Brent Council and Barnardo’s

Consultation about proposals to consolidate Brent children’s centres and redevelop remaining centres as Family Hubs

August 2019
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Executive Summary

In line with Brent Council’s duties at section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006¹, the Council is consulting on proposals for consolidating the number of Children’s Centres and redeveloping remaining centres into Family Hubs². The proposals aim to deliver budget savings and bring more services into one place to meet the needs of the whole family. In this way, Family Hubs do not cease to be Children’s Centres. Rather they are Children’s Centres which provide additional services for older children and families with older and younger children.

Brent Council is committed to maintaining sufficiency of Children’s Centres. The Council is also committed to developing provision consistent with the main priorities of families with children aged 0-4 and key stakeholders. These stakeholders include multiagency, multidisciplinary staff offering information, advice and assistance to local children and families, schools and those involved in the governance of local Children’s Centres.

A mixed method consultation was undertaken by the Council working with Barnardo’s and the Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership, which manage the existing portfolio of Children’s Centres, across June- August 2019. See Appendix One for details.

Key findings

Brent Children’s Centres are strongly valued by most parents/carers, multidisciplinary staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies. There are wide-ranging views about the value that Brent Children’s Centres have brought to children, families and the community. This includes securing prevention and early intervention outcomes for children and families especially for those more likely to benefit from early help to build resilience and well-being and supporting self-help and community cohesion.

Overwhelmingly, parents/carers, staff and members of governance bodies contributing to this consultation want no closure of any Brent Children’s Centres. Rather, many would like to have more services and more sessions of existing services available from these venues. The rationale is broadly summarised by a parent who attends Wembley Children’s Centre with her child. The parent shared via the survey:

‘Please do not cancel these centres. They are so important. Myself and my partner are wage earning employees. But even then, when I had my baby, I felt stuck at home until I found that I can come here, to baby sessions. This helped me from being alone when my husband went to work. I made friends with other mums and we exchanged our experiences which helped so much. Please do not close these centres as <for> those who can’t afford to send their kids to nursery this is a great way of getting them to interact with others. And these centres are a short distance from home. Thanks.’

Mostly parents/carers, staff and members of governance bodies are welcoming of the Council’s proposals for making more services available from centres to support the whole family, including for families with children aged 4+. There are largely supportive views about having services operate across a longer day and on the weekend, especially to meet the needs of working families and to support provision of services that involve the whole family. Amongst families where children have additional needs and disabilities³ (SEND) and

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¹ To “secure such consultation as they think appropriate” before any change was made in the services to be provided through a Children’s Centre or before the closure of any such centre.
³ For the purposes of this report, children with additional needs and/or disabilities will be referred to as SEND (i.e. having special educational needs and/or disabilities).
multiagency, multidisciplinary staff there is strong support for more holistic provision that meets their needs.

Parents/carers, multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies largely agree that, in progressing Family Hubs proposals, Brent Council should seek to:

a. Maintain dedicated provision for families with children aged 0-4 that is distinct from health visiting/midwifery and early education and childcare settings.

b. Maintain some universal provision for families with children aged 0-4 within the scheduling of Family Hub information, advice and services. This includes:
   a. Stay, play and learn activities, including sessions delivered by childminders (and where these include access to outdoor space)
   b. Health services particularly health visiting and midwifery services
   c. Access to early years speech and language
   d. Childcare information and advice
   e. Support with parenting, especially for new parents

c. Schedule services at times and venues that families with children aged 0-4 can attend and feel confident to do so.

d. Integrate Family Hubs into the wider provision within each Family Hub area, so that staff and families have good knowledge about, and are effective in referral/signposting to all relevant provision that meet the needs of families with children aged 0-4 year within local communities.

e. Develop services in ways that overcome challenges for some families to access services. For example, those families unable to travel to relevant services due to cost/distance/location not being safe for them and/or where families require support in other languages and/or where families with parents and/or children with SEND.

f. Develop a communications and information strategy that keeps families and staff up to date on developments and provides opportunities for families and staff to inform developments.

Amongst most parents/carers, there is an openness to charging for attendance of some families without greater levels of need for non-statutory services. The average level of charge recommended for sessions is £2-2.50.

What we learned from surveys

a. Most helpful services

For more than half of all 544 parents/carers sharing their views, Children’s Centres services considered most helpful/helpful are:

a. Health visiting services (67%)

b. Let’s Talk sessions which give families access to early years speech and language information, advice and assistance (58%)

c. Stay, play and learn sessions including those that are for children cared for by childminders (54%)

d. Childcare information and advice (54%)
There are material differences between different cohorts of families about what is most helpful. Cohort analysis suggests that for families more likely to have greater need for early help to build resilience and well-being, there are other targeted services which are especially important. Most particularly these are:

- Parenting courses and workshops (especially for young parents and those living in Kingsbury locality)
- Midwifery services (especially for lone parents and families expecting a baby)
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) (especially for families where parents and/or children have a disability or additional need and those living in Harlesden locality)
- Stay, play and learn sessions for families with a child/ren with a disability or additional need.

Multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of governance bodies have more diverse views than parents/carers about what constitute the most important services for families. However, staff and members of governance bodies largely reinforce the views of parents/carers about the relative importance of health visiting services, stay, play and learn activities, services related to early years speech and language development and support for effective parenting through parenting programmes, training and workshops. Staff and members of governance bodies are also more likely to identify family support as important.

**b. Most important features of services**

For more than half of parents/carers with children aged 0-4, the most important features about how services are offered are that these:

- Have as much information, advice and services available in one place, which rises to more than 2 in 3 of all young parents and parents from mixed ethnicity backgrounds
- Are free, with one quarter of parents/carers reporting that low cost services are key
- Are within a 20-minute walking distance from their homes, which was even more important for more than 3 in 5 disabled parents/carers. However, this was less important for parents/carers living in households where no adults are in paid work and lone parents.

For close to 2 in 5 (37%) parents/carers, the importance of having access to confidential advice from trusted professionals was key. However, 1 in 2 families with children with SEND and lone parents rate access to confidential advice from trusted professionals as key.

Amongst multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies, they concur with parents/carers about having as much information, advice and services in one place. This is consistent with Council proposals for Family Hubs.

Staff and members of governance bodies were much more likely than parents/carers to rate as important; services being accessible to families with children with SEND and able to meet the needs of the whole family. They were much less likely to rate as important, however, services being within a 20-minute walking distance from family homes.

In addition to specific services currently available through Brent Children’s Centres, the bulk of suggestions by parents/carers for other services are largely consistent with the Council’s proposals for Family Hubs. For example, the provision of services for families with children aged 4+ and services available in the late afternoon, evening and weekend.
c. Staff and members of governance bodies main worries and suggestions of actions to mitigate

The main worries relate to risks that reduced Children’s Centres and more targeted services risk more families with children aged 0-4 only seeking support when problems have escalated/they are in crisis. Further, staff and members of governance bodies worry that the proposals risk increasing isolation amongst children and families, especially more vulnerable children and families.

There are worries also about specific areas within Brent not having sufficient provision for children and families. This is mostly in the Willesden area and parts of Harlesden. At the service level, staff have concerns about the implications for them from the proposals too. For instance, will their jobs be at risk and the impact on staff retention and motivation during a period of uncertainty about the future.

Staff and members of governance bodies have a range of suggestions for Brent Council about ways to mitigate these concerns. For some staff, they suggest keeping the current portfolio of Children’s Centres. The other main mitigating actions suggested are:

- Developing more integration of local services with each Family Hub
- Developing ‘satellites’ for each Family Hub which offer services, particularly some universal stay, play and learn activities for families with children aged 0-4
- Maintaining two-way communication with families and staff throughout the finalisation of proposals and implementation of any changes.

What we learned from interviews and focus groups

d. Informal interviews with 29 parents/carers

Overall, 3 in 4 (76%) families walk from their homes to access Brent Children’s Centres. About 1 in 10 (11%) only use the bus or car to access Brent Children’s Centres.

Overwhelmingly, parents/carers are motivated to attend Brent Children’s Centres to support different aspects of their child(ren)’s development. For example, opportunities for socialisation, to play with toys and access other resources and experiences that parents/carers cannot provide at home (including outdoor play) and to develop communication and language skills.

For at least 3 in 5 (62%) parents/carers they are also motivated to access Brent Children’s Centres to secure benefits for themselves. This includes to form friendships with, and network with other parents/carers. Several parents also point to improvements in their own parenting skills and confidence from taking up of support at Brent Children’s Centres.

Mostly parents/carers were comfortable with ideas about possible charging for non-targeted provision, although there are some parents/carers who recommend all services remaining free. Amongst parents/carers suggesting possible rates, the average is £2-2.50 per session.

e. Focus groups with 82 parents, staff and members of governance bodies

Of 58 multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and representatives of Children’s Centre governance bodies and schools and 24 parents/carers that shared views across 8 focus

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4 This is reinforced in the 2018 Brent Children’s Centres parent satisfaction and impact study (Jan 2019). The study reported that consistently across 2011-2018 the main motivations of parents/carers accessing Brent Children’s Centres are to promote their child’s development and to play and have fun together with their children.

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groups, there was strong reinforcement of key conclusions associated with survey work and parent/carer interviews.

Those participating in focus groups largely would prefer that no Brent Children’s Centres close. For some schools particularly, more clarity about how decisions were made about which centres might close was sought. While representatives of two schools that will no longer have a dedicated Children’s Centre support the proposals in respect of their schools, they also expressed willingness to offer some continued provision for families with children aged 0-4 from their sites too.

There is good support for the Council’s proposals about information, advice and services available for families with children aged 0-18 (and 25 for children with SEND). Concerns were raised about how services may be scheduled, with recommendations that these are sensitive to the needs of families with children aged 0-4 (e.g. not scheduling a baby group at the same time as sessions for young people and/or adults with complex problems) and overcome gaps in provision within particular parts of Brent. Staff and parents/carers were keen also to ensure that within a wider age-range provision, there are dedicated services for families with children aged 0-4. This is also consistent with the Council’s proposals.

Staff and parents/carers are keen the Council recognise in its future developments the specific and distinct role of Children’s Centres compared with other types of support for children and families and to sustain some universal provision for families with children aged 0-4, particularly stay, play and learn activities (including those delivered by childminders). Worries about the impact of proposals were mainly focused on these issues in focus groups. There was a broad consensus this would mostly affect families with children aged 0-4 most likely to benefit from early help to build resilience and well-being and those that would find travelling to other venues more challenging for reasons set out at page 4 (bullet point e).

There are varied suggestions about how to integrate more universal provision particularly stay, play and learn activities within future developments. This includes: having these services available at satellite centres; integrated within Family Hub schedules; and early years staff building the know-how of community-based play groups to identify need and signpost/refer children and families to more targeted early help support. This links also to suggestions for more integration with local services so that a more comprehensive offer about what is available for families with children aged 0-4 (and older) exists within the footprint of each Family Hub.

Finally, reinforcing survey findings, there are concerns for the welfare and needs of staff and families as changes take place. In the same way, there are also suggestions for effective two-way communication with families and staff to help overcome these concerns.
1. Detailed findings from surveys
1.1 Profile of families sharing views through the survey

Figure 1 sets out key characteristics of the 544 parents/carers contributing views through the survey. This included 41 families who are expecting a baby (7.5% of total) and 32 parents aged 21 years or under (5.9% of total). Appendix One provides a more detailed breakdown.

**Figure 1: Family cohort analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young parents (21 or under)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working households</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family expecting a baby</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or both parents have a disability/ additional need</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has a disability or additional need</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying the Office of National Statistics (ONS) ethnicity classification level 1, the profile of parents/carers contributing views through the survey are set out at Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Ethnicities of families sharing views through the survey**

Of the 544 families sharing views through the survey, 1% (3) did not indicate which Children’s Centre they might use and 4% (24) reported not using any Children’s Centres.

Figure 3 shows that for families sharing views through the survey the most popularly attended Children’s Centres are: 21% (117) Wembley Primary Children’s Centre; 16% (86) Three Trees Children’s Centre; and 14% (78) Wykeham Children’s Centre.

The least popularly attended Children’s Centres amongst families sharing views through the survey are: 1% (8) Granville Plus Children’s Centre; 2% (11) Welcome Children’s Centre; and 5% (27) Treetops Children’s Centre.
Figure 3: The main Children’s Centres used by families sharing views through the survey

Figure 4 shows that the main Children’s Centre used by families sharing views through the survey broadly corresponds with the Children’s Centre locality of their residence. 91% of families provided information that supports understanding of the locality of their residence, with a good mix of families across the borough represented in the survey. The locality with the least families sharing their views through the survey is Harlesden (57, 10% of total) while Wembley 2 had the most families participating (87, 16% of total).

Figure 4: Where families reside that shared views through the survey

1.2 Profile of staff and members of governance bodies sharing views through the survey

65 multidisciplinary, multiagency staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies shared their views through a confidential online survey. These are:

- 22 education and early years professionals (e.g. early years worker, creche staff, nursery staff, teacher etc)
- 20 Family support/social care professional (e.g. family worker, SENCO, portage worker, occupational therapist etc)
- 7 administrators/ administrative assistants working with Brent Children’s Centres

5 Children’s Centre localities are Curzon Crescent and Fawood, Harlesden (Harmony, St Raphael’s), Kilburn (Granville, Three Trees), Kingsbury (Church Lane, Mt Stewart, Willow), Wembley 1 (Alperton, Barham and Welcome), Wembley 2 (Wembley, Preston Park) and Willesden (Treetops, Wykeham)
• 4 parents
• 3 health professionals (e.g. health visitor, midwife, speech and language therapist etc)
• 3 Children’s Centre managers and a premises manager
• 2 employment, adult education, housing and welfare, information and advice professionals
• 2 members of Children’s Centre governance bodies

1.3 Most helpful services: Parent/carer perspective

Figure 5 shows the types of services available through Brent Children’s Centres that parents/carers report most helpful. For more than half of all parents/carers, the services considered *most helpful/helpful* are:

- Health visiting services (67%)
- Let’s Talk sessions which give families access to early years speech and language information, advice and assistance (58%)
- Stay, play and learn sessions including those that are for children cared for by childminders (54%)
- Childcare information and advice (54%)

44% of parents/carers rated Midwifery services *most helpful/helpful*, while 1 in 3 (33%) of parents/carers rated Parenting courses and workshops as *most helpful/helpful*.

Other types of more targeted services such as Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Father’s Project, Adult Education, stay, play and learn for children with SEND and support for new parents were considered *most helpful/helpful* by approximately 20-25% of parents/carers. Support for young parents and childcare available from St Raphael’s Children’s Centre was considered *most helpful/helpful* by fewer than 1 in 5 parents/carers.

