

## **Appendix 1**

### **Analysis of the Children's Centre Have Your Say consultation question responses**

11<sup>th</sup> November was the start of conversation with parents/carers, staff, partners and other residents in Harrow about the options for proposed changes to Children's Centres' services, linked to Harrow Council's challenge ahead of delivering £83 million of cuts to its budget over the next four years with 1.89 million from Children's Services.

Consultation took place between the dates Tuesday 11th November 2014 through to Sunday 4th January 2015.

10 event dates were set up across the Children's Centre network offering 19 sessions including 9 specific focus groups, 3 each for; staff, parents and key partners.

1,000 plus surveys distributed

1,000 plus booklets distributed

27 in depth conversations

Over 75 face to face conversations

19 'have your say' event sessions

#### **There were many ways used to gain views:**

- online survey at [www.harrow.gov.uk/CCconsultation](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/CCconsultation)
- Fill in a paper copy of the survey, available at all Children's Centres
- Join the conversation on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/harrowcc](http://www.facebook.com/harrowcc)
- Drop in to one of 18 'Have Your Say' engagement events

The standard online platform the council uses for hosting surveys: Have Your Say Objective system was used to record all online and hard copy survey results.

A best practice EqIA stakeholder group was set up met on 3 occasions with positive results in assessing the responses received to the consultation and therefore allowing intervention to support increased representation from underrepresented groups.

- 504 participants took part in the survey and were entered on line

- 371 of these were hard copy and entered by Harrow council staff
- Final report from the objective entry was created on 7.1.2015
- 16 emails
- 7 phone calls
- 13 letters from head teachers, school governors, preschools managers, LSCB chair, Clinical Commissioning Group, North West London Health Trust.
- 2 parent led petitions and 1 school/governor led petition with a total of 1,065 signatures

The response was considered by communications colleagues to be a 'good' response.  
There were 3 petitions received with a total of 1,065 signatures.

There is a belief that the petitions had an impact on the number of people completing the consultation survey and there was some confusion about the council's Take Part consultation as people said they had completed a survey and it then emerged that it was the Take Part survey they had completed and not the Children's Centres one. This belief follows feedback received by staff at centres and at the planned 'events' held.

The response via the Objective system has offered statistical, graphical and narrative feedback all of which offers outcomes that supports decision making.

**Following scrutiny of the responses Option 3 has been recommended to cabinet for approval:-**

**Retain 2 Full Core Offer Children's Centres at Cedars and Hillview**

**Operate 8 "delivery sites" that will continue to offer access to some of the early childhood services on behalf of the 2 full core offer children's centres.**

## **Introduction to questions**

There were 12 questions and the level of response differed for each question. Feedback was received which indicated that for some of the population of respondents the questions were not completely clear to them as individuals, and some suggested that they did not have access to enough information to make a response or in some cases an informed response.

The paper presenting the consultation was a separate paper to the survey and one could consider from the responses that people were not referring to this when answering the questions e.g. Response; 'it is difficult to comment without knowing the current structure', and yet the current structure was within the paper.

## **Question responses**

**Question 1:** Which (if any) of Harrow's Children's Centres(s) do you currently use?

Overall the respondents used centres in the following Hubs:

- Cedars Hub 36.66%
- Kenmore Park Hub 32.36%
- Hillview Hub 26.43%

The respondents used the following 6 centres the most.

- Cedars 12.71%
- Kenmore Park 10.79%
- St. Joseph's 9.78%
- Stanmore Park 9.14%
- The Pinner Centre 7.68%
- Whitefriars 7.13%

Calculation of the centres used by the respondents as overall figures per Hub:

- Cedars Hub 36.66%
- Kenmore Park Hub 32.36%
- Hillview Hub 26.43%

**Question 2:** Are you completing this consultation as:

Parent / Carer of a child under 5 years old

Parent / Carer of a child age 5 -12 years old

Parent / Carer of a child age 13 -17 years old

- 66.87% of respondents were parent /carers of a child under 5 years old
- 8.73% were parents/carers of a child aged 5-12 years
- 1.98% were parents/ carers of a child aged 13-17 years
- 16.87% were 'other' which includes:- staff, partners from health,midwifery,health visiting, PVI sector; preschools and child-minders, therapy services,G.P's, Clinical Commissioning group, London North West Hospital Trust, Schools, Head Teachers, Governors, nurseries,L.A officers,adult learners, traveller liaison officer,residents, grandparents.

