Children’s Centre buildings

- 4.1 The main element of consultation feedback centred on the initial proposal for how the service could be configured and delivered in the future. To that end, a specific question was asked within the questionnaire to determine the extent people agreed or disagreed with the overarching proposal to have one main centre and one satellite, outreach centre in each constituency. The response to that question is provided in the chart below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	29.0%	257
Agree	12.4%	110
Neither agree or disagree	6.0%	53
Disagree	11.4%	101
Strongly disagree	35.7%	316
Disagree but understand the need to do this	5.4%	48

- 4.2 A geographical analysis has been performed on the response to this question, which demonstrates that the strongest level of disagreement with the proposal comes from within the Wallasey constituency. The highest level of agreement with the proposal comes from respondents living within Birkenhead. The chart below provides this analysis in full.

Constituency	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	37%	17%	2%	14%	25%
Wallasey	26%	8%	5%	13%	41%
Wirral West	26%	11%	8%	10%	39%
Wirral South	25%	18%	8%	10%	34%
No Post Code Data	32%	12%	9%	9%	35%

4.3 Further data was gathered to determine views on the proposed locations of both the 'hubs' and the satellite centres within each constituency. This data is provided below.

Location of Hubs (proposed as Eastham, Pensby & Thingwall, Seacombe and Brassey Gardens).

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	14.3%	114
Agree	13.1%	105
Neither agree or disagree	13.5%	108
Disagree	16.8%	134
Strongly disagree	37.3%	298
Disagree but understand the need to do this	5.0%	40

Once again, when this data is analysed on a geographical basis it is clear that, while there is a general trend of disagreement across all areas, respondents living in wards within the Wallasey constituency are more strongly opposed to the proposed locations of the 'hub' centres.

Constituency Areas	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	18%	14%	18%	23%	26%
Wallasey	15%	14%	9%	15%	47%
Wirral West	16%	6%	17%	23%	39%
Wirral South	7%	20%	17%	15%	40%
No Post Code Data	18%	14%	16%	16%	37%

Location of Satellite Centres (proposed as New Ferry, West Kirby, New Brighton and Birkenhead & Tranmere).

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	9.9%	79
Agree	14.9%	118
Neither agree or disagree	22.0%	175
Disagree	16.5%	131
Strongly disagree	32.5%	258
Disagree but understand the need to do this	4.2%	33

Geographic analysis of this question demonstrates broadly that responses from all constituency areas hold similar opinions on the proposed location of the satellite centres, but with respondents from the Wallasey constituency again being more strongly opposed.

Constituency Areas	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	12%	17%	26%	25%	18%
Wallasey	10%	14%	15%	12%	44%
Wirral West	6%	14%	25%	17%	31%
Wirral South	6%	17%	27%	16%	30%
No Post Code Data	13%	14%	24%	16%	28%

Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:

The consultation generated a significant amount of positive feedback concerning people's experience of the service indicating how highly the service, and in particular the colleagues delivering it, are valued by the families, parents and carers of young people. Many comments related to the need to balance the service provision offered between outreach and buildings.

A key theme emerging from the consultation feedback was that people did not necessarily disagree in principle with the proposal to develop a service based on hubs, satellite centres and outreach, but rather the overriding concern was avoiding the outright closure of centres.

Some key themes which emerged in relation to the proposed location of hub and satellite centres include:

- Respondents strongly felt that locations of centres should be determined by need, not necessarily purely by geography.
- There were concerns raised about the potential for the reconfigured service to be able to accommodate the demand through the new model.
- The main concerns expressed were about the lack of easy access to a centre and the distance that may have to be travelled to get access to a service from a hub or satellite. For some, the potential added cost of transport was highlighted as a concern.
- It was felt that attention should be given to 'rebranding', ensuring that centres are welcoming and give clear information about what happens there in relation to direct delivery and access to other services or signposting.
- Geographical analysis showed that the strongest level of disagreement came from the Wallasey constituency area (41%) closely followed by the West Wirral area (39%) where responses indicated that centres remain unchanged.
- From an analysis of the comments received through the feedback forms and notes of meetings, the level of disagreement was in relation to peoples/ users preferred centres to remain as they were currently with no change.
- Concerns raised through comments within the consultation feedback focussed on a perceived closure of centres. In particular, a considerable number of concerns came from parents, service users and stakeholders concerned about the reduced provision from the two nursery schools currently commissioned to deliver children's centre provision (Leasowe and Ganney's Meadow) and from centres within West Wirral.
- Within South Wirral 40% disagreed with the named hub at Eastham with feedback from group events consistently indicating that Bromborough should be considered

5.0 FEEDBACK ON SERVICE POLICY PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In addition to the specific, detailed proposals on the design and configuration of the service, stakeholders were also asked to provide feedback on a series of proposals related to the future development of the service.

Integration and Collaboration

- 5.2 Initially, people were asked to indicate their views on developing more integrated arrangements with other services and organisations that provide services for children and their families. The response to that question is

provided below and demonstrates that a majority of people responding (over 60%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal develop more integrated arrangements with other services and organisations that provide services for children and their families.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	31.3%	245
Agree	31.6%	248
Neither agree or disagree	12.0%	94
Disagree	7.3%	57
Strongly disagree	16.2%	127
Disagree but understand the need to do this	1.7%	13

Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:

There was general agreement with this proposal from the consultation feedback. Many of the comments received in this area focussed on how important it is for parents and young children that the Council is joined up with health and other partners and can provide an efficient service.