![Figure 5. Most helpful services for families with children aged 0-4 years](image-url)
Figure 5 shows that different cohort of families have different perspectives about what is most helpful. In summary:

- **Young parents** are much more likely than parents/carers aged 21 years or more to consider parenting courses and workshops (59%), CAB (34%) and Adult Education (38%) *most helpful/helpful*;

- **Families expecting a baby** are much more likely than other parents/carers to consider Midwifery services (59%) *most helpful/helpful*, but fewer than 2 in 5 (39%) consider Let’s Talk *most helpful/helpful*;

- **Disabled parents** are much more likely than other parents/carers to consider Let’s Talk (68%) and CAB (54%) *most helpful/helpful* and are least likely (11%) to consider childcare provision at St Raphael’s Children’s Centre *most helpful/helpful*;

- **Lone parents** are much more likely than other parents/carers to consider Midwifery services (52%) and CAB (48%) *most helpful/helpful*;

- **Parents/carers in households where no parent/carer is in paid work** are least likely of all parents/carers (25%) to consider parenting courses and workshops *most helpful/helpful*;

- **Families with a child/ren with SEND** are the most likely of all parents/carers to consider Health Visiting (78%), Let’s Talk (78%), childcare information and advice (63%), CAB (63%), stay, play and learn for children with SEND (58%), Adult Education (48%) and Father’s Project (38%) *most helpful/helpful*; and

- **Amongst families of different ethnicities:**
  - **Asian parents/carers** are the most likely of all parents/carers to consider childcare information and advice (62%) *most helpful/helpful*;
  - **Black parents/carers** are more likely than most parents/carers to consider Adult Education (30%) and CAB (39%) *most helpful/helpful*;
  - **Mixed ethnicity parents/carers** are significantly more likely than other parents/carers to consider Health Visiting (84%), Midwifery services (59%) and support for young parents (27%) *most helpful/helpful* but least likely of all parents/carers to consider childcare information and advice (43%) and parenting courses and workshops (30%) *most helpful/helpful*;
  - **Other ethnicity parents/carers** are significantly more likely than other parents/carers to consider Let’s Talk (70%) and CAB (41%) *most helpful/helpful* but least likely to consider stay, play and learn for childminders (31%) *most helpful/helpful*; and
  - **White parents/carers** are least likely of all parents/carers to consider Fathers’ Project (14%) and CAB (21%) *most helpful/helpful*.

Figure 6 shows some variance between existing Children’s Centres localities in what services parents/carers report *most helpful/helpful*. The sections highlighted green are those where more than half of all parents/carers report these as *most helpful/helpful*. Significant areas of variance are:

- Harlesden parents/carers were much more likely than parents/carers in other parts of Brent to report childcare at St Raphael’s Children’s Centre and CAB as *most helpful/helpful*. 

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- Kingsbury parents/carers were much more likely than parents/carers in other parts of Brent to report parenting courses and workshops and stay, play and learn sessions for children with SEND as most helpful/helpful.

- Support for young parents was greatest in Kilburn and Wembley Team 1 localities and reported least by parents/carers in Curzon Crescent and Fawood.

- 1 in 5 parents/carers in Curzon Crescent and Fawood and Wembley Team 1 localities reported the Father’s Project as most helpful/helpful.

Figure 6: Locality analysis of most helpful services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Curzon Crescent &amp; Fawood</th>
<th>Harlesden</th>
<th>Kingsbury</th>
<th>Kilburn</th>
<th>Wembley Team 1</th>
<th>Wembley Team 2</th>
<th>Willesden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare at St Raphael's CC</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare info and advice</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childminders stay, play &amp; learn</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAB</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>Father’s Project</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health visiting</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<td>71%</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let’s Talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwifery</td>
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<td>47%</td>
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<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting courses &amp; workshops</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay, play &amp; learn</td>
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<td>Stay, play &amp; learn for children with SEND</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>Support for new parents</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for young parents</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.1 Other services which parents/carers report as helpful

42 parents/carers reported other services as especially helpful for their family. These are:

- Chances for socialisation (10) This included in relation to mums, children and in encouraging interaction between families from different ethnicities and experiences. One parent living in a household where no parents are in paid work said ‘The children centres have been a great way to meet new mums and make friends. It’s a relief not only for the kids but for us mums too. Please don’t shut them down.’

- Support for baby groups/baby play/baby massage sessions (9) was reported by dual-parent households where one or both parents are in paid work and aged 21 years or more. One parent shared, ‘baby sessions on a Monday at Mount Stewart have been fundamental to my child’s early development. I would support to keep those sessions open for the under 2’s.’

- Courses which are focused on practical skills e.g. ESOL, computers, cooking, first aid (6) was reported by a mix of dual-parent and lone parent households where most
have one or both parents in paid work. These parents/carers were of mixed ethnicity, Black and Asian.

- *Support for parenting (5)* with several parenting programmes identified as especially helpful by some parents/carers. These are Mellow and Stepping Stones. A parent in a dual-parent, working household where one or both parents have a disability and their child has additional needs noted, ‘I found stepping stones a very helpful course as it educates parents <about> how to manage their children behaviour which most of us as parents struggle with’.

- *Childcare (5)* was reported by dual-parent households work aged 21 years or more and where one or both parents are in paid work. As one Asian parent/carer living in the Wembley Team 1 area reports, ‘early education is very helpful and important to help and create foundation of life before they go to school. It helps parents to stay in paid work instead of expecting benefits from the government. I think early education is important for children and families’.

- *Support for new mums and those expecting babies (5)*. This included one young parent who shared how helpful breastfeeding support was and one parent who shared how helpful perinatal support was in addressing her post-natal depression.

- *Sensory classes/play (5)* was reported by dual-parent households work aged 21 years or more, and for two of these parents they live in a household where no parents/carers are reported to be in paid work.

- *Speech and language, Let’s Talk (4)* was reported by dual-parent households work where one or both parents/carers are reported to be in paid work.

- *Sewing classes (3)* was reported by two parents live in households where one or both parents has a disability. For one parent, they also are a lone parent, not in paid work and have a child with additional needs.

- *Family support (3)* was reported by dual-parent households work aged 21 years or more, and for one of these parents they live in a household where no parents/carers are reported to be in paid work.

- *Trips and outings (3)* were reported by dual-parent households work where one or both parents/carers are reported to be in paid work. One parent/carer is a young parent.

Additional services identified as especially helpful are: support for children with SEND (2), sports activities (2), Busy Feet (2), Freedom Programme (1), play therapy (1), a summer programme (1), volunteering (1) and childminder’s stay, play and learn (1).

For half of parents/carers offering feedback to this question, they reinforced especially the value of stay, play and learn sessions (12), Health Visiting (7) and the Father’s Project (2). Other parents/carers tended to talk generally about the value of Brent Children’s Centres and their positive experiences of staff and the centres.
1.4 Most helpful services: Staff and member of governance bodies perspective

Figure 7 sets out what multidisciplinary, multiagency staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies report as the most important services for families with children aged 0-4. The most important services reported are:

- Stay, play and learn (42%)
- Services related to children’s speech and language (e.g. Let’s Talk) (28%)
- Family support (18%)
- Parenting programmes/advice/support (17%)
- Health visiting services (15%)

For many contributing views through the survey, specific Children’s Centres were also identified as especially important. These are Alperton (3), Challenge House (6), Church Lane (6), Curzon Crescent (8), Fawood (5), Granville Plus (7), Harmony (4), Mount Stewart (3), Preston Park (1), Three Trees (5), Wembley (2), Willow (7) and Wykeham (5).

In summary:

Staff and members of governance bodies have more diverse views than parents/carers about what constitute the most important services for families. Between families, however, there are some differences. For example, young parents, those with disabilities and/or with children with SEND and those expecting a baby valuing some services far more than others.

However, staff and members of governance bodies largely reinforce the views of parents/carers about the relative importance of health visiting services, stay, play and learn activities, services related to early years speech and language development and support for effective parenting through parenting programmes, training and workshops.
1.5 Most important features of services

Figure 8 sets out what families and multidisciplinary, multiagency staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies sharing their views through the survey consider the most important features of how support is made available.

For more than half of parents/carers with children aged 0-4, the most important features are:

- Having as much information, advice and services available in one place
- Services are free, with one quarter of parents/carers reporting that low cost services are key
- Services are within a 20-minute walking distance from their homes.

For close to 2 in 5 (37%) parents/carers, the importance of having access to confidential advice from trusted professionals was key.

Services able to meet a wider age-range of children (i.e. over 4 years) was rated most important for 1 in 4 parents/carers. For just under 1 in 5 (17%) of parents/carers, having services that meet the needs of families with children withSEND was rated most important.

Like parents/carers, having information, advice and services in one place is rated most important by the majority of staff and members of governance bodies sharing their views through the survey. However, in other ways, staff and members of governance bodies views contrast with parents/carers. Staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies consider more important than parents/carers the ability of services to meet the needs of families with additional needs/disabilities (48% cf. 17%) and to meet the needs of the whole family (38% cf. 25%). They are also much less likely to consider services being free (40% cf. 57%) and no more than a 20-minute walk away from a family home (26% cf. 54%) as most important features.

Figure 8: Most important features of services for families with children aged 0-4

Different cohorts of families have different perspectives about the most important features of services for them. In summary:
• **Young parents** are much more likely than parents/carers aged 21 years or more to consider as important having as much information, advice and services in one place (69%). They were, however, less likely to consider as important services being no more than a 20-minute walk from their home (43%).

• **Families expecting a baby** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important having services able to meet a wider age-range of children (41%).

• **Disabled parents** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important services being no more than a 20-minute walk from their home (62%) and that services can meet the needs of families with children with SEND (32%). While just over half of all families where one or both parents report having a disability rate services being free as important, they were far less likely to consider services being low cost as important (10%).

• **Lone parents** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important having access to confidential advice from a trusted professional (49%) and services which are free (61%). They were, however, less likely to consider as important services being no more than a 20-minute walk from their home (38%).

• **Parents/carers in households where no parent/carer is in paid work** are less likely to consider as important services being no more than a 20-minute walk from their home (45%).

• **Families with a child/ren with SEND** are significantly more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important having services that meet the needs of families with children with SEND (60%), access to confidential advice from a trusted professional (50%) and services can meet the needs of my family including children aged 4+ (48%). While slightly less than half of all families where children with SEND rate services being free as important, they were far less likely to consider services being low cost as important (10%).

• **Amongst families of different ethnicities:**
  o **Asian parents/carers and Black parents/carers** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider access to services that are free as important (62%).
  o **Asian parents/carers** are much less likely to consider access to confidential advice from a trusted professional as important (32%) and services that can meet the needs of families with children with SEND (17%).
  o **Black parents/carers** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important having access to services which meet the needs of the whole family including children aged over 4 (37%).
  o **Mixed ethnicity parents/carers** are much more likely than other parents/carers to consider as important having as much information, advice and services in one place (67%) and services that are free (67%).
  o **Other ethnicity parents/carers** are more likely than other parents/carers to consider having services that are free (66%).
  o **White parents/carers** are much more likely than other parents/carers to consider having as much information, advice and services in one place as important (63%). They are least likely, however, to consider access to confidential advice from a trusted professional as important (19%).
Figure 9 shows fairly limited variance between existing Children’s Centres localities about the most important service features identified by parents/carers. The sections highlighted green are those where more than half of all parents/carers report these as important. Material variances are associated with:

- Harlesden where less than half of parents/carers prioritise having as much information, advice and services in one place
- Wembley Team 1 where less than half of parents/carers prioritise services being free
- Kingsbury locality where more than 2 in 5 parents/carers prioritise having access to confidential advice from trusted professionals.

**Figure 9: Locality level analysis of most important service features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Curzon Crescent &amp; Fawood</th>
<th>Harlesden</th>
<th>Kingsbury</th>
<th>Kilburn</th>
<th>Wembley Team 1</th>
<th>Wembley Team 2</th>
<th>Willesden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services can meet the needs of families with children with SEND</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services can meet the needs of my whole family including children aged over 4</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services are low cost</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get confidential advice from trusted professionals</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services are no more than a 20-minute walk from my house</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services are free</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can have as much information, advice and services in one place</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.6 Families suggestions about other helpful services

255 parents/carers provided further information to the question about other services they would find useful for their family. One parent said they fully supported the proposal for Family Hubs and a few parents/carers suggested introducing some small charges for accessing Children’s Centres. Much of the feedback of parents/carers was consistent with Council proposals for Family Hubs. For example:

- **Services for families with children aged 4+ (17).** This included suggestions about:
  - Helping parents and teenagers ‘recognising when gangs are approaching them and how to avoid and who to contact for support.’
  - More services for young people, with suggestions about making available mentoring for young people by entrepreneurs, youth centres of excellence and holiday activities and camps for children and young people aged 11+
  - Homework clubs for children after school
  - Music lessons for children

A few parents/carers also suggested that effort is made to schedule sessions in ways which enable parents and older children to access activities at the same time.
• **Services in the evening, afternoon and weekend (11).** Evening and weekend activities was reported more by lone parents and parents/carers in households where one or both parents are in paid work. This included having suggestions about activities for the whole family on the weekend. Increased sessions in the afternoon was especially the case for parents/carers that report stay, play and learn activities as most helpful/helpful.

• **Capable of meeting the specific requirements of families with children with SEND (7).** Two parents recommended access to assistance for families with children that have an autistic spectrum condition (ASC). As a lone parent in paid work noted, ‘as a parent of special needs children, I would appreciate more tailored sessions for children with SEND. This will help children to play without pressure from peers. Parents with SEND Children will be more comfortable attending these sessions.’

Another parent with a child with additional needs reported, ‘it would be nice to have a walk-in advice clinic or help centre to provide a dedicated service to advise on the various support options available to help with issues such as language disorders etc.’

• **Parenting groups and workshops (6) on diverse subjects.** For instance, one lone parent recommended, ‘parenting groups, discussions on parenting i.e. potty training, twin groups, weaning, breastfeeding, guidance and boundaries, groups on first time parents.’

Many parents/carers were keen to reinforce how important specific services are which are currently available from Brent Children’s Centres, if not always the Children’s Centre that they mostly attend. Specifically, these are:

• **Stay, play and learn (40)** which included some specific suggestions about a father’s stay, play and learn, grandparent stay, play and learn, weekend stay, play and learn sessions and scheduling at least some stay, play and learn sessions in the afternoon and early evening. There were also requests for additional stay, play and learn activities at Mount Stewart, Preston Park and Willow Children’s Centres.

• **Sessions related to babies (21)** which included baby massage, baby play, sensory play for babies and classes related to supporting the development of babies.

• **Sports activities and exercise (14).** This mainly related to toddlers and babies, including swimming and yoga. For adult related activities, several parents/carers suggested Zumba classes, yoga and sports activities for adults. Generally, parents/carers also noted that having crèche available for children for their adult classes would support their attendance.

• **ESOL classes and support for developing English skills (13)** which included recommendations for conversational English, advanced level English and for parents and children to learn English together. As a grandparent noted, ‘as a grand mum I have been coming to Mt Stewart since 2013 and it is like a home for me. I have learnt a lot from here, especially English and cooking. I would like Mt Stewart to stay open’.

• **Trips and outings (12)** which include family day outs and suggestions about visiting museums and the seaside.
• **Adult education (7).** One parent noted, ‘would be nice to see a wider range of adult education classes that include a crèche. Even if they carried small change, they would be very popular and very beneficial for parents to add to their skills’. Affordable first aid courses were specifically suggested by 4 parents/carers.

• **Support for breastfeeding and weaning (5).** One parent/carer said ‘Preston children centre is only open Mondays and Tuesdays. I would find it very useful if it was open every day. Currently they only have stay and play and antenatal clinics. This is most certainly not enough especially when compared to the Harrow children’s centres. Need a lot more workshops e.g. weaning, breastfeeding networks!'

• **Saturday Father’s Project sessions (5)** with a couple parents/carers also noting that there should also be dedicated provision for fathers during the week also. Two parents/carers also suggested making available a father’s clinic and one parent/carer suggested a fathers and baby day out activity.

• **Singing and speech only sessions, time with the speech and language therapist (5).** One parent/carer currently expecting a baby said, ‘speech session programs for young children at Harmony Children centre is quite helpful for children with language difficulties like ours. We would like to see more of such programs so that children with such problem get support at the right time’.

• **Support for children’s transition to nursery/school/school readiness (3)**

Services that are different to what is currently available from Brent Children’s Centres are:

- Careers advice and programmes to support return to work (5)
- Social activities and coffee mornings for parents (4)
- Counselling and mental health support for children and families (3)
- Sessions on self-employment (2)
- Drop in creche (2)
- Children’s playground (2)
- Celebrations which bring the community together (1)
- Networking for self-employed mums (1)

Parents/carers were also invited to share any further comments. This offered insight about many parents/carers extremely positive experiences from taking up support through Brent Children’s Centres and the positive impacts for their children and selves from doing so. See Appendix Two for more details.