Children's Centre eStart data system shows that 86% of all Children's Centre users are:

- Children Aged 0-5, 12%
- Children aged 5-12
- 0.6% are children aged 13 – 18.

(We can assume a large number of staff/other residents have completed the survey too hence the 16.87% stating 'Other')

This age breakdown for Children's Centre usage is in similar proportion to the age breakdown on the survey response demonstrating that this represents accurately users if the centres.

**Question 3:** To what extent would you agree with savings being made to the Children's Centres' budget in the following ways?

**Closing Children's Centres, with some services provided at alternative centres (which may be further away)**

- 69.95% of respondents strongly disagree or disagree
- 13.70% of respondents strongly agree or agree
- 5.56% responded as neutral
  
- 11.12% either offered no response or 'don't know' response.

There were 100 additional comments received to question 3.

The 'no response' or 'don't know' response could be attributed to the number of people that have responded stating that they believed that Children's Centres should remain open with many respondents echoing the following type of statement:-

'I feel these centres are hugely important to our community- they provide such invaluable help to many families'.

'I think it would be a huge loss to the borough if you closed any of the centres. Concerns such as the impact on accessibility- travel to a centre further away from home especially for families with more than 1 under 5'

'Closing the children's centres would have devastating consequences for families across the borough, leading to greater long-term pressure on other services. If you close the centres, I would expect to see a higher number of mothers with post-natal depression, a greater number of children arriving at school or preschool with lower levels of development, an increase in the number of appointments made with GPs for issues regarding child development, nutrition, dental care, and pnd. These centres are much more than a place for mums to meet up for a chat- they are a lifeline of support for many'.

'Whilst I don't agree with any of the changes, I realise that savings do need to be made and I feel that over fives and mothers of over fives probably need less support than mothers of young babies. Although I think that help should remain for over five's who have additional needs, i.e. learning or development issues, e.g. speech etc. I also know that administration, whilst necessary should not affect the front facing element of the centres'.

This response clearly demonstrates that there is a strong view that this is not a desired outcome.

### **Reducing services at some centres**

- 54.57 strongly disagree or disagree
- 21.83% strongly agree or agree
- 9.72 % were neutral
  
- 13.89% either offered no response or 'don't know' response

'Mothers rely on these centres so much so that they are always at full capacity. To close any of them would be criminal. They offer educational development and support for both child and mother, a huge asset to the local community'.

'I think some of the centres are quite close to each other, so it makes sense to close some of them'.

'The centres are already running a streamlined reduced service in comparison to four years ago and the variety and availability of sessions for the under 5's is already at a bare minimum. Any further reduction would mean a complete loss of this valuable service to the community and the under 5's'.

This response clearly demonstrates that there is a strong view that this is not a desired outcome. Accumulated figures for 21.83% strongly agree or agree, plus 9.72 % neutral plus 13.89% no response or 'don't know' still does not reach the 54.57%, instead 44.44%.

### **Reducing or closing services for children over the age of five**

- 52.19% strongly disagree or disagree
- 23.02% strongly agree or agree
- 11.51% were neutral
  
- 13.29% either offered no response or 'don't know' response.

'Whilst I don't agree with any of the changes, I realise that savings do need to be made and I feel that over fives probably need less support than mothers of young babies. Although I think that helps should remain for over five's who have additional needs, i.e.

learning and development issues, e.g. speech etc. I also know that administration, whilst necessary should not affect the front facing element of centres’.

‘Childrens over 5 start school so less should be needed for children of that age group. Children’s centres are much needed, however, are more beneficial for younger children and pregnant women’.

‘All children benefit from Children’s centres NOT just under 5’s’.

‘Children over 5 will be receiving school support’.

**This response demonstrates that there is a view that this is not a desired outcome.**

There is a possibility that parents of families with under 5’s and over 5’s may have considered that it was the family sessions that would no longer be available; this will not be the case, it is the specific over 5’s services delivered by Children’s Centre staff that will be impacted upon, however mitigation is being considered to reduce the potential impact, before changes are implemented.