Some concerns were raised, which can be summarised as follows:

- There was recognition of the need to avoid duplication built on a shared vision and outcomes
- The Council should not expect other organisations to deliver on its behalf, but seek to develop partnerships that work and deliver the best outcomes for families.
- Relationships should be built up and strengthened with areas such as health, social care, Job Centre Plus, midwifery, maternity, social landlords and others.
- The Council should seek to gather best practice from other areas to further improve the service offer and model.
- The service objective and purpose should be clear and effectively communicated and promoted to partners, staff and users through a marketing and communications strategy.
- Processes should be improved to strengthen the role of Advisory Boards in the centres, to enable more robust challenge and direction of the centres performance.
- Key opportunities for closer joint working with health and early years partners were identified through initiatives such as the 2 year old integrated review. This would be rolled out across all areas and will identify the children most in need of support

- Working alongside community partners in the voluntary sector and using community development approaches was seen as essential in reshaping children’s centres role in communities.

Outreach Model

5.3 People were further asked to indicate their views on whether they agreed with the proposal for staff to work as an outreach team across a constituency area to respond to need. This proposal would mean that services would be delivered where they were needed in the community. The response to that question is provided below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	23.7%	187
Agree	22.4%	177
Neither agree or disagree	16.1%	127
Disagree	13.8%	109
Strongly disagree	20.5%	162
Disagree but understand the need to do this	3.4%	27

46.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the proposal for staff to work as an outreach team across a constituency area with 30% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:

Once again, a significant theme of feedback in this area focussed on how highly regarded Children’s Centre staff are by the families accessing the service. There were a whole range of comments received in this area, some of which expressed support for the proposal and some which put forward concerns. The feedback received can be summarised as follows:

- People supporting the outreach model stated that if services were brought out into the community then people would not have far to travel to access groups, services and other support. They also believed that an outreach model would likely be more responsive to the needs of individual communities than a purely building based model and that buildings could be used differently.
- People were concerned however at the impact an increased focus on outreach would have on the availability of services, and staff resources, at the centre buildings themselves.

- Comments from the stakeholder events also identified that an outreach approach as essential to ensure that services were delivered where needed in the community
- Staff must be well trained, flexible and responsive to needs, offering support and access to resources appropriately.
- Centre staff were recognised as having a good level of expertise that supported parents in a range of ways and that support is not consistently available through other provision. eg childcare.
- Good relationships were seen as important and integral to parents and children trusting centre staff.
- Concerns around the outreach model centred on the continuity of staff running groups and staff's knowledge of individual parents and children's needs. Quality of delivery could also be an issue if there was not consistency of staff to run groups.
- Volunteering at a community level was highlighted as a potentially important way to enhance universal provision effectively and was considered as less stigmatising for families.

Targeting the Offer

- 5.4 Finally, people were asked their views on the proposal that Children's Centres should play a key role in providing targeted early help to those families that need it most. The response to that question is provided below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	45.7%	360
Agree	22.9%	180
Neither agree or disagree	12.6%	99
Disagree	5.1%	40
Strongly disagree	11.7%	92
Disagree but understand the need to do this	2.0%	16

Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:

In this area, comments and other feedback received was generally extremely positive, which is further represented by the responses to the questionnaire provided above. People felt that the service offer should be targeted at those in need, but not 'stigmatised'. Other feedback received can be summarised as follows:

- The definition of 'most in need' should be made clearer and easier to understand for families and partners. People were also concerned that this

approach should not exclude any family from accessing a service, irrespective of their economic status or where they lived.

- Centres should retain a universal community focus providing access to other parents and opportunities for them and their children. There was concern that support through children’s centres would be ‘lost’ to those families not seen as being ‘in need’.
- The key role centres played in their lives toward reducing isolation, increasing parental confidence, especially through active participation in children’s centres.
- That a purely targeted approach could risk missing those families who may also need a range of support particularly those families where there are children with complex health needs, families that are socially isolated, low income families.
- Centres to be ‘rebranded’ so that they remain accessible in order to get information, access to services or be signposted to other services.
- A clear defined offer for children’s centres that clarifies services provision, including access to services delivered by partners at centres and through outreach.
- The importance of centres in terms of building social capital especially through opportunities for peer support and as a focal point for families with young children..

6.0 FEEDBACK ON THE IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

6.1 All stakeholders were asked to consider and provide their views on what they felt the impact would be on them, if the proposals were implemented. This data is provided below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
No impact	18.7%	141
I will attend another Children's Centre instead	8.1%	61
I will use Children's Centre services less often	26.8%	202
I will use Children’s Centre services more often	5.3%	40
I will not use Children's Centres anymore	21.5%	162
I will attend alternative (non-Children's Centre) early year services/activities (for example attending other local groups in the community)	13.2%	100
Don't know	20.0%	151

6.2 The chart above demonstrates that while almost 20% of respondents believe they will have no impact, 26.8% state they will use the services less often. However, it is also clear from the response that over 25% (combined) of respondents believe they will either a) use the centres more often, b) attend another centre instead or c) use other early years services provided throughout the community.

Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:

In this area, people felt that if less centres were available on a given day then families would not be able to get the support they needed from the service, which would potentially place greater pressure on other services and agencies.

People also again expressed the view that early years children's centre services were extremely important to a community and its development. Another key theme to emerge was that while targeted, specific service provision was important other more open and general groups (such as coffee mornings) held an equally important role in providing support to young families.