Of 235 parents/carers, 24 used this as an opportunity to ask that no Children’s Centres close, with a further 10 parents/carers recommending that specific Children’s Centres remain open. These are Barham Park, Curzon Crescent, Fawood, Harmony, Mount Stewart, Three Trees and Wembley Children’s Centres. As one parent using Three Trees Children’s Centre noted, ‘As a young mum undergoing treatment for breast cancer this is the only children’s centre near my house. The staff at the children’s centre have offered valuable advice and have put me in touch with relevant services’.
In summary:

The majority of parents/carers and multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies rate as the most important feature of services having as much information, advice and services available from one place. This is consistent with the Council’s proposals for Family Hubs.

In addition to specific services currently available through Brent Children’s Centres, the bulk of suggestions by parents/carers for other services are largely consistent with the Council’s proposals for Family Hubs. For example, the provision of services for families with children aged 4+ and services available in the late afternoon, evening and weekend.

Overall, families also support services being free and near to their homes, although these are rated much less important by staff and members of governance bodies. Closeness to home is also less important for lone parents and households where no parents are in paid work.

For some families such as young parents, lone parents and families with children with SEND they also prioritise access to confidential advice from trusted professionals. Like families with parents and/or children with SEND, staff and members of governance bodies also prioritise services meeting the needs of children with SEND.

1.7 Staff and members of governance bodies concerns about proposals

Through the survey, multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of Children’s Centre governance bodies shared concerns about proposals to consolidate the number of Children’s Centres. 5 staff advised that they had no worries about potential impacts. 55 staff and members of governance bodies did share concerns. These are worries about:

- **Families not accessing support until they are in crisis and presenting with multiple needs (22).** Several reasons were cited through the survey for this:
  - Distance involved in travelling to support acting to discourage families from taking up early support. As a health professional noted, ‘A lot of the children in Brent would be under-stimulated leading to developmental delays.’ This is also related to the cost of travel, with an education and early years professional noting, ‘due to Hubs being far apart many needy families will have financial implications for travelling, which will lead them to not access the services. The impact of this would be that they will fall through the net.’
  - Families not attending because they are unfamiliar with the staff. As one family support/social care professional noted ‘My worry is the need of the families will get worse as they will not have their local children’s centre to pop into when they need advice and support. Families' attend and are familiar with staff at their local centre. They feel they are able to trust the staff at the centres they attend’.
  - Loss of universal services that support relationship building and early identification of needs of children and families. As an education and early years professional noted, ‘families in need will miss the opportunity to take their child to stay and play or crèches, where their children are benefiting from this to develop their social and personal skills, as not all parents can afford to send their children to private nurseries.’
Families will find out late about services.

- **Reducing support for vulnerable families with young children and increasing isolation and a reduced sense of community amongst more vulnerable parents and children (11).** This included families affected by domestic abuse, poverty and families with limited or no English. Examples were shared of women and children fleeing domestic abuse and families where children have been walking around naked in the local area. As one education and early years professional noted, ‘for some parents it is a day out from home, for making friends and have fun with their children as a family. Parents have even commented that children’s centre is the first place where my child’s needs were identified at the right time with great support.’

- **Losing early childhood education services and other support for school readiness (9)** This includes universal stay, play and learn including sessions for children cared for by childminders As a manager noted, ‘I am concerned that the very valuable Early Years work and intervention that currently takes place in Children’s Centres will be lost to make way for other services. Children’s Centres have worked hard to make strong family links with their communities and these need to be protected’.

- **Gaps in provision in particular parts of the borough (6).** This mainly related to the Harlesden area where Challenge House Children’s Centre has closed (3), the area around Wykeham Children’s Centre given limited provision between Kilburn and Willesden areas (2) and one family support/social care professional expressed concerns about the proposed closure of Welcome Children’s Centre.

- **Extending the age-range at Family Hubs will discourage attendance (3).** This included worries about services losing focus as a result of having a wider age, with one family support/social care professional noting that work with fathers might be affected by this. Another family support/social care professional noted, ‘conflicting requirements of different service i.e. some people feeling concerned about older YP in the centre at same time.’ This was reinforced by an education and early years professional who expressed worries that families with children aged 0-4 may not attend Family Hubs if these become associated with services for people with especially complex problems such as related to drugs and alcohol.

- **Support for families with children with SEND (2)**

- **The potential of introducing charges for services discouraging attendance (2)**

- **Lack of support to reduce obesity within the borough (1).** As one manager noted, ‘overall contracted Nutritional services. This is a crucial educational service to reduce the levels of obesity in Brent. Obesity levels are increasing in the borough yet the contracted service has been cut which has put extra workload pressure on staff to provide the service’.

Many also highlighted specific services that families currently have access to, where staff and members of governance bodies have worries that these will reduce or no longer be available for families. These are health services/baby clinics (5), parenting programmes and support for effective parenting (5), CAB (2), speech and language services (2), ESOL classes (1), counselling (1), messy play (1), baby groups and Busy Feet (1).
Some staff and members of governance bodies also shared broader concerns about the Council’s proposals. These concern the impact on:

- **Children’s development and ability to provide effective early intervention from less services being available for them** (8). Several staff commented that they felt that the proposals risk children’s development and reducing the ability to prevent violence, stress and poverty; and in a couple cases, that the proposals reflect a lack of prioritisation of very young children. Aligned to this were comments about families feeling upset about closures given the importance Children’s Centres have within their communities and as ways of supporting social capital and self-help.

- **Focus on targeted services** (6) There was reinforcement of themes about the impact of limiting universal services within Family Hubs outside of statutory health services such as midwifery and health visiting. As one staff member noted, ‘I am concerned regarding early identification and how this will happen with targeted sessions only, as these families will already be known to services. The families which are not known may not be so easily identified at a local stay and play and therefore not referred into support services’.

- **Staffing** (5). There were multiple dimensions to this, with some comments about the impact of extended hours on existing staff contracts, potential loss of early years expertise and jobs (including their own) and morale. For example, one staff member noted, ‘management of staff by Heads of children’s centres need to be addressed. Highly skilled and experienced staff are being forced to leave the service or are on sick leave due to feeling undervalued and not being supported in their role and not given the opportunities to carry out their role. Some staff are very unhappy. This cannot be allowed to continue in the hubs’.

1.7.1 Suggestion about how to mitigate worries

52 staff and members of governance bodies suggested potential actions to overcome these worries. These are:

- **Developing more integrated services built around each Family Hub** (11) i.e. improving knowledge of, and signposting/referral to other local services. As one member of a Children’s Centre governance body suggested, ‘availability <is recommended> and for other service providers to make sure they know where to go, advertise support in wider areas such as GP, dentist, schools, hospitals.’ Aligned to this were suggestions that Family Hubs:

  o facilitate access to charities and community groups that offer practical support (food banks, decorating, gardening etc).
  o have provision for support groups such as for those with a family member with SEND
  o offer empowerment/assertiveness workshops for parents/carers and other types of training
  o operate a Team Around the Family model

- **Sustain existing Children’s Centres** (9) and/or ensure at least one Children’s Centre in every area of need.
• **Ongoing communication with parents/carers that is sensitive to communication needs and encourages parents/carers to have a role (8)**. This includes ensuring parents/carers are kept informed of, and have opportunities to contribute to developments using mixed-method communication strategies (not just online and posters and is inclusive of families where limited or no English is spoken).

In addition, several staff and members of governance bodies described benefits to reassuring parents/carers that they can access relevant support from any Family Hub and that families will still have access to professionals they need. As one family support/social care professional said, ‘It’s the same service across all centres, so families need not worry. Good thing is we still have children centres running as opposed to some boroughs that have none.

• **Developing satellite provision from the Family Hubs which sustains some local provision for families with children aged 0-4 (7)** Several staff suggested that alternative sites should be identified to continue making available similar services to what is currently available from Brent Children’s Centres. Several staff reiterated the benefits of integrating universal stay and play sessions within Family Hubs, with one staff member suggesting these act ‘to feed children and families into targeted stay and play sessions with early intervention.’

• **Drop in sessions/immediate access to support (5)** As an education and early years professional suggested drop-in can support parents with coaching or solution focus tools…and act as a single point access…<where this will be helped by> evening access and extra-curricular activities.

• **Home visits and outreach (3)**

• **Have accessible services (2)**

• **Make available interpreters and crèche facilities (2)** given the high number of families with limited English language.

• **Make available services within areas where gaps are identified (2)** This was identified as the area where Challenge House Children’s Centre is and near Willesden Junction.

• **Introduce some charging (2)** with one education and early years professional noting that ‘We can have paid services, start charging a reasonable amount of money from the parents rather than putting them into the worry that they do not have any nearest place to go now. We can have more informative sessions across all centres, morning and evening and even in weekends as that is the time when family is together to go and access services’.

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**In summary:**

The main worries of multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and members of governance bodies focus on the risks to effective early identification and intervention from reduced Children’s Centres and reduced universal provision i.e. families will mainly seek support when problems have escalated. Further, staff and members of governance bodies worry about increasing
isolation amongst children and families from the proposals, especially for those more vulnerable children and families.

There are worries also about specific areas within Brent not having sufficient provision for children and families. This is mostly in the Willesden area and parts of Harlesden. At the service level, staff have concerns about the implications for them from the proposals too.

Staff and members of governance bodies have a range of suggestions for Brent Council about ways to mitigate these concerns. The most common actions relate to developing more integration of local services with each Family Hub, developing ‘satellites’ for each Family Hub which offer services, particularly some universal stay, play and learn activities for families with children aged 0-4, and to maintain two-way communication with families and staff throughout the finalisation of proposals and implementation of any changes. For some staff, they also suggest keeping the current portfolio of Children’s Centres.
2. Summary findings from interviews with parents/carers

29 parents/carers were informally interviewed by practitioners at Brent Children’s Centres in July-August 2019 about different aspects of how they access and experience Brent Children’s Centres. They also gave feedback about potential charging. Overall findings are set out at Figure 10.

*Figure 10: Summary findings from informal interviews with families*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels of attendance</td>
<td>2-2.5 times per week on average per family, with one family reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attendances of 4-5 times per week and one family reporting attendances of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>once per fortnight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of centres attended</td>
<td>3 in 4 (76%) families report only accessing one Children’s Centre⁶.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regularly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How centres are accessed</td>
<td>• Walking only (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Walking and bus (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Walking and driving (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bus only (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Driving only (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main reasons for attendance</td>
<td>More than 4 in 5 families point to reasons relevant to their child’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development and giving their child opportunities for socialisation, having</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fun, being able to do things/use resources which they do not have at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 in 5 (62%) of parents/carers also provide reasons related to benefits for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>themselves. This most particularly relates to opportunities to meet and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>socialise/gain support from other parents/carers and access to courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several parents pointed to parenting programmes and workshops as having</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>been especially beneficial for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential charging</td>
<td>The average level of charge recommended if charges were introduced for some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-targeted provision is £2- £2.50.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several parents/carers recommend all services remaining free, while one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parent/carer suggested that charges should be £10-20/session.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Three provides detailed findings from each of the 29 informal interviews conducted by Barnardo’s and Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership practitioners with parents/carers.

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⁶ NB. Challenge House Children’s Centre is now closed so excluded as a centre that families attend.
3. Overall findings from focus groups
Throughout focus groups, there was strong reinforcement that priorities for Brent Council should include sufficiency of provision for families with children aged 0-4 for whom:

- English is an additional language
- Parents are young
- Babies and children have additional needs and/or SEND
- There are challenges of travelling further to relevant provision. Focus groups reinforced points from survey work about cost, time and concerns about security in some cases risking some families more likely to benefit from early help to build resilience and well-being not accessing support until problems have escalated and/or they are in crisis.

Across different stakeholders (parents, partners and multidisciplinary staff working with families with children aged 0-4) there were very consistent views about the most important activities to sustain in any future developments such as Family Hubs. See Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Most important services within any future provision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key feature to be sustained</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated provision for families with children aged 0-4</td>
<td>Based primarily on the key role, supported by the evidence base, that Children’s Centres have in supporting early development of babies and very young children and early identification of families with greater levels of need, as distinct from the role of other key services for families with young children such as midwives, health visitors and early years childcare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal provision</td>
<td>Risk of targeted only provision is that these risk stigmatising support and families do not access support until they reach crisis point. Further, opportunities for families to build relationships with practitioners and for practitioners to identify needs and intervene early will be missed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay, play and learn, with access to outdoor space</td>
<td>Main benefits of aiding children’s development and providing a safe space for early identification of children and families with additional needs. Further, these sessions offer opportunities to reduce isolation and foster community development and self-help amongst diverse families and communities. For example, for some parents/carers these acts as tools ‘to get out of the house and do something’ and for helping their ‘children get ready for school.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across different stakeholders (parents, partners and multidisciplinary staff working with families with children aged 0-4) other key services which are identified as very important by more than half of all focus groups are:

- Early years speech and language support
- Support for children’s transition to nursery and to school
- Support for effective parenting, with this identified as most important by representatives of schools, childminders and for many staff. This included also ensuring that there is available support for dads/male carers at times that suit them.

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7 National Evaluation of Sure Start, *The impact of Sure Start Local Programmes on seven year olds and their families* (2012)
Peer support and learning activities which includes supporting effective parenting (e.g. through parenting programmes) and other types of adult education and more informal networking and information sharing opportunities

Welfare rights, information and advice

Other provision also identified as important by at least some focus groups are:

- Stay, play and learn activities for children cared for by childminders given benefits associated with child development and supporting quality practice amongst childminders. There were also priorities explained about ensuring equitable provision for all children in Brent.
- Wider health provision to support mental and emotional health and well-being
- More activities relevant to babies such as baby massage and support for new parents
- Soft play

The most important services features shared by those attending focus groups reinforced the findings from survey work and interviews with parents/carers. These are:

- High quality staff, including front of house staff with the know-how to assess the needs of diverse families and the knowledge and skills to help families access relevant support. See especially Appendix Four (3) for more details.

- Accessible services for all families taking account of requirements such as SEND, English as an additional language and any challenges of distance for some families to access support from specific venues. There are also suggestions about the use of SMS notifications to reduce instances of families not attending appointments.

For parents/carers, they also prioritised free services for those families with greater levels of need and that those scheduling services recognise distance from home, the need for clear information about the purpose of services, scheduling services at times that suit them (which can include evening and weekend) and that services are not over-crowded.

As with survey work and interviews with parents/carers, there is good support for the principles of Family Hubs as part of Council proposals. Most particularly, this relates to supporting families with older and young children, more information, advice and services being available from one place to meet the needs of the whole family and greater availability of information, advice and services across the week (e.g. late afternoon, evening and weekend services). Proposals for a SEND Hub are welcome to, albeit so long as there is also relevant support for families with children with SEND across all Family Hubs.

As with survey work and interviews with parents/carers, primary worries about the proposed reduction of Children’s Centres and the redevelopment of remaining centres into Family Hubs are that:

- There will be less support for families with children aged 0-4
- Some families will lack knowledge and confidence to access relevant support due to reduced universal provision which helps increase confidence and knowledge and builds relationships with key professionals and other families
- Cost/distance/safety for some families, especially those that will benefit most from early help, will dissuade them from seeking support until problems have escalated

There are also concerns about how Family Hubs are managed and how different services work together when they have different roles and approaches to collecting, managing and
sharing information. As with survey work, a recurring theme through focus groups are about the value of sensitive scheduling of services and developing more integration with local services and schools within the neighbourhood of each Family Hub. To assist this, members of existing governance bodies suggested that local multiagency, multidisciplinary governance arrangements be established for each Family Hub which also include families.