‘Children’s centres are essential. Not just to the children, but the parents. 1/2 term/holiday activities are essential. I would look to charge for services before closures/cuts are made’.

#### **Reducing management and administration costs**

- 42.66% strongly agree or agree
- 26.39% strongly disagree or disagree
- 16.87% were neutral
  
- 14.09% either offered no response or ‘don’t know’ response.

‘The admin and staff who run the groups work very hard. Lot of managers are not needed, they are paid far too much money by LB Harrow. Childrens Centres provide brilliant services. I have been attending for seven years now’.

‘My concern with reducing admin is that clinical staff will be further burdened with admin and reducing their clinical role’.

'There has to be some sort of management for the running of CC so they can plan ahead and help families with activities/groups/workshop the families need'.

'The government have spent lots of money in Children's Centres but when you close them you have thrown away the money spent. Therefore you see no future. Reduce core management staff on higher level'.

The admin and staff who run the groups work very hard. Lot of managers are not needed, they are paid far too much money by LB Harrow. Childrens Centres provide brilliant services. I have been attending for seven years now'.

'I agree with reducing some of the management, especially the higher paid ones. The Coordinators are able to run services and manage centres so why do you need a service manager and 2/3 Hub Managers'?

**This response demonstrates that people are in favour of this approach;** some responses indicated that there was reference to staff outside of the children's centres structure rather than within e.g. 'management staff on a higher level'.

The service manager post is a shared post not a Children's Centre Service Manager instead an Early Intervention Service, Service Manager.

Question 3 generated 100 comments, many of which were long responses e.g.

'My son has a disability and has been attending Hillview since he was 3 years old. The centre has been a great place to gain information about support available for both myself and my son and the support that myself and my son continue to receive is invaluable. When you have a child with a disability you need assistance at the earliest time to ensure that you are able to continue in your caring role. Most of this support is received via the centre including support in accessing appropriate schooling and health care support. It would be a financial mistake to close centres as they are one of the main preventatives in making sure that families are able to remain living as a family and reducing the need and risk of long term placements in the future. You will lose more money by closing the centres'.



**Question 4:** To what extent do you think that the options proposed will enable Harrow Children's Centres to **continue to fulfil their core purpose?** (Core purpose was supplied)

**Option 1** Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 4 Centre Delivery Points

- 34.13% strongly disagree or disagree
- 24.00% strongly agree or agree
- 27.78% either did not respond or 'don't know'
- 14.09% were neutral

**Option 2** Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 6 Centre Delivery Points

- 34.33% strongly agree or agree
- 23.41% strongly disagree or disagree
- 26.24% did not respond or 'don't know'
- 15.48% were neutral

**Option 3** Retain 2 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 8 Centre Delivery Points

- 44.45% strongly agree or agree
- 19.84% strongly disagree or disagree
- 22.42% did not respond or 'don't know'
- 13.29% were neutral

**Option 3 had the higher percentage of respondents that believed that centres could fulfil their core purpose.**

There were 74 additional comments received to this question some of which were comprehensive and some brief; there were none that favoured fully the preferred option 3 instead there were a number of comments that had the following themed points:-

'I would like to keep all our centres'

'Not sure the agree/ disagree options make sense here but I'm trying to say that option 3 fulfils the best'

'I think closing any of the centres will mean some families in need simply won't be able to access these essential services, but of all the options I believe option 3 to be the best choice for families within the borough'.

'The demands are increasing with increase in younger population, hence it is strongly recommended that Harrow Council thinks proactive approaches on how to increase revenue and improve quality of care rather than thinking of closing down services which would in some way or another put increased pressure on the centres that remain open'

'I don't think you should close any of the centres, they are well used and have helped to make Harrow one of the most child-friendly boroughs in the country( as recognised in the recent baby friendly accreditation UNICEF). I am very disappointed the council are even considering this as an option to save money in the borough'

'I feel the services provided at the moment only just meet the needs of the community.

'The more CC's retained will help keep some of the services to parents.If anything we need more to open not shut them down'.