See Appendix Four for the detailed findings from each focus group.
Appendix One: Methodology and more detailed profile of families engaged with the survey

The Childcare Act 2006 mandates that local authorities must consult as appropriate before doing anything which would result in a children’s centre ceasing to be a children’s centre or where significant changes in service delivery are proposed.

Statutory guidance sets out expectations that everyone who could be affected by the proposed changes (e.g. local families, children’s centre staff, advisory board members and service providers) should be consulted with specific consideration of groups that are at greater risk of exclusion. The statutory guidance specifies that the consultation must explain how the local authority will continue to meet the needs of families with children aged 0-4, subsequent to the changes. There are also expectations about providing adequate time for people to share their views and for the decisions following consultation to be made known.

Brent Council approved for consultation proposals that will reduce some Children’s Centres and consolidate and develop the remaining centres into Family Hubs on 17 June 2019. See: http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4625 for full details. In summary, the Family Hubs will provide an enhanced service offer across a broader age range of 0-18 and up to 25 in the case of SEND (which includes delivering statutory requirements for a children’s centre universal and targeted offer). In this way, Children’s Centres do not cease their operation. Rather, they offer support for families with older and younger children. The role of the remaining centres will involve dialogue with the community, within the context of the reduced financial envelope, to assess key priorities, impacts from closure and any suggestions about how adverse impacts can be mitigated.

A mixed method consultation was agreed with partners from Barnardo’s and Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership that currently manage Brent Children’s Centres across June-August 2019. This included:

- 1:1 informal interviews were conducted by Barnardo’s and Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership with 29 parents/carers accessing Brent Children’s Centres. These families attend centres 2-2.5 times each week. They mainly attend one Children’s Centre rather than multiple centres. Most families also access other support within local communities, such as libraries, sports centres, parks and health services. See Appendix Three for details from each interview.

- 8 focus groups and 2 public meetings were held. The public meetings led by the Council were not well attend and the 8 focus groups facilitated by an independent researcher from George Partnership Limited had 82 participants. These are:
  - 1 x members of governance bodies and schools
  - 1 x families with children aged 0-4 with SEND, although this was wider and included other families accessing early years provision at Willow Nursery
  - 1 x families accessing the Mellow Parenting Programme, a parenting programme for families mainly with additional needs and challenges
  - 1 x childminder network
  - 3 x multidisciplinary staff focus groups for staff that directly support families with children aged 0-4 in Brent
  - 1 x partner staff that do not directly provide support to with multidisciplinary staff who work from Children’s Centres
• An online survey in which 63 multiagency, multidisciplinary staff and parents and other members of Children’s Centre governance bodies in Brent shared their views across 5 weeks.

• An online survey in which 544 parents/carers/childminders contributed their views across 6 weeks. The analysis of these applies the ONS ethnicity classification level 1 where:
  - **Asian / Asian British** (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Any other Asian background)
  - **Black** (African, Caribbean, Black British and Any other Black / African / Caribbean background)
  - **Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups** (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background)
  - **White** (English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British/ Irish/ Gypsy or Irish Traveller/ Any other White background)
  - **Other ethnic group** (Arab, Any other ethnic group)

Amongst those families that are currently recognised as ‘target group’ households by Brent Children’s Centres that shared views through the online survey:

**Young Parents**
Of 32 young parents, 6 (19%) are lone parents, of which 4 are in paid work. One of these parents, one reports being of other ethnicity and has a child with additional needs. Of 26 young parents that do not identify as lone parents, 19 report living in households where at least one parent is in paid work (27% where no parents in paid work).

3 (9%) young parents also report that they are expecting a baby, of which 1 is a lone parent (in paid work). For one other of these parents, the family has a child with additional needs.

Amongst young parents participating in the research:
  - 11 identify as Asian/Asian-British (34%)
  - 8 identify as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (25%)
  - 1 identifies as of mixed ethnicities (3%)
  - 3 identify as of other ethnicities (9%)
  - 8 identify as White (25%)
  - 1 did not answer the question (3%)

**Families with a child/ren with SEND**
Of 40 parents reporting that they have a child with SEND, 12 (30%) of parents also report that they or their partner has a disability. 9 (75%) parents also do not report living in a household where one or both parents are in paid work. A further 11 (39%) of families are not in households where one or both parents are in paid work.

4 (10%) are young parents and 11 (28%) are lone parents. Of the young parents with a child with additional needs, 1 is a lone parent not currently in paid work.

Amongst families with a child/ren with additional needs participating in the research:
  - 12 identify as Asian/Asian-British (30%)
  - 7 identify as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (17%)
• 1 identifies as of mixed ethnicities (3%)
• 8 identify as of other ethnicities (20%)
• 10 identify as White (25%)
• 2 did not answer the question (5%)

Families with a parent/carer with a disability
Of 28 parents/carers reporting that they or their partner has a disability, 12 (40%) also report having a child with SEND. 5 (18%) are also expecting a baby.

Amongst this cohort, 17 (61%) do not report living in a household where one or both parents are in paid work. None identify as young parents and 6 (21%) are lone parents. Of the lone parents with a disability, half are in paid work and one of these parents also has a child with SEND.

Amongst families where one or both parent/carers have a disability:
• 11 identify as Asian/Asian-British (39%)
• 9 identify as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (37%)
• 5 identify as of other ethnicities (18%)
• 3 identify as White (16%)

Parents in households where no one in paid work
Amongst 166 parents that report not being in households where one or both parents are in paid work, 40 (24%) are lone parents and 7 (4%) are young parents. 13 (8%) parents report that they are expecting a baby.

21 (13%) parents that report not being in households where one or both parents are in paid work have a child with additional needs. 18 (11%) identify that they and/or their partner have a disability. This includes 3 lone parents.

18 (11%) of parents that report not being in households where one or both parents are in paid work report expecting a baby, of which half (50%) report having a at least one child with additional needs. There are a further 9 parents that report not being in households where one or both parents are in paid work that report having a child with additional needs.

Amongst parents that report not being in households where one or both parents are in paid work participating in the research:
• 62 identify as Asian/Asian-British (37%)
• 29 identify as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (17%)
• 11 identify as of mixed ethnicities (7%)
• 23 identify as of other ethnicities (14%)
• 33 identify as White (20%)
• 9 did not answer the question (5%)

Families that are expecting a baby
Of 41 expectant families, most have other children also. 2 (5%) are lone parents and 3 (6%) are young parents. Of the 3 young parents, 1 is a lone parent. 28 are in households where at least one parent is in paid work, with 13 (32%) not reporting being in households where at least one parent is in paid work.

5 (12%) expectant families report that one or both parents has a disability. This includes a family where they also have at least one child with additional needs. There is one other expectant family where they have at least one child with additional needs.
Amongst expectant families participating in the research:

- 14 identify as Asian/Asian-British (34%)
- 6 identify as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (15%)
- 2 identify as of mixed ethnicities (7%)
- 7 identify as of other ethnicities (19%)
- 12 identify as White (30%)

A draft report was prepared for the Barnardo’s, Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership and Brent Council commissioners in August 2019. This draft report was prepared by George Partnership Limited, bringing together and analysing and synthesising the data from the consultation methods described above. A final report will be prepared and published by Brent Council for families and wider stakeholders in Autumn 2019. Complementing that report, will also be a short report that sets out how Brent Council is adapting its proposals for Family Hubs based on the feedback of families and other stakeholders engaged in this consultation and an equalities impact analysis about the next stage developments.
## Appendix Two: Parent/carer additional feedback

**Key for ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Other ethic group</th>
<th>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups</th>
<th>Not answered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups</td>
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</table>

### COMMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under 21</th>
<th>Lone parent</th>
<th>Paid work</th>
<th>Expecting</th>
<th>Adult SEND</th>
<th>Child SEND</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>St Raphael is my local children centre it is amazing. Staff are friendly &amp; helpful also they celebrate diversity e.g. Eid community lunch amazing centre</td>
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<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
<td>Support family</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Excellent customer service, Children's centre. Support family, friendly &amp; help</td>
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<td>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>More schemes for the youths who are venerable, After school clubs for different age group, Support for abuse victims - young girls &amp; boys &amp; Advice &amp; information for children 10+</td>
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<td>Not answered</td>
<td>Please keep as many open as possible - it would be awful to lose some of these locations! It helps new parents So much from what I have seen &amp; experienced</td>
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<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>I hardly use the children centres anymore as I work full time &amp; my child goes to school &amp; after school club. However, I truly appreciate those children centres when I was on my maternity leave. I built a business, gained confidence in myself &amp; was fully supported by staff &amp; made lifelong friendships with other parents. The range of courses was fantastic &amp; beat loneliness by going out &amp; help develop my child as well as have other parents to talk with</td>
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<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
<td>Too many spongers in today's society. Expect everything on a plate. Expect to have vehicle, tv as a rite. Needs to work for everything. Should have for treats to work like we did for everything not sponge</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>From the time I had my first child who is now 9 the services for children have been massively reduced. I do not know why &amp; how you came to this conclusion. If you knew what it's like to raise children in this day &amp; age you would have consulted.</td>
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<td>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>Curzon crescent is far the best children's centre. My daughter feels safe &amp; comfortable with the services &amp; the environment there would be a bad side effect for children if they do not see those places</td>
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<td>Not answered</td>
<td>I as a mother find my children's centres crucial in my weekly life. My child loves &amp; thrives so much from birth coming to baby groups mainly at Curzon Crescent &amp; Fawood. She has benefited so much from socialising around other children &amp; from the variety of groups we have attended. Her favourites currently are sensory play, messy play &amp; stay play &amp; learn. The staff are great &amp; I benefit to.</td>
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<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>Thanks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
<td>Curzon crescent centre is amazing for all the local kids &amp; mums</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>I feel pleased &amp; comfortable when I visits C.C.C.C &amp; my daughter as well</td>
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<td>Mixed / multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>Thank you for the great job you are doing. The community needs you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>Really thank you for all the team at Curzon &amp; Fawood for everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>We love coming to the children centre classes. It is lovely meeting other babies &amp; mums, but also its lovely &amp; important as I can see my son develop</td>
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<td>staff chosen for the family hubs must have multi-lingual skills to help the parents with communication skills difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having an older child with additional needs makes it harder to attend sessions for a younger child, as neither can be left alone &amp; neither can attend sessions for the other’s age group. It is also harder to travel further to a service, as much more planning &amp; arrangements need to be put in place.</td>
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<td>As a public service i.e. civil servant employee, the employer should have a heart to service the community make a difference the general public families are depending expecting this despite the disposition of lack of Government funding, find a way to become more effective, creative manage to impact the community positively, do not treat your appointment as just another job what you contribute directly changes &amp; sustained lives across the Borough always give the very best nothing short of Quality Excellent Service will be accepted.</td>
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<td>I also visited Hillside for a few health visitor appointments &amp; weaning classes. This too is a great location, building but sessions that take place here are not advertised or that well known about. More can be done to use/promote this location.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not close Fawood &amp; Curzon Crescent Children’s centres</td>
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<td>Services are good for me &amp; my son. My son is much sociable &amp; friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barham Park CC was an incredible lifeline when I had my daughter. The baby sessions were so helpful &amp; they helped me get out of the house when I was feeling isolated &amp; emotional. It allowed me to meet other parents &amp; gain support &amp; camaraderie. I do not have any family nearby so this was an absolutely priceless service. Barham is a 20 min walk &amp; was close enough I felt I could go without being stressed out by the journey. Other Children Centres are too far to walk to &amp; I cannot drive. Please do not close Barham CC as I have another baby due in 2 months &amp; I absolutely need these services for my mental &amp; emotional health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children centres are really important in children’s development. It helps parent with lots of stuff.</td>
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<td>Getting good service from CC. My daughter has become more confident. The staff is so good &amp; attend each child with love &amp; care.</td>
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<td>This play group centre is really really important to us. My children love to play &amp; learn alongside other children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like the children &amp; family activities to remain. &amp; the family learning activities.</td>
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<td>So many babies, children &amp; parents rely on these services for education, social interaction. They improve wellbeing for everyone. It would be a huge mistake to close these people mental health will be at risk if this happens.</td>
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<td>There shouldn’t be less of these children centres. We should keep them.</td>
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<td>Happy the service is good the staff is lovely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The services that the children centres provide are essential to me &amp; my children. The stay &amp; play groups that my toddler attends, are very helpful for making friends, gain confidence, learn &amp; explore. The most important thing for me as a parent is that my child is surrounding by other children &amp; a wonderful people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We love Three Tree -it provided exceptional support for me &amp; my 2 children. Staff are welcoming &amp; Knowledgeable &amp; to go stay &amp; play &amp; learn is excellent for the children to develop &amp; making friends, please do not shut it. It our life live.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Three Trees children’s centre on a regular basis. As a young mum undergoing treatment for breast cancer this is the only children’s centre near my house. The staff at the children’s centre have offered valuable advice &amp; have put me in touch with relevant services.</td>
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<td>Please save our children’s centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We rely on Three Tree centre heavily. It would be a shame for it to close.</td>
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<td>Yes there are lots of services available south of Brent in Kilburn, Harlesden, Stonebridge etc, but in Kingsbury, Colindale, Queensbury there is a lack of family activities, especially if a parent doesn’t drive &amp; has a child with autism who can’t manage crowds &amp; lots of traveling. So, recreation services this end of the borough is desperately needed</td>
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<td>This playgroup is a really amazing learn &amp; nice place. We always looking forward to come here. I would be very sad if the council decide to shut it. I hope it won’t happen we need more play group like this.</td>
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I live in Kingsbury & have for over 35 years. There are no services & nowhere for young people to go. Other side of borough gets everything & always has done. There are lots of vulnerable young people who are at risk of getting in trouble who need support & somewhere to go to get them off streets. This centre is an amazing life live, being stuck at home it's a good to get out & come here we can meet other parents & talks, & children can play safely. It's close to home I can quickly get here. It's the best thing & the staff are great.

We have been using these services for over a decade & would hate to see them go. really hope this centre continues to stay open for parents & the children, my baby loves this place & she's very happy here.

As I mentioned earlier this is the third time I am coming to the stay, play & learn session with my daughter. She was quite shy & not very open at the beginning. Basically, the reason why I decided to come to this session at Three Trees. The staff has been very helpful since day one & I can already see the progress with my daughter. They have provided good services, information & the centre an ideal for children development. I just hope this centre stays open for help others families. Thank you.

The children's centres stated on page 1 are on absolute essential part of the community & offer parents an opportunity to meet other parents & professional for support & advice. So, children can play & learn in controlled staff environment & close to where we live. to close it down would be an absolute catastrophe.

Thank you it was great today to meet other mum & babies. I would really like to come every day. it a very helpful service. Drop in for under 4s very necessarily helpful. Would be a real shame to lose these services.

Our children's centres provide an invaluable service for parents & children in the local community. They help with children development & help the well-being of parents & children.

I found play groups extremely important I am part-time mother & having few days when I can bring my only child to the play groups is very helpful to me. My child is able to socialise & learn skill we would not be able to spending time only with mum or adult in family. The centres are really good for babies & parents, it's the way to meet more parents like me.

My two girls have been coming to this children's centre Three Trees & others for 4 -5 years now. This service has been so important to us & many other parents & children who gain so much from coming to these sessions. It would be very sad & a big loss to see more centres close which so many children & parents benefit from.

I prefer children centres as they help my children learn lot new things than I would do at home. They definitely helped my child in learning, sharing & working in a group. I feel family hub will be over crowded/ busier & not pay attention to young children. Please keep the children's centres. Thank you. Would be helpful for children's centre to be open in the weekends for working families.

Please we really need the services keep the children centre open as they really support our little kids.

These sessions are really important to us as parent and new parent as it stops us being isolated.

I will be happy if you open child care services and teaching assistance courses.

The Children's Centre are life savers. Coming here has saved me from becoming depressed after giving birth.

Children's Centres were the best place for me and baby after giving birth. It allowed me to connect with other parents and help with developing baby.

These sessions are lifeline to parents/cares. The group are low cost/fee and plus it is a good way to parent to meet people, help my child's development and gain advice especially important to new parent and to those on low income. Brent offices currently without services that would impact many families if not available.

Children's Centre provide a good start for children and very helpful for children who need special care.

I have lived in Brent all my life + fortunate to come from a good supportive household. The importance of children centres is here for equal opportunities for all vulnerable families + children. I have found the worth + support provided to me by the Granville Children's Centre after the birth of the first child extra play. Without these services + support it would have made the first six months more challenging.

These services are very valuable and are run by dedicated, knowledgeable staff. Thank you
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<th><strong>Brent Children's Centre Consultation Report</strong></th>
<th><strong>August 2019</strong></th>
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| Thank you for all the help over pregnancy and following the birth  The children in Brent one fundamental to bringing our community together and making it a safe more loving place to live and thrive  Thank you to the fantastic services currently available, we need them.  
1. Have more midwifery checks locally To. 2. Clinics local. Sudbury gets very packed and busy - running often in the week would be ideal. 3. Teaching parents how to parent - Many do not know how to go about various issues, especially through development/sleep change. 4. Social events for stay at home parents. 5. Support with children with addition needs 6. Ideally more than one weigh-in clinic (Sudbury is quite far for me)  
Don't close the children's Centre.  
The Children's Centre have limited spaces (only 18) for stay and play and others sessions. Please increase more spaces for these sessions, because a lot of children would like to attend  
Granville centre is a very good place to be and the staff are very friendly and helpful at all time. Am always happy whenever I visit the centre  
We are very impressed with the range of services provided  
Thank! If you close two centres, it will take me two hours to reach the next closer one. I always get advice and help from this centre. I am a mother of three children I don't have a family to help me, this centre is the only place I get advice and help. Thanks!  
The centres are great and provide a valuable service. It's important that they stay available where possible.  
The services at Preston Park are great, we would appreciate it if the sessions could be for longer and on more than one day per week as there is a need for more sessions. The sessions get quite full quite fast and sometimes we get turned back  
The centres are so important as they provide a space to meet other local parents & a chance to get out the house & talk to adults. I have met a couple of very good friends which have been an invaluable support to me. Staff are lovely & there are lots of toys for my baby to play with I don't have at home. Thank you.  
Three Trees is a lovely children centre. The staff are wonderful and it provides a wonderful service to local families.  
It's such a shame children's centre are closing. With my 4-year-old daughter I had a 15-minute walk to my nearest (hope) no with 40 mils Three Trees.  
The services are good need move preventing workshop  
please do not close down, these sessions really help parents and their experiencing to help develop children  
very happy with smiles you are providing  
As a parent I think the services for under 5 years of age is very important, they give the children a warm welcome to school environment, play group are very educational for children under 5 in ways of what to expect ahead.  
We need children's centres, children happy children our future.  
children's centre is very helpful to meet others babies and have fun  
Children's Centres are literally a lifesaver for mums/dads who need to keep their children entertained and learning. It is extremely important for both parents and children. It is essential that they are always available for the well-being of both parents/children.  
Ensure this new Hub's do not become over crowded & also by mixing babies with no vaccines with kids (with older age range) who may be sick (e.g. smallpox) increase risk for babies becoming side and contagious at high risk. Beware of separating them as much as possible.  
Please keep Wembley Centre open.  
All excellent. Great service they need to stay open. Parents need some where for young children.  
This is a very good and important children's centre here. I use it almost every time I here to use a story is my child. I always have the feel at home atmosphere here this until should be kept open  
More activities walking distance and in the afternoon.  
I like to see play groups in the new hubs, also I like learning to the child. |
Where is a family hub? I am unclear from the information you provide what you are actually intend to change.

The overall service has been great.

We had a few issues arranging our child's developmental review. It was cancelled 3 times and re-arranged. Each time we had to chase them to organise the review. Finally, we sought assistance from the reception at one of the Children's Centre.

Local and easily accessible stay and play is so important. Having to travel is a disincentive and would inevitably lead to less attendance, and isolation for children.

More sessions

Children Centre are most useful for our children. We need more sessions.

Please carry on Stay and Play.

Children centre have been lifeline for me. It's made a huge difference having somewhere to go with my child where there is a friendly face and supportive safe environment. Please keep them open they are so important, especially first-time parents like me.

I wish the future children's group will be lucky enough to get all these facilities from the Council.

This CC are doing socially good by helping children with session where ability, skills, sensory and lot house things in their development process.

This centre is amazing and handy would be a big loss/shame if it was to be shut down.

Increase more than 2 day play its present restricted to two days

I find these Stay and Play sessions very helpful.

Appreciate any kind of similar activities and plays for children and parent, like stay and play sessions.

Need centres within 20 minutes' walk. Need more staff. Should be in-house not outsourced for better supervision of service. 4. Centres have been a real lifeline. 5. More centres needed not less

It is good that we can bring all kids together for different activates

Brent Council is providing an excellent service. It would be a shame if the council will have to go through a cut in funding.

I love having Wykeham centre close distance to us as I have 2 kids under 3 years old. Very difficult to get out and about. Prefers walking distance as can get there with getting on bus or parking with car. Lets talk and busy feet my kids definitly love benefit from language development wise. Helps them with confidence to need more longer sessions with let's talk singing.

We would like a website of Brent any information activities for families like me who wants activities for my 5-yr. old boy who is very active and having Autism. Thank You!!

The children's central local has been very useful and essential for developing my child's social and learning skills from before going to nursery and also during nursery time and my daughter really enjoys coming to the children's centre from age 2 - 4 and its open during the summer holidays as well. The children centres are needed as a social meeting point for mum's and social development for children.

I love having Wykeham centre close distance to us as I have difficulty to get out and about. I prefer walking distance as can get there without struggle from buses or parking with car. let's talk and busy feet my kids definitely benefit from language development wise.

thank you for quality of step up that course really affective

The current children's centre services are fantastic. The current sessions are helpful, although would prefer afternoon sessions of stay and play as well. Don't really like the idea of these family hubs -as they would not meet my needs. Unnecessary!! All you are doing is trying to save money Brent Council by making out you are doing more! Pathetic.

I cannot stress enough the need for child-minding session to continue at the above centres. "Every Child Matters" I want the children I currently registered in the centres or future children I may take care of to have the opportunity of using childminders sessions at those centres.

Was not born in the UK. Working parents who don’t have flexible working
I like the children centre and I am very happy with it. Brent Children's centres have been really valuable to me as a parent, with both my children. They are both of school age as on September and I shall miss the support and community provided by the centre. It would be great if the age value of children could be increased.

Children's centre is a great opportunity to seek advice, meet new mums learn new skills on a low fee charge.

I need more adult education such as ESOL.

Please don't close the children centres.

Children's centres are so important to the local community, particular those who are single parents or have learning difficulties. They are available to also cross the divide of wealth or lack of and provide a common meeting place to meet people and make friends, invading children / people lives.

I recommend that a compulsory charge of £1-2 is charged per session. Willow CC is fantastic.

The children centre has been a good venue for my children, is a place where can go and have fun.

The Willow is an excellent centre and should be kept running, very good professional. (Mamta)

The number of activities at the centre really helps the children to learn a lot. It improves them socially.

Please ensure the hubs include: (a) breastfeeding advice/ vacation consultants. (b) lots of baby classes ( massage, music sensory, baby yoga and baby signing classes) (c) Midwives – advice and weaning advice, (d) baby weighing (e) baby duet/food (f) fitness classes, crèche (g) cooking classes for making our baby food (h) first aid (babies/children)

Thanks. It's a great centre for kids and family.

Please don't shut down.

The children's centres are very helpful for my children.

The children's centre are a great place for my child’s development. we have received great support and it is easy to access because it is a walking distance and I have no car to drive to.

I would suggest a nursery should be near the house or work place where their parents can collect any time.

My child enjoys his time at the Children's Centre and he's becoming more social especially as we don't have other kids at home. He plays, learn and speak and spend good time with toys and activities.

Early education is very helpful and important to help and create foundation of life before they go school and also help parents to stay in paid work instead of expecting benefits from the government. I think early education is important for children and families.

Everything is ok.

Children's centres have helped me as a parent enormously.

Clinics are a great opportunity to meet other mums to discuss each other issues. Lot of time you don't know what service are available as a new parent these clinic help guide you to varies stage in our lives.

I used to attend playgroup 6 years ago and as a new mum. It built my confidence and guided me in the right direction to be a great mum. There were a lot of courses available and I think it is a really good idea to have Children's Centres.

Thank you for all the advice and fun at Three Trees.

We really love the stay and play.

I've found the children's centres a great resource for both my children and myself. Its invaluable for new mums to go out meet people make friends provide a safe stimulating place for the children to play and interact with other kids. I have attended and enjoyed many courses, stay and plays. I think there need to be more sessions. As a lot are over-subscribed and there needs to be more stay and plays locally.

The baby sessions at Mount Stewart have been fantastic and have allowed me to meet other local mothers. It would be amazing if this class could continue and Mamta has been brilliant.
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| "I would like to say this children centre is very helpful for children and their families and I think it should be more development in them such as increase the length of sessions for children and increase the services that they provided like let’s talk to help children grow and talk. I think by decreasing the number of children centres, many families will be not in services because when the number decrease the service also decrease." | "Children's centres are very important as it helps new parents, mothers with confidence. I remember when I had my first child it was better that I could not only have my post-natal servise but meeting other parents boosted my confidence."

I am a registered child minder. I live across the road. I have been working for 10 years and the children's centre has been very convenient. the kids I look after every Friday if the children's centre was going to close, I would feel very disappointed as I rely on the children's centre as a weekly routine. |
| "Don't close the children's centre" | "We really like Wembley children's centre. very helpful for everything. thank you." |
| "We feel very strongly that that the consultation should be accessible to parents/carers who cannot attend in the afternoon or evening due to family commitments" | "Children centres are great and useful place to support a child's development from our early age, especially when free nursery is only when the child turns 3 is a children centre is great place to develop social and skills and get support an advice from team of professional."

Services are helpful, they need to be more frequent and some new services are needed |
| "We would like for children activities in children's centres to stay running since it benefits a lot for us as parents of our children." | "We would like for children to feel safer when walking home from school due to increase in knife crime and bullying."

We would like for children activities in children's centres to stay running since it benefits a lot for us as parents of our children. |
| "A less to facilities on weekend for fathers is useful." | "We need to run this children's centre as it is very good." |
| "One thing that we benefited a lot from is the fact that the cc was able to create holiday activities for children to experience and keep emotions held high which was a very good benefit for us as parents." | "Very good service happy with it thank you." |
| "I am currently training with tavistock and portman in a psychodynamic observation course for children and families. If three trees children centre provides counselling service, I would like to volunteer for these sessions for work experience." | "Mount Stewart is the best children's centre like a home for parents."

There are very many mums in this area who will benefit from having the local children’s centre & keeping it active by incorporating more activities. The future of our children depends on these centres |
| "CAB more English and IT classes" | "The services provide at three tree has been brilliant and has benefited me and my daughter greatly over the last year." |
| "I understand that there is a genuine threat to the continuation of the children centres. to stay that this would be a transit of multi - generational, would not be understanding things. I can see that in one or two generations the effects of closures of these centres will be felt rounding scores of family’s poor social skills, anti-social behaviour, ejections difficulties are just a sample of the many symptom this will arise from these two crucial public services."

The services provide at three tree has been brilliant and has benefited me and my daughter greatly over the last year. |
| "Should be more sessions during week for stay, play and learn as there are good for development and do get busy." | "I feel the services you provide for parents and children are brilliant, the various facilities provided are a real asset to the community." |
| "Great sessions provided by cc" | "Baby sessions have been very helpful and fun" |
| "The stay and play sessions are life savers. by coming here with my son after giving birth saved me from depression." | "I have been attending CCs for last 8 years. I enjoy every activity. I have built good with all the EYPs and managers too. Please keep the activities open." |
As a mother of four young children, the children's centre plays a very important role in our lives. It is a safe fun environment for my children. I hope this will be always available for me and other mums in the future,

Keep a balance and variety of sessions running at all sites not just some and keep all sessions free and more breast-feeding support.

Please keep sessions under 1 more sessions at Mount Stewart as Monday class is useful.

I would like Mount Stewart CC to arrange baby sessions which have high attendance. It would be great to continue & have the babies group up to 1-2 years.

Hope these centres continue to provide these families in Brent. Also, as our borough is so diverse, the children and their centre tend to bring the community closer. So, this is a very good incentive to maintain these services.

Overall happy with the children's centre

Nice service

Family learning, stay and play 0-10 years

Playgroup is something good that helps the child to meet other kids and mix around. Since they are alone at home and watch television all the time. Would advise to continue the playgroup and help the kids to enjoy the activities.

Some sports activities for parents and children

Very happy with the services, is local, very close to get to, stay and play are good. Very nice staff.

Health visitors services very important, SLT and services open to all ages

The Mount Stewart mothers & baby group held on a Monday has been pivotal & very rewarding for our children. We would wish for that to continue.

These playgroup sessions helped many children to become a better toddler. Kindly consider not to avoid these sessions or changing the place too far. Thank you for providing these kinds of useful services. Keep doing it for the better development of children.

Inform some parents who are new in parenthood in GP. Because I was bit late about some facilities.

To continue the children's centre services & less stressful for new parents especially with young children.

Sessions that could start at 10.45/11.00. Sessions based promoting physical activities for under 5 groups for 2-3-year olds.

I would like if my kids get different kind of activities like football & cricket.

Children centres are amazing places to learn & develop for both parents & children. They help prepare children for school, socialising & help with wellbeing.

Mount Stewart children's centre has been fantastic since I started going there for prenatal clinics. Mamtta has been fantastic at organising baby massage & baby sessions as requested by us new mothers. However, I feel more can be done at the Mount Stewart children's centre especially for baby/toddler ages as there are approximately 10 new mums within walking distance of this children's centre. It is a great place to meet new people & have our babies interact.

Please provide more sessions at the Mount Stewart children's centre specific for babies (0-12 months) & toddlers (1-3 years). Thanks, you

This is very useful for my child's future.

We really rely on these services.

We need more children centres & large ones

We are pleased that Alperton children's centre is at walking distance from home. Makes a lot of difference as I can take my little one with no travel time involved. It provides good facilities & my baby enjoys her stay play session, mixing with other kids of her age group.

English classes are more helpful to do.

Don't close children's centres please

The children's centres help me as a mother to know more people & my children have fun & play, learn a lot of good things.

Children's centres are very good places for family children to play & learn.
We love the children centre & the children centre staff. very professional & welcoming!

I have been bringing my child to children centres since she was only 6 weeks old. I can see a massive difference in her behaviour & the children who only stay at home. children centre are essential for a healthy upbringing & well-being of a child as they provide a same site to support child's emotional, social & educational needs. I would be devastated to know if none are left.

Having a childrens centre near you is very helpful as travelling is hard with children/child in tow. this children centre (st. raphael) has & still helpful for us. We learned a lot going here, this place is wonderful. i hope more workshops & activities are available here, thank you!