A fuller response was as follows:

'Harrow council tax goes up but our services are cut. The services provided are essential to supporting parents and their children. Compared to Hillingdon, we are not provided with full extent of support that they provide their residents such as support courses for new parents but to remove the services that we currently do have would be disastrous. Without these centres I would not have connected to other like parents going through difficult milestones with their children. It takes some mothers courage and confidence to leave the house with their first borns. By reducing centres and making centres further away for some will prevent these mothers from leaving their homes and gaining the confidence and support they need. Also centres like these provide us guidance with caring and educating our children. Plus some centres are often packed to full capacity. Reducing centres will only reduce opportunities for Harrow residents gaining access to these reduced services'

There was also a strong theme related to option 3described as the 'better' option:-

'Looks like the better option for all. More centres maintained and saved'

'Not sure how to answer this but Option 3 would have least negative impact I think'

**Question5:** To what extent do you think the **options proposed will negatively** impact on access to early childhood services through Children's Centres?

Option 1: Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 4 Centre Delivery Points

- 48.02% strongly agree or agree
- 13.10% strongly disagree or disagree
- 13.49% were neutral
- 8.73% responded as don't know and 16.67% offered no response

Option 2: Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 6 Centre Delivery Points

- 39.88% strongly agree or agree
- 15.28% strongly disagree or disagree
- 17.26% were neutral
- 8.33% responded as don't know and 19.25% offered no response

Option 3: Retain 2 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 8 Centre Delivery Points

- 40.87% strongly agree or agree
- 17.06% strongly disagree or disagree
- 15.48% were neutral
- 8.13% responded as don't know and 18.45 % offered no response.

**Option 1 emerged as the option that would have the most negative impact, Option 2 and 3 having similar responses and option 2 being the lowest percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing.** There were 61 additional comments received to this question. Some comments received indicated that the question was difficult to understand and respond to for some: responses do not equate with other question responses; there is a likely possibility that this response does not reflect accurately people's views. (This issue has been reported on the learning lessons pro-forma)

'The question here and answers do not match. Closing centres and delivery points is not a way forward here'.

'This question is strange... and I don't understand what it is aiming to find out'.

'This question is poorly worded – the answer statements would work with a statement rather than a question'.

'Maintaining the maximum possible will obviously have the least negative impact. Maintaining the current levels would obviously have the best impact'.

'Closing any Children's Centres would negatively impact users of that centre'.  
More children's centres the better for their needs!!!'

'Families will have nowhere to go. Your thinking behind this is silly. Families who have issues will not have the access to gain what is needed for them and their children. You do not need management on £240,000 a year'.

'All the closures of our children's centres will create a negative impact'

'I disagree with all the proposals'

'Option 2 and 3 provide a positive impact compared to option 1'.

**Question 6:** To what extent are the **proposed options effective** to provide Children's Centre services for families across Harrow?

**Option 1:** Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 4 Centre Delivery Points

- 25.99% strongly agree or agree
- 27.78% strongly disagree or disagree
- 17.06% neutral
  
- 8.93% responded as don't know and 20.24% offered no response.

**Option 2:** Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 6 Centre Delivery Points

- 33.14% strongly agree or agree
- 21.63% strongly disagree or disagree
- 14.48% were neutral

- 8.33% responded as don't know and 22.42 % offered no response.

**Option 3: Retain 2 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 8 Centre Delivery Points**

- 42.86% strongly agree or agree
- 18.65% strongly disagree or disagree
- 12.90% were neutral
  
- 8.53% responded as don't know and 17.06% offered no response.

**Option 3 was clearly the preferred approach:** with the most % strongly agreeing or agreeing and the least % strongly disagreeing or disagreeing, the least % neutral and the least offering no response.

There were 47 additional comments received to this question. The main themes were to either not close any centres or have the maximum number of centres.

'I feel this is not giving us much choice - if you have to close some centres then the more delivery sites the better, clearly'.

'Leave all as they are – open'.

'Option 3 is the best and option 1 the worst in my opinion'.

I think losing any of these centres is going to affect the future of families and their children

'I think I have mentioned this above. Really need to keep all children's centres. They work. Get rid of some management'.