I am mainly free on fridays & find that there aren't many stay & play sessions. they fall mainly on tuesday. more spread out services would be good.

thank you! god speed.

very good improvement, keep it up, well done.

as a first-time mum with no friends in the area, it took a lot of courage going to the children's centre for the first time. if my local centre hadn't been so close to home I would not have gone, this would have left me isolated, lonely & probably depressed with a baby under 1 year old. The proximity of the centre to my home made it more accessible to me. shutting down centres will mean people like me might not access their services.

All the staff are invaluable. friendly superstars. children's centres are an invaluable necessity in local communities & have been a lifeline to my family.

Please keep the services that give new parents a chance to access low cost/free services for the under 2's, stay & play, baby yoga/ massage, dad's group. they were so helpful when we first had our child.

staff are friendly & helpful. more information & advice to parents/carers/gr and parents for well-being of children. children centre should cater for working people too not just those with special needs as they can't afford child minders.

I am qualified journalist but have difficulty to get a decent job. My husb& is it professional. we pay all taxes & everything but in addition we just can't avail all other benefits. I am not talking about financial benefits here as we are specialist. I am saying to get an opportunity to get job & be financially independent & good citizen who pays taxes helps myself & to grow. as a women we need a chance to get employed that's all.

It is a great place to start with & thanks for that, as it helps with early learning & i would suggest to keep it universal for all families.

Yes. I read the planned consultation about changes to Brent children's centres. here is what i think about. I think the council does not give a damn about these services & Brent family priority. I believe it is vital & life changing experience for parents who attend these centres. It is absolutely absurd to reduce it in a time when the need is the greatest. We all know that 1 in 5 or 1 in 10 mum suffers from post-natal depression & these services for many is the only point of contact with outside world where parents do not feel alone & psychologically, emotionally get help from the centres. Many people attending these services from experience & knowledge of community "which you have no idea of" does have the ability to explain the benefit since English is not their first language. However, these benefit can be seen, if "people", responsible for cutting these services, get off their high post chair & spend 5 minutes in their/this community. Austerity has its limit! children are the most important people as they shape the future. these centres are great platform for them to develop social skills. I know my feedback will have no impact on your insensitive decision! However, i thought as a Brent resident it is important you know that i know you do not give a shit about us! i sorry for the language i could find any appropriate word to express myself.

These services are very good & baby enjoy very well & it's help my baby lots.

My daughter learns a lot from the children centres so i would request to provide more sessions for kids aged 0-3 years as to learn & talk more with other kids.

I feel like these centre are important for the community & are class important.

The children centre has helped me & other parents to gain confidence whilst learning a skill or seeking information. It has taken away the carelines you sometimes have difficulty to get a decent job. My husband is it professional. we pay all taxes & everything but in addition we just can't avail all other benefits. I am not talking about financial benefits here as we are specialist. I am saying to get an opportunity to get job & be financially independent & good citizen who pays taxes helps myself & to grow. as a women we need a chance to get employed that's all.

I love harmony centre; it is lovely place with amazing workers.
Appendix Three: Detailed findings from 29 informal interviews with parents/carers conducted by CC staff

17 July 2019 at Barham CC

A two-parent White family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 12 months or so approximately twice per week has one child aged 1 year. The parent reports mainly using Barham Children’s Centre and Alperton Children’s Centre. Other services the parent reports accessing in Brent are health related services such as health visitors and the GP. These are mainly accessed by walking.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that means she and her son keep coming back is that her ‘son loves it here….and loves to play other children here’ with benefits from attendance including ‘learning to walk here, to speak and learn songs.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2-3 per session is the right level of charge.

18 July 2019 at Barham CC

A two-parent White family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 18 months or so approximately 4-5 times per week has one child aged 2 years. The parent reports mainly using Barham Children’s Centre and also accessing a range of other services within Brent too. This includes playgroup, Vale Farm swimming and GP. These are mainly accessed by walking.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Children’s Centre operate so that she and her child keep coming back are talking to other mums and so her child can play and learn new things. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is ‘a place I can come with my daughter because she likes to be around kids.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates it would depend on the type of service.

29 July 2019 at Wembley CC

A two-parent Asian family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 2 years, approximately 2-3 times per week. The family has children aged 9 months and 2 years. The parent reports mainly using Wembley Children’s Centre and Preston Park Children’s Centre. The other services the parent reports accessing in Brent are parks, library. These are mainly accessed by walking, but from time to time they will also use their car or bus.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her child keep coming back are:

- The activities
- The variety of toys, such as sensory toys, sand and water which the family do not have this at home)
- How much children enjoy themselves
- Meeting other parents
• Being able to breastfeed with ease
• It’s very convenient. Having two young children, one who is mobile and the other can’t walk so this makes it easier. I find it safe and everything I need is so close e.g. baby changing facilities.

The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are:

• Getting out of the house which prevents the mum from being isolated. This is helped by how activities at the centre are very convenient, being close by and accessible.
• The children’s centre provides somewhere where children can learn and thrive, with the parent pointing to how her older child had grown in confidence, developed language and joining in song times. The older child wants to attend the centre ‘all the time’
• My older child has got her confidence from coming here. Her language has developed and she loves joining in at song time.
• My older child asks to come here all the time.
• Attending activities at the CC is very convenient. It is close by and accessible.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1.50-2 per session is the right level of charge. This mirrors the experience of family members using children’s centre services in Manchester.

The parent also shared the following additional comments:

“The important thing is that there are going to be more sessions. Families would definitely benefit from more sessions. I have been turned away previously when full and it’s very difficult as come prepared and have to go.

As a parent of two young children I totally rely on CC especially in winter season as sometimes this is the only place for us to come.

I feel comfortable to breast feed and it is much easier than going anywhere else. It’s the only place that I feel relaxed and confident that it’s safe for both my children and it not stressful.

I started coming when my older child was just 6 weeks old and the Children Centres have been so important for us – they have been a life line for me.”

31 July 2019 at Alperton CC

A two-parent Asian family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 6 months or so approximately 1-2 times per week. They have one child. The parent reports mainly using Alperton Children’s Centre. The other service the parent reports accessing in Brent is the library. These are mainly accessed by walking.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her child keep coming back are ‘lots of activities for my child’ and so that she can meet other parents in a friendly environment. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is ‘my child learns with other children.’
On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 per session is the right level of charge.

The parent identifies scope for improvement to better meet the needs of her family through having ‘more activities at Alperton Children’s Centre’.

31 July 2019 at Alperton CC

A two-parent Asian family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 12 months or so approximately 2-3 times per week. They have one child. The parent reports mainly using Alperton Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking and by bus.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her child keep coming back are that there are ‘good sessions for my child with lots of different toys. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is ‘my child can play with other children that live locally.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1-2 per session is the right level of charge.

31 July 2019 at St Raphael’s CC

A lone-parent Asian family in paid work using Children’s Centres approximately twice per week. The parent has children aged 11 months and 2 years, with the child aged 2 having additional needs. The parent reports mainly using St Raphael’s Children’s Centre and Harmony Children’s Centre, which are accessed by walking. The parent reports that her child also takes up 2-year early education at St Raphael’s Children Centre.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are:

- Activities and friendly staff
- Meeting other parents
- Access other services e.g. ESOL, CAB and parenting classes
- Good facilities

The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is that her child is more confident and interacts more with other children.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 per session is the right level of charge.

31 July 2019 at St Raphael’s CC

A family accessing Children’s Centres for the last year approximately once per week. The family has one child aged 23 months. The parent reports only using St Raphael’s Children’s Centre which is accessed by walking. The parent reports that her child also takes up 2-year early education at St Raphael’s Children Centre.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her child come back are the quality of resources and the friendliness of staff. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is that the child is more confident, playing more with other children and that ‘he likes to share now.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £5 per session is the right level of charge.
31 July 2019 at St Raphael’s CC

A family accessing Children’s Centres since January 2019, approximately twice per week. The family has children aged 9 months and 2.5 years, with the child aged 2.5 having additional needs. The parent reports mainly using St Raphael’s Children’s Centre and Three Trees Children’s Centre, which are accessed by car. The family reports that they also access Brent play centres and the swimming pool.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are: staff who run the session and their caring nature; referral for speech and language support to assist child’s speech delay; and access to a wide selection of toys. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are:

- Children learn about sharing and good interaction for the children
- Meeting other families
- Sharing issues with practitioners

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per session is the right level of charge.

31 July 2019 at St Raphael’s CC

A two-parent Asian family where both parents are in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 3 months approximately 2 times per week. They have one child aged 18 months. The parent reports mainly using St Raphael’s Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking.

The parent reports being happy with the services and the quality of staff and resources at St Raphael’s Children’s Centre. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is ‘my child is more confident.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £10-20 per session is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A lone-parent Black family in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 3 years, approximately twice per week. The family has two children, both aged 3 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Fawood Children’s Centre, which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access the Harlesden Library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are how friendly the staff are, the cleanliness of centres and the value of the 3 courses the parent attended. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres relate to the courses that have been attended and that it has helped the parent learn how to play with her children.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per child is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)
A two-parent White family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 3.5 years, approximately twice per week. The family has a child aged 3.5 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which are accessed by walking or bus. The family reports that they also access Harlesden Library sessions, swimming lessons and Roundwood Park.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the singing, playing with other children, new toys and different sessions. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is in mixing with other families.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Black family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for close to 4 years, approximately 3 times per week. The family has children aged 1 and 4 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access libraries at Willesden and Harlesden.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are stay and play sessions, the great range of courses on offer and staff friendliness. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is improved knowledge from courses the parent has attended.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per child per day is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent White family where both parents are in paid work using Children’s Centres for 3 years about once per fortnight. The family has children aged 6 months and 3 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access Roundwood Park and Monday sessions at Harlesden Library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the classes on offer and the lovely people. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are the interaction with other families and learning about child development.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that no charging should be introduced as this will mean some families that cannot afford to attend ‘will lose out on the children’s centre sessions’.

The parent also added ‘thank you for the brilliant services at Curzon Crescent. Please don’t close it.’

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)
A two-parent Arabic family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for about 1 year about once per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The family reports also accessing a childcare course, a first aid course and the Incredible Years parenting programme.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are that times suit and the staff are friendly at Curzon Crescent. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are gaining qualifications, understanding more about child development and the child’s improved communication and socialisation.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 is the right level of charge.

The parent also recommended that more activities and parenting courses should be offered.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Asian family using Children’s Centres for about 1 year about once per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The family reports also access a local sports centre.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the friendly staff and always feeling welcome. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are making friends, child’s confidence is improved, learning more about outdoors and that it easy to get to.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that this is okay and should be based on what people can afford.

The parent also recommended more activities for young children, as they will get more benefit from babies.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent White family where both parents are in paid work using Children’s Centres for 2 years about twice per week. The family has children aged 15 months and 4 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which is accessed by walking. The parent reports also accessing Harlesden Library and local parks.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are because of the chance to mix with other children, noting that her son found it hard to share at the beginning. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are making friends with other parents and her son playing well with other children.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1-2 is the right level of charge depending on how long the family stays at the session.
1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Asian family where both parents are in paid work using Children’s Centres for the last 6-9 months, approximately 3 times per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which is accessed by walking. The parent reports also accessing Harlesden Library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back is the chance to mix with other children which helps her daughter learn to share. The parent notes that her daughter ‘loves the stay and play sessions.’ The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are that it offers a safe, friendly and clean environment to take her child.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Asian family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for 1 year about once per fortnight. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Fawood Children’s Centre, which is accessed mainly by walking, but sometimes the bus. The family reports also access local parks.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back is helping her child to become very sociable, noting that the child is very active now. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are mixing with other families and supporting the child’s language development.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 is the right level of charge.

The parent also commented that I am very happy with the service.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent White family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres since 2014 about twice per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by car. The parent reports also accessing a local sports centre and library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the friendly staff, feeling welcome and the services. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are from ‘the wonderful courses they provide.’

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 is the right level of charge.

The parent also recommended:
• More support and activities for babies
• Teaching children about being useful members of the community e.g. helping with cleaning up in local parks.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A lone-parent Black African family where the parent is not in paid work using Children’s Centres for one month about once per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by bus. The parent reports also accessing a library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the friendly staff and the cleanliness of the environment. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are opportunities for both parent and child to socialise with other parents and children.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1-2 is the right level of charge.

The parent also recommended more activities for babies.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Black African family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres about once per week. The family has one child. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The parent advises that no other services are accessed in Brent.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the friendly staff, welcoming environment, the cleanliness and feeling supported. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is in relation to child development. The parent observes ‘my son is more confident, talking and mixing with others’.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £5 is the right level of charge.

1 August 2019 at Roundwood Park (a fun in the park session facilitated by staff from Curzon and Fawood Partnership)

A two-parent Black family where one parent is in paid work using Children’s Centres for 6 years, every day. The family has children aged 2.5 and 6 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The parent reports also accessing local parks and the library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are the courses, children having opportunities to play with other children and being able to talk with other parents. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres come from the courses that are she has completed and the helpfulness of staff.
On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £2 is the right level of charge.

The parent also commented that ‘I am happy with all the services.’

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A two-parent White family where both parents are in paid work have been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 3 years, approximately 3 times per week. The family has children aged 9 months and 3 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Fawood Children’s Centre, which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access Brent play centres and the swimming pool.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are that ‘the staff are all lovely and helpful’ and that she knows her children are safe. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are helping my child get ready for nursery and understanding my child’s development, especially speech and language development.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1-2 per session is the right level of charge.

The parent also commented that ‘I think the children’s centres are brilliant. It’s a shame some are being closed.’

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A working lone-parent White family has been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 3 years, approximately 3 times per week. The family has children aged 26 months and 5 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access the library and Willesden sports centre.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are that children get to socialise with other children and the parent gets to meet other parents. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is in supporting children’s development.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per session is the right level of charge.

The parent also commented that being happy with all that is offered.

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A two-parent White family where both parents are in paid work have been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 5 years, approximately twice weekly. The family has children aged 1, 3 and 5 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Harmony Children’s Centre, which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access the library, Willesden sports centre and once per month, Fathers in Brent.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are that children can get messy, the space and the toys. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is that children and parents can socialise no matter what the weather is like.
On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per session is the right level of charge.

The parent also commented about how helpful the parenting programme had been, giving the parent ‘so much confidence’.

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A two-parent Asian family where one parent is in paid work have been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 8 months, approximately once a fortnight. The family has a child aged 1.5 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access the library.

The parent reports that what they like about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that the family keep coming back are its proximity to their home and that their daughter enjoys the activities. The main benefits that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres are the quality of the space, enabling the child to be outside and all the activities.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that £1 per session is the right level of charge.

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A working lone-parent Black family has been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 5 years, approximately 3 times per week and in school holidays. The family has children aged 3 and 5 years. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre, which is accessed by walking and the bus. The family reports that they also access the library and Willesden sports centre.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are that it is something the children can do and it is helpful because it is free. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is that children can socialise with other children.

On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that the services should be free. The parent says that the family would not take up services with any charges.

The parent also commented that it would be helpful to have sessions which promote reading as having a child aged 5 years, there is not much offered for that age group.

5 August 2019 at Curzon Crescent CC

A two-parent Asian family where both parents are in paid work have been attending Brent Children’s Centres for 10 months, approximately three times per week. The family has a child aged 14 months. The parent reports mainly using Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre and Challenge Children’s Centre (now closed), which are accessed by walking. The family reports that they also access the library.

The parent reports that what she likes about how Brent Children’s Centres operate so that she and her children keep coming back are all the activities/sessions on offer and the opportunities for meeting other families. The main benefit that the parent reports from accessing Brent Children’s Centres is in supporting child development. The parent observes how ‘my child has now got used to having lots of people around her.’
On the potential of charges being introduced for some services not for families in greatest need, the parent indicates that different services might have different charges. That said, all charges would need to be small.

The parent also commented that with the closure of Challenge House Children’s Centre it is much harder for grandmother to walk to Curzon Children’s Centre with the 14 month old.
Appendix Four: Detailed findings from focus groups

Childminding network

Consultation activity took place with 10 of 11 childminders (caring for 20 children) on a 1:1 basis and in small groups on 10 July 2019. Childminders expressed unanimous views about the impact of the proposals for redeveloping and consolidating the number of Children’s Centres into Family Hubs. These are:

- it was important to retain provision for childminder network sessions within future service planning; and
- worries that there would be reduced or no provision for childminders.

The main reasons childminders considered childminder network provision as important to retain in future service planning are:

- supports children’s transitions and readiness for school. All CMs described how much the children benefit from consistent, regular opportunities with a larger group of children in a different learning environment. CMs described particularly the benefits to children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED) from regularly accessing the childminder network sessions. Specific examples shared include:
  - children being in a group context so that skills in sharing and turn taking have more opportunity for development.
  - children benefiting from group routines. For example, this included circle times and snack time where all children eat together at the table. This was noted by several childminders as especially helpful for the youngest children who copied other children’s good table manners.
  - children making friends with other children. Several childminders gave - examples of how parents valued their children forming friendships with other children. Parents would report to childminders how pleased they were when in the local community that their child/ren would be excited to run into and greet a friend.

- equal opportunity for all children within Brent. Most childminders reported that the Government and Brent Council actively encourages parents to work. As a result of parents working, parents sought childcare for their children. Childminders noted that if the parents were not working, they would attend the stay, play and learn activities and other sessions made possible through Children’s Centres with their children. Childminders felt that because they were caring for children, including those taking up the early education entitlement for more vulnerable two-year olds, these children were denied access to the same opportunities that are otherwise available for all children in Brent. This was regarded as ‘unfair’ and ‘discriminatory’.

- parents value children having access to a wider range of opportunities and experiences. Most childminders described the broader range of toys, books, messy play, indoor and outdoor equipment and other resources available through Brent Children’s Centres than is possible for them to routinely provide within their homes. At the same time, this is a safe child-friendly space for very young children. A couple childminders noted particularly the benefits of access to sessions within Children’s
Centres in bad weather. As one childminder noted, ‘Children’s Centres are god send and parents are really pleased we are still giving children opportunities to safely meet and socialise with other children and have different good quality experiences.’

While several childminders described accessing other local provision especially libraries where story time or rhyme time sessions took place, other provision did not provide the breadth of opportunities and experiences that is available for very young children through sessions at Children’s Centres.

- **supports early identification of potential needs and next steps for children’s development.** Several childminders described how the opportunity for them to observe the child they cared for in a different group context helped improve the quality of their assessment work with children. This included identifying challenges a child may have within the group context and benefiting from the insight of other childminders about potential difficulties a child may be experiencing and where/how they can access relevant support for the child.

- **supports improvements in childminder practice and reduces childminder isolation.** Most childminders described the benefits that come from information sharing and working together with colleagues. For example, different childminders lead activities in each of the weekly network meetings which is an opportunity to learn from other childminders. Several also commented on how childminding ‘can often be quite an isolating experience’ so the chance to catch up with colleagues supported their own professional development and motivation.

A general view expressed by most childminders through the discussions is that because they are paid, there is a perception that somehow the children they care for already have their needs met and so should not be prioritised for support through Children’s Centres. Several noted that there had been a progressive reduction in opportunities for childminders to come together at, and access opportunities for children at Children’s Centres over the last several years. Sessions were now available only at children’s centres based at St Raphael’s, Three Trees and Curzon Crescent. They were keen that at a minimum this level is sustained and ideally that it is expanded. A recurring theme as expressed by one childminder was ‘I would feel really sad if they are closed.’

Most childminders said that all they required was the space (in morning slots) and access to the resources, given that they were responsible for set up/clear up, snacks and items such as paper, glue and other consumables used in activities. A couple childminders said they would be open to parents also attending these sessions with their children to; noting this can also help with sustaining stay, play and learn activities and support their own business development. A couple childminders also said they are open to paying a nominal fee to sustain the sessions.

**On most important services, childminders prioritised the childminder network events.**

**Other key services for families with very young children which were highlighted are:**

- early years speech and language (suggested by most)
- parenting support
- support for families where English is an additional language
- support for young parents such as with weaning
- information and advice that promotes good oral health
On Family Hub development, several childminders also shared their thoughts on family hubs. Those who did share views were supportive of whole family working and offering support for parents with children at different ages and stages, with two childminders describing the importance of supporting young people to stay safe given rising knife-crime and gang related violence. One childminder also suggested weekend sessions which support community cohesion and developing social capital, such as through families sharing and eating food together.

Parents with greater levels of need accessing the Mellow Parenting Programme

Consultation activity took place with 10 parents accessing the Mellow parenting programme at Harmony Children’s Centre on 10 July 2019. The session also included two programme facilitators and the Brent Council Cabinet Lead Member for Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care.

Parents described their primary motivations for attending Children’s Centres as:

- **a chance to get out of the house and do something in a safe environment**
  
  Several parents shared experiences of feeling very isolated, stressed and without friends and support prior to their take up of support from Children’s Centres. They highlighted that mainly through health visitor signposting they had learned about and started to attend local Children’s Centres. The parents shared how transformational the experience had been for them. They described how much they value having made friends and catching up with them through the sessions and programmes they access. They also felt these had helped them feel calmer, less stressed and isolated, better supported and more knowledgeable about what is available locally.

- **to help their children get ready for school.** Parents highlighted particularly opportunities for children to interact with other children and stay, play and learn activities and/or creche that runs alongside parenting programmes/adult education that is delivered by appropriately skilled staff.

On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, parents highlighted:

- stay, play and learn activities with access to outdoor space. Several parents described how they do not have outdoor space and that especially during winter and/or when it is raining, having access to activities at Children’s Centres for their children is crucial.

- peer support and learning activities such as through parenting programmes, breastfeeding support and classes such as sewing and ESOL. On adult and parenting education, parents also described it was crucial that these have free attached creche provision. For 8 of 10 parents, they said they would not be able to attend adult and parenting education if free creche was not made available.

- child and maternal health services such as midwifery and health visiting. Several parents also indicated value to making available support for parents experiencing depression and low mood.

- having trips and outings for very young children, especially for those families experiencing financial stress and hardship. Several parents reinforced how valuable
these broadening experiences had been for their children given they could not afford to do so themselves.

- support for dads and male carers. Several parents also highlighted how it was important that this provision was accessible throughout the week.

Parents highlighted key service characteristics most important for their taking up support through Children’s Centres and that should inform future service planning:

- services are free. One parent described how deposits used to reserve places for dads to participate in a programme discouraged participation as they lacked the means, notwithstanding the refundable deposit.

- appropriately skilled staff that are non-judgemental, friendly and welcoming

- centres not being crowded, with a couple parents reporting that Fawood and Alperton Children’s Centres particularly were ‘too small’.

- easy to access, with many parents very worried about the distance involved in travelling to relevant support with a consolidation of the number of Children’s Centres. Several parents noted that catching buses or other forms of public transport can be too costly. They also said that given the time involved in getting child/ren ready and out the door to then need to catch one or more buses to attend a session and do the same returning home, would dissuade them from attending.

- good quality advertising that provides clear information about available support. For example, several parents reported they did not find existing information in brochures and online sufficiently informative about the purpose and benefits of some activities.

On Family Hub development, several parents also shared their thoughts. Those who did share views were supportive of whole family working and offering support for parents with children at different ages and stages, so having opportunities for instance in summer holidays/half term where parents could attend sessions with children of different ages would be much appreciated.

Some parents shared worries about how scheduling may reduce provision for families with very young children; because of fewer centres offering broader services for families with children aged to 18 (and 25 where child with SEND). in the same way, they worried about particular centres they attended being closed where they had formed relationships with staff and their children also felt comfortable and indeed excited about attending.

Multiagency partners

Consultation activity took place with 4 partners not directly providing services to families Harmony Children’s Centre on 10 July 2019. This included those with roles at Barnardo’s, CAB, Early Years Advisory Teaching and Health Visiting.

On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, partners highlighted:

- a comprehensive offer for children in the early years which recognises the role of Children’s Centres in supporting early development and early intervention, given that supporting families to ‘change is hard’ (e.g. eating healthier, parents feeling confident about their children taking up early education entitlements when they have no experience or understanding of early education including how it is made available
and how it can benefit children, parents learning and embedding consistent approaches to managing children’s behaviour, supporting children’s positive relationships, routines around sleep, mealtimes and so on).

As one partner said it ‘is a completely different ethos’ to information, advice and interventions delivered by health visitors and nurseries, childminders and other childcare settings. Some partners said they felt that there was growing and false perception that health visitors could largely deliver early development and early interventions for the youngest children, with this then taken forward by childcare providers when children become 2-3 years, whereas:

- health visitors rely on Children’s Centre activities to help identify and offer most interventions that secure good outcomes for very young children and parents (and this included with parents that are supported through the Maternal Early Sustained Health Visiting service (MESH); and
- most children do not access childcare provision until age 3 and the proportion of children aged 2, 3 and 4 taking up early education entitlements in Brent has been reducing.

- universal services forming a core component of the service offering. Partners describe the risk otherwise that early years services become ‘a branch of social services’ and so stigmatise available support. This will limit families voluntarily taking up the support that will help them, until they are in crisis.

In addition, partners recommended that more should happen as part of the universal offer to address childhood obesity, oral health and children’s PSED.

- stay, play and learn activities given their role in fostering community development and self-help amongst diverse families and communities, aiding children’s development and providing a space for early identification of children and families with additional needs.

Partners recognised these may increasingly form part of a satellite offer led by voluntary and community sector groups associated with individual Family Hubs rather than be directly delivered by the Council and or Council commissioned services. It was considered ‘essential’ to ensure that these settings were well supported so that Family Hubs were confident about the ethos, quality and ability of practitioners facilitating these activities to effectively and quickly identify and support children and families access any targeted early help.

- childminding networks. It was noted that while children that access childminders tend to progress better in their communication and language and behavioural regulation than children in group settings, children in group settings tend to progress better in their PSED (especially pro-social behaviour and emotional regulation). This reflects key research findings\(^8\).

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• supporting good transitions for children to school. For Children’s Centres, this is particularly focused on those children not accessing early education and helping parents understand the impacts of, and successfully support their children’s transition to school. One partner noted this can work especially well where there are strong partnerships with schools.

Partners also describe key gaps as (1) a lack of provision for working mums/female carers; and (2) in having weekend activities that support the whole family. There were suggestions about having ‘Saturday morning cinema’ where families can come together to relax and have fun as a family and meet/form relationships with other families. It was noted by one partner that dads had fed back about Brent Children’s Centre dedicated activities for dads and children taking place on a Saturday as not suitable for many of them as Saturday was a day where families can often all be together.

**Partners highlighted key service characteristics most important for families taking up support that should inform future service planning:**

• high quality staff, including especially front of house staff. Front of house staff were identified as essential to supporting families access the right support quickly. Partners described the importance of these staff having the:
  
  o know-how to effectively assess family needs
  
  o knowledge of available support and the skills and confidence to help families access the support (e.g. booking systems must be very simple and service directories were considered insufficient. Partners noted these should be *alive*)
  
  o knowledge and skills about what to do when something goes wrong e.g. who to contact when the family turns up for an appointment on a different day, a key practitioner is not available etc. There was the suggestion by partners about how moving to a Family Hub model should support a shared responsibility approach to managing this eventuality.
  
  o knowledge of, and skills to effectively work with families with more complex needs (e.g. the ‘toxic trio’ of domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance and alcohol misuse)

• staff which reflect the local community. As much as possible staff will speak relevant community languages

• printing information about available support in different languages and using pictures

• grounding service planning and scheduling based on ongoing assessment of the local community

• SMS notifications (ideally in relevant languages) to families to remind them of appointments and services they might find useful, based on an understanding of their needs and circumstances. This will help reduce families not attending appointments (DNAs) and help families connect with opportunities on a more ongoing basis.

**On key worries from the proposed reduction of Children’s Centres and redevelopment of other Children’s Centres to Family Hubs, partners highlighted:**
• worries about the cost and distance that may be involved in travelling to relevant support. It was noted that this will discourage some families from taking up the support they require until problems have escalated. In addition, partners reported that as families with more chaotic circumstances are more likely to miss appointments generally, this will be made more challenging the further away from home an appointment might be.

• what is the universal offer once targeted support ends with a family? What are the opportunities for stepping families down?

• operational issues that need to be worked through to support safe working (e.g. if fewer venues are delivering baby clinics, demand is likely to be higher at these times), how decisions about access to space within Family Hubs are managed and how different services work together when they have different rules (e.g. who keeps a Family Hub open later in the evening? Speech and language therapy is reported to have requirements to never be left on their own in a centre).

On Family Hub development, partners also shared their thoughts. They were strongly supportive of the enhanced ‘one-stop shop’ potential to cater for a wider range of family needs, given the extended age-range. Partners consider that there is more to do with schools particularly, so appropriate space can be utilised outside the school day for service delivery. Partners identify this has scope to enhance the community offer.

Partners suggested commissioners develop integrated systems for registering families and sharing information about families within the Family Hub. There were worries about whether this might happen and its impacts on efficiency and providing the most effective early help for all families that will benefit from this. Associated with this, were suggestions about reducing administrative burden and having clarity and simplicity in data recording and reporting processes.

Partners also recommended developing local governance arrangements for each Family Hub involving key statutory and voluntary and community sector services (and families) within the area of that Family Hub. This was considered important to encourage partnership work, information sharing and mutual understanding about local services.

Parents, Willow Children’s Centre

Consultation activity took place with 14 parents with 5 having children with SEND on 12 July 2019. On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, parents highlighted:

• early years speech and language, with parents describing poor experience of speech and language services for older age children. One parent said, ‘it is too little and all they do is give you a plan’. Associated with this was the value of Makaton training to support children’s communication and language development for all children and particularly those where children with SEND.

• stay, play and learn activities as these are non-stigmatising, encourage networking between parents and children’s PSED and help with early identification of children with SEND.

• baby massage.
• soft play and opportunities to develop children’s physical skills, such as swimming and outdoor play. The latter was regarded as especially important given balancing of parental concerns about the safety of very young children (e.g. in the community and in parks) and lack of outdoor play opportunities for many children, both through lack of appropriate equipment and the extent to which many children live in accommodation without any outdoor space.

Parents also highlighted other important services for children of different ages. This includes extra tuition for school age children and the promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) amongst children. For parents with children with SEND, they were especially concerned that there was:

• insufficient provision for their children and families. This included access to places within special schools, with parents describing their children being on waiting lists for access to places.

• poor quality provision. One parent described feelings of extreme frustration about her child with additional needs having had 5 minutes of specialist support in 2 years. Other parents also commented that support for Brent families with children with SEND of all ages was often fragmented, characterised by waiting lists and staff ill equipped to offer assistance which addresses the range of needs of the family. Several parents did want acknowledgement, however, that Willow Nursery in Brent was very good at caring for and supporting the development of their children with SEND; and supporting them as parents.

Parents highlighted key service characteristics most important for their taking up support through Children’s Centres and/or other types of services and that should inform future service planning:

• appropriately skilled, knowledgeable staff. Core to this, parents agreed was having consistency with staff teams. Parents described how relationship building was crucial to building trust with staff. In turn, this enabled parents to open up and have more difficult conversations about their needs. In addition, this helped avoid parents repeatedly resharing their needs and circumstances with different staff.

• easy to access, with many parents very worried about the distance involved in travelling to relevant support with a consolidation of the number of Children’s Centres. As with other focus groups involving parents and staff, several parents noted that catching buses or other forms of public transport can be:
  
  o too costly; and
  o the time involved in getting child/ren ready and out the door to then need to catch one or more buses to attend a session and do the same returning home, would dissuade them from attending.