'Again the question cannot be answered by selecting 'strongly agree'. Please correct. Closing these essential services will impact families across Harrow in a negative way'.

'The group thinks that with more children in the neighbourhood smaller number of centres is less likely to be effective'.

'Once they are gone it will be too late to worry about effectiveness. The question is how fewer sites are going to cover all of Harrow when services are already stretched'.

**Question 7:** To what extent are the **proposed options effective to provide services for families within deprived areas in Harrow?**

Option 1: Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 4 Centre Delivery Points

- 26.39% strongly agree or agree
- 27.78% strongly disagree or disagree
- 12.30% were neutral
  
- 10.52% responded as don't know and 23.02% offered no response.

Option 2: Retain 3 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 6 Centre Delivery Points

- 32.34% strongly agree or agree
- 21.63% strongly disagree or disagree
- 12.30% were neutral
  
- 10.32% responded as don't know and 23.41% offered no response.

Option 3: Retain 2 Full Core Offer Children's Centres and 8 Centre Delivery Points

- 42.46% strongly agree or agree
- 16.27% strongly disagree or disagree
- 12.70% were neutral
  
- 10.91% responded as don't know and 17.66% offered no response.

**Option 3 was clearly the preferred option**

There were 44 additional comments received to this question, with strong messages against closures and offering reasons why they should remain open and why more centres are the better option. Examples are:-

‘Just because the proposed options are for CC in deprived areas, this is a draconian statement as just because other centres are in so called affluent areas it doesn’t mean children are in less need or at risk’.

‘Because option 3 will retain more childrens centres in the borough I disagree with all the proposals – all centres should remain open’.

‘By taking centres away families will be limited in what they can access it will potentially stop many families accessing services they need and rely on’.

‘We want to keep as many as we can. Children in Harrow need them’.

‘All families need access. In some ways the middle-class mothers used to going to professional work can be most thrown by the change of being at home with baby and need support/somewhere to go/people to speak with. The more centres open, the better for families’.

‘Children Centres provide support across the whole community and should continue to be developed as a community resource and not just in areas of recognised deprivation’.

‘All three proposed options would involve closure of the Pinner Centre which will negatively impact the provision of childhood services to deprived families in Pinner’.

‘Option 1 will have a significantly negative impact on access to service particularly to children with SLCN i.e. no location / delivery point in the north west of the borough and no site for thepre-school language unit. Little opportunity to increase day care places for under 5. Less delivery siteswill reduce access further for needy children and families’

**Question 8: To what extent do you think that the use of some existing buildings for community-run projects will help to provide servicesto families?**

- 67.06% strongly agree or agree
- 5.56% strongly disagree or disagree
- 9.33% were neutral

- 8.13% responded as don't know and 0% offered no response.

There were 68 additional comments received to this question. **There was strong support for this approach**, the following responses indicated that careful thought would need to be given to any plan.

Examples are:-

'Providing that the correct safeguarding/ child protection measures are followed. This seems like an effective and sensible use of the space'.

'How will be funded? Will there be a grant for a set time and then again no funding'? Existing buildings could be a venue for community run projects. But who will fund them? Will Harrow make the buildings desirable for organisations to hire. Will Harrow market the new opportunities? Provide funding to get some of the groups set up. Will the community run organisations offer the services for children 0-5?'

'Usually volunteers need the support of the Council to work efficiently'.

'I think this might work in Pinner, not sure how this is going to work in Elm Grove'.

'Lots of services are already run by volunteers, e.g. breastfeeding support, the current system works well – you would struggle to find volunteers to run the centres and they would close anyway, thus meeting your original goals'.

'Some of the centres appear to have capacity for other services to be provided also. Perhaps you should consider multi use buildings that could house a children's service, library, coffee shop, voluntary agency access and GPs or such like in one place, instead of sole children's centre usage. This would increase social contact and be buildings that are well used and could become hubs of the community. That would save a lot of money'.

'Community Groups are not run the same way as Children Centres and do not offer the same support for parents. Depends on location and costs involved'.



**Question 9:** To what extent do you think Children's Centre services will be effectively provided through the following **changes to staffing structures?**

**A network of Children's Centres led by staff grouped into 3 teams**

- 51.59% strongly agree or agree
- 10.72% strongly disagree or disagree
- 13.29% were neutral
  
- 8.73% responded as don't know and 15.67% offered no response.