Suggestions by parents to help overcome this worry included having additional provision within community settings (satellites to the Family Hubs) and using mobile buses to help promote and make at least some information, advice and assistance available on an outreach basis.

• person or family-centred support models, with parents who have had support from key workers (e.g. through Brent Family Solutions) recommending this model as the
basis for Family Hub service design.

- easily understood and well promoted services. Parents described how it was not always clear what different services mean. They suggested involving parents in local governance arrangements to provide advice to inform local information and communication strategies about available services.

**On Family Hub development**, parents also shared their thoughts. Parents were strongly supportive of:

- A dedicated SEND hub for families with children with SEND, albeit noting it was important that there was support for these families across all hubs
- Whole family working
- Offering support for parents with children at different ages and stages, so that there are opportunities in summer holidays for instance where parents could attend sessions with children of different ages.
- Hubs that are open longer and on weekend. This was especially well supported by working parents and identified as especially beneficial to working parents. One parent noted for instance that she had attended the focus group while ‘being at work’ because she felt it was so important to inform the consultation about the needs and experiences of her family.
- Having drop-in advice and support for parents, including by telephone.

As with other parents and staff, recommendations were made about having sensitivity in scheduling to ensure useful activities are appropriately spaced throughout the week and that families with very young children for example are not discouraged from attending because a session they want to attend means they will share waiting rooms or in other ways cross over with a cohort of young people and/or families that are overly challenging.

Parents also indicated that for drop-in advice and support for parents to have value and encourage support for Family Hubs, front of house staff must be highly knowledgeable and effective in linking families to the right support. Parents also suggested improving attendance at activities/sessions within Family Hubs through using SMS notifications to remind families about appointments and to promote relevant services.

There were also recommendations that parents are invited to form part of any final testing group of the Family Hub service specification.

**Multidisciplinary staff**

Consultation activity took place with 8 staff who deliver services to children and families across the existing Brent Children’s Centres at Granville Plus Children’s Centre on 17 July 2019. As well as staff working with Barnardo’s, a midwife and two staff working with Brent Family Solutions participated.

**On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, staff highlighted:**

- the importance of having dedicated under 5 provision to support early identification and encourage children’s early PSED and communication and language.
- universal and drop-in support for families with very young children. These were regarded as key to early identification of need, proving especially useful in supporting relationship building between families with greater levels of need and
professionals. These were also regarded as especially useful in reducing social isolation and encouraging self-help and community amongst families.

On key worries from the proposed reduction of Children’s Centres and redevelopment of other Children’s Centres to Family Hubs, staff highlighted:

- the consolidation and move to more targeted provision reducing the number of universal and drop-in style sessions.
- concerns about the footprint of the proposed Family Hubs meaning that some young people/families will not access the support they need because they need to travel much further and/or to places that they do not feel safe, with in some cases gang activity preventing people going to particular areas.

To help mitigate these worries, staff recommended:

- community-based provision outside of Family Hubs of some Children’s Centre services such as stay, play and learn and community health. It was recommended by some staff that this include a focus on the areas of Neasden, Willesden and Dollis Hill where the gaps in provision were reported greatest.

It was also suggested that if more stay, play and learn activities are undertaken in the community, work with these settings was necessary to ensure that these offer good quality early years provision. This includes that they have sufficient know-how to identify early children/families most likely to benefit from targeted early help.

- scheduling for Family Hubs include drop-in opportunities and parenting workshops for families with very young children as distinct from families with children aged 5+.
- sensitive scheduling so that midwifery and health visiting services for example are offered at different times to when a cohort of young people not in education, employment or training might be accessing the Family Hub.
- having staff undertake more outreach and home visits, albeit that staff also identified that this will result in reduced numbers of children and families being assisted.
- offering support for families with children with SEND across all Family Hubs not simply at the SEND Hub.

On Family Hub development, staff also shared their thoughts. They were supportive of:

- a single SEND Hub, given challenges families with children with SEND face having their needs met. At the same time, staff expressed worries about having one SEND Hub if SEND support was not accessible across all Family Hubs, given transport/cost difficulties for many families.
- more services co-located that means more families can have their needs met in one place. This was cited as supporting more effective information sharing between multidisciplinary staff. For example, Brent Family Solutions staff gave examples of informal information sharing with health colleagues within Children’s Centres speeding up families’ access to relevant information and advice.
- extended age-range and opportunities for parents to access advice and assistance relevant to children of different ages.
opportunities for working parents to have access to support in the early evening and weekend.

Advisory board members and schools

Consultation activity took place with 7 representatives of advisory boards and schools at Brent Civic Centre on 22 July 2019. This included headteachers from 3 primary schools and 1 secondary school (three of which have Children’s Centres that are proposed to be redeveloped as Family Hubs and one which will cease and the school will take over), a Children’s Centre Advisory Board Chair (also a governor at a school which has a Children’s Centre which will cease and the school will take over) and representatives of Brent Start and Barnardo’s. The session also included Brent Council Cabinet Lead Member for Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, the Brent Head of Early Years and Brent Children’s Centre Quality Improvement and Early Years Project Lead.

This consultation had a considerably different emphasis to other focus groups. Attendees understood the rationale for the proposed closure of some Children’s Centres and broadly welcomed the proposed redevelopment of remaining Children’s Centres into Family Hubs recognising the importance of easily accessible, early help for parents with children across a wider age-range and more holistic service delivery that meets the wider needs of families for example. Overall, there was also a strong consensus that the most significant common need is parenting.

Attendees indicated areas for more information. They felt that there was insufficient clarity about:

- The overall strategy and ambition of Family Hubs and how these will operate. This was discussed further in relation to plans for appropriate governance models and managing performance. The Head of Early Help advised that decisions about governance and management models are anticipated later this year and that KPIs will be developed alongside the detailed final service specification. This will occur further to Cabinet decisions in October 2019 to progress proposals for closing and redeveloping some Children’s Centres as Family Hubs.

- The business cases which informed the proposals about Children’s Centres that close and those to redevelop as Family Hubs. In a couple cases, headteachers said they did not ‘feel involved and it doesn’t sit right’, with decisions presented as a ‘fait accompli’. This was reported as particularly so with the proposed redevelopment of Church Lane Children’s Centre into a Family Hub.

- How existing staff at Children’s Centres are supported, kept informed and what this may mean for them in any new service model. This was discussed further given that decision making about the management models for Family Hubs (e.g. in-house, outsourced, hybrid) is not yet agreed. The Head of Early Help also advised about existing Brent Council arrangements with Barnardo’s, Curzon and Fawood Partnership and Preston Park school all scheduled to end in August 2020, with current proposals designed on the basis of a September 2020 ‘go live’ date. Further communication and consultation activities are expected throughout future stages of project design and implementation.

- How families will be identified as benefiting from targeted support from Family Hubs. The Head of Early Help described how universal services including information and
advice services (e.g. the Children and Families Information Service), health visiting, midwifery, GPs, early education services for children aged 3-4 years and schools provided as a right to children, young people and their families, including those whose needs are also met within targeted and/or specialist and statutory services, will continue to have a key role in identifying children and families that require extra support. Families may also self-refer into these services or may just need access to information, guidance and signposting.

- Worries were also expressed about the distance from home for some families attending Family Hubs which may discourage them attending until they are in crisis. There was discussion about the traditional catchment area focus of Children’s Centres will no longer operate. Families will have the opportunity to access relevant services across Brent.

- How schools and other services are knowledgeable about and will promote support that benefits families with children aged 0-4 before and when the service model might change.

There were also specific issues relevant to the circumstances of individual attendees. This includes:

- Arrangements with a private nursery leased by one school which occupies some of the existing Children’s Centre.

- Operational issues that need to be worked through such as in respect of caretaking, insurance and keeping people safe if older age children and young people are accessing Family Hubs, more people are accessing Family Hubs and more people are attending Family Hubs over an extended day and weekend.

- For schools which will take over space used by Children’s Centres what the level of expectation is on them in continuing some support for families with very young children (which they are keen to do)

- How services will be scheduled within Family Hubs given that some services such as Brent Start make good use of some Children’s Centres that will close. The attendee was keen to make sure that in any ‘scramble for space’ that adult education is not marginalised.

Multidisciplinary staff

Consultation activity took place with 9 staff who deliver services to children and families across the existing Brent Children’s Centres at Brent Civic Centre on 22 July 2019. As well as staff working with Barnardo’s, a perinatal midwife also attended. The Brent Head of Early Years and Brent Children’s Centre Quality Improvement and Early Years Project Lead also attended.

On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, staff highlighted:

- early years speech and language services. This was considered of greatest importance by several staff.

- stay, play and learn activities. There was discussion about how these build relationships with families and offer scope for early identification and signposting of
families to relevant early support, well before any escalation of problems. It was also observed that these support children’s socialisation skills, especially those not attending other types of group provision.

- transition support for children and families. This included supporting parents with strategies to mitigate the emotional impacts of transition on children and parents. There was also discussion about staff experiences with parents who have no knowledge of how the schools admissions process works.

- welfare rights advice of the type offered through Brent Children’s Centres by Citizens Advice Bureau. Staff described how ‘parents find very helpful’ this assistance, especially from the significant cuts to legal aid services by the UK Government. Staff also identified that families on low incomes and those without recourse to public funds have been able to avoid significant crisis as a result of this support.

- availability of SEND support at all Family Hubs, not solely the SEND Hub. There was strong support amongst staff for the concept of a one-stop shop for families with children with SEND, but subject to inclusive and accessible services at all Family Hubs and some scheduled provision for families with children with SEND across the Family Hubs.

Staff also suggested other services which are missing or difficult to access, both for families with very young children and those with children aged 5+. These include:

- CAMHS and greater availability of mental health support for children and young people. A staff member shared an example of a child aged 7 years with a history of suicidal ideation, researching online how to commit suicide and self-harming, who has been on a waiting list for services for 12 months.

- Befriending support especially for families that are new to Brent and/or the UK (and so not that this support was only available through applying to the Early Help Panel). It was suggested that this could be undertaken by volunteers, with appropriate support and coordination.

On key worries from the proposed reduction of Children’s Centres and redevelopment of other Children’s Centres to Family Hubs, staff highlighted:

- The impact on existing staff with concerns about whether these arrangements would lead to redundancies. In addition, staff shared concerns about whether they may be expected to work with a wider age-range and whether they would have access to training to ensure they had the right know-how to do so.

As discussed at focus group 3.6, the Head of Early Help advised about existing Brent Council arrangements with Barnardo’s and Curzon and Fawood Partnership scheduled to end in August 2020, with current proposals designed on the basis of a September 2020 ‘go live’ date. The Head of Early Help also described how no decisions about what type of management model would apply but (1) further communication and consultation activities will occur throughout future stages of project design and implementation; (2) even if there was a change in provider, TUPE arrangements will apply for similar roles in any future model; and (3) early years specialism continues to be required, with access to training a continuing priority.
• the distance involved in travelling to relevant support with a consolidation of the number of Children’s Centres discouraging some families from accessing support until a point of crisis. Worries were expressed specifically in relation to the planned closure of Wykeham Children’s Centre. There was discussion about how some families stopped accessing Children’s Centres.

Staff suggested this could be mitigated by increased outreach and increased community based or satellite activities of Family Hubs. There were suggestions that some of the schools which no longer have on-site Children’s Centres should provide some continued services for families with children aged 0-4.

On Family Hub development, staff also shared some thoughts. There was support for offering support for parents with children at different ages and stages and dedicated provision for SEND (albeit mindful of bullet point 5 about most important services).

At the same time, the focus group reported that it will be essential to show sensitivity in scheduling to assure the comfort of those attending a Family Hub at any given time. There were also specific suggestions about modifying entrances to Preston Park Primary School to help with this if proposals for a Family Hub are confirmed at the site (as also discussed in the previous focus group).

Multidisciplinary staff
Consultation activity took place with 19 staff who deliver services to children and families across the existing Brent Children’s Centres at Curzon Crescent Children’s Centre on 23 July 2019. As well as staff working with Barnardo’s and the Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership, a therapist from the commissioned speech and language therapy service participated. The Brent Children’s Centre Quality Improvement and Early Years Project Lead also attended.

On most important services for families with children aged 0-4, staff highlighted:

• the importance of having dedicated under 5 provision. Several staff reported worries about some local authority areas having cut most under 5 provision as they move to Family Hubs. It was suggested that ringfencing resources specific for under 5s could help mitigate this risk.

• universal provision including particularly stay, play and learn activities. These were reported as crucial to ‘relationship building’ and ‘for early intervention’. Associated with this, many staff also discussed the importance of universal provision within Children’s Centres as helpful to ‘destigmatising’ access to more targeted provision.

One staff member shared after the focus group, that some parents at Willow and Mt Stewart Children’s Centres suggested introducing nominal charges for stay and play activities if this would help sustain these services within Family Hubs.

• partnerships with health so that a substantially more integrated early years offer with key child and family health services is offered.

• availability of SEND support at all Family Hubs, not solely the SEND Hub. This was reported as important because: (a) as much as possible SEND support should be available within mainstream settings as part of an inclusive approach; and (b) to recognise the challenge for some families travelling to a single hub dedicated to
**SEND within Brent.** At the same time, it was also noted by several staff members that existing SEND drop-in has not been well attended.

- support for dads and male carers and making available activities that promotes intergenerational work.

The focus group discussed ideas about the availability of most universal stay, play and learn activities being available within the community. They felt that this should supplement some provision from within Family Hubs. Moreover, staff agreed that it was crucial that any community-based provision supports access and inclusion. Examples cited include about faith and disability. For example, some families will not attend provision available from establishments operated by faith groups and it will be important to ensure that any community-based provision is inclusive of, and accessible to families with disabilities/SEND.

**On key worries from the proposed reduction of Children’s Centres and redevelopment of other Children’s Centres to Family Hubs, staff highlighted:**

- worries about the distance involved in travelling to relevant support with a consolidation of the number of Children’s Centres. This would dissuade some families from accessing Children’s Centres, which would limit the ability for early identification of need and engagement with families most likely to benefit from early support to build resilience and limit problem escalation. This was highlighted as having already occurred with some families that had accessed support from the Challenge House Children’s Centre.

- gaps in provision, with some staff members describing some centres earmarked for closure as having significant footfall. The specific examples cited were Welcome and Barham Children’s Centres so that the remaining Children’s Centre within the existing Wembley Team 1 locality, Alperton, would be the sole remaining Children’s Centre. This was referred to by one staff member as a ‘gap in provision for Sudbury’.

There were worries about where these families might go to access support, with the particular risk that they would not go anywhere and that family problems might escalate. While it was noted that it is welcome in the proposals for future service development that

**On Family Hub development,** staff also shared some thoughts There was support for whole family working, offering support for parents with children at different ages and stages, dedicated provision for SEND (albeit mindful of bullet point 4 about most important services) and making provision available at times that suit families better e.g. working parents/families attending twilight and weekend provision.

At the same time, the focus group reported that it will be essential to show sensitivity in scheduling to ensure that everyone attending a Family Hub at any given time feels safe. There were worries also about having children and young people of different ages attending Family Hubs at the same time. It was noted by several staff that this is already a problem for Children’s Centres which are adjacent to secondary schools and so very young children hear inappropriate language for example of pupils.

In addition, it was noted by several staff that if longer hours and delivered over more days per week, there would need to be adequate resourcing/budgeting for this to occur. There will also likely be impacts on insurance, caretaking etc.
Several staff also are keen to understand more about planned service models and what it might mean for retraining (e.g. working with a wider age-range of children and young people), potential restructuring and possible TUPE to any new provider.