**A network of Children's Centres led by staff grouped into 2 teams**

- 29.17% strongly agree or agree
- 18.65% strongly disagree or disagree
- 20.04% were neutral
  
- 9.13% responded as don't know and 23.02% offered no response.

**Reducing the number of senior roles within Children's Centres**

- 34.72% strongly agree or agree
- 22.62% strongly disagree or disagree
- 16.67% were neutral
  
- 7.94% responded as don't know and 18.06% offered no response.

There was a higher percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing with staff grouped in 3 teams however this response did not correlate with responses to other questions, e.g. question 6 , 7:- option 3, with 2 main centres, was the preferred option; this would have staff grouped in 2 teams. A higher percentage strongly agreed or agreed with reducing the number of senior roles.

There were 43 additional comments received to this question.

Examples are:-

'Surely this depends on the outcome of the other question on number of hubs - please think things through before asking questions of the public'.

'The children's centres and their staff should be protected in their entirety'.

'A majority % in part 2 of the question 'A network of Children's Centres led by staff grouped into 2 teams' still emerged as a higher percentage that strongly agree or agree compared to strongly disagree or disagree'.

Comments received may explain further individuals thinking and links with a previous comment about using the provided Children's Centres consultation booklet alongside the survey form: *'The paper presenting the consultation was a separate paper to the survey and one could consider from the responses that people were not referring to this when answering the questions'*.

'This is a silly question because how are the public meant to know the answer to this. We don't know what is currently happening at present. Why don't you state this before asking this question then we can compare the differences'?

'It is difficult to comment when I do not know the current structure and the roles of the senior staff'.

'I'm not aware of the current structure to comment accurately on outcomes'

'The information available does not provide an understanding of the overall structure of the department and reporting lines and responsibilities therefore no answer can be given'.

'I don't know the current number of staff employed to run the children centres but I can only see a detriment to the services provided to the harrow residents should staff be cut'.

Other comments include comments related to management and senior posts:-

'Strong leadership at the centres is one of the main reasons they have been so successful in my opinion'.

'Managing staff over a number of locations is not easy and can be very time-consuming, this is even more complex where many staff also work part time, as they do in Ch Cs.'

'I do not feel I have the required knowledge/information to provide constructive feedback!'

'I have always much appreciated the advice given at the centres. Senior roles with experience and knowledge are important for this'

'Because staffing will be more effective when they work direct with families and be aware of transition community's changing need, special like in Harrow. I believe there is no need of a Service Manager when they are spending £40K + on Hub Managers'.

'Middle managers seem to be cut back in most areas of business now so if this will save money for the future and provide a better option for centres, I agree!'

'It is important to ensure some leadership within each Children Centre to maintain focus on delivery and expectations of Children Centre. There also needs to be someone with ultimate decision making responsibility at each centre'.

'It is important to retain senior roles to ensure sound leadership to support – Delivery of quality services; Service developments, Partnership working, Staff development support and training'

**Question 10:** Which of the options proposed do you think provides **the best model for the future of Harrow's Children's Centres for....**

#### **You**

Option 3 33.52%

- Option 2 17.05 %
- Option 1 11.88%
- None of the options proposed 11.69%

#### **Your child/children**

- Option 3 32.63%
- Option 2 17.945 %
- Option 1 13.93%
- None of the options proposed 9.92%

#### **Your family**

- Option 3 30.96%
- Option 2 17.12%
- Option 1 11.35%
- None of the options proposed 10.00%

#### **The Children's Centrecommunity**

- Option332.64%
- Option2 18.55 %
- Option1 12.06%
- None of the options proposed 10.02%

#### **Harrow residents**

- Option3 35.00%
- Option2 18.52%
- Option1 9.63%
- None of the options proposed 10.37%

**Option 3 was overall overwhelmingly the preferred option**, with the higher % preferred option for each of the 5 categories. The main message was that option 3 seemed the best option if changes had to be made.

There were 45 additional comments received to this question.

Examples are:-

'I think the reductions proposed are all inadequate'.

'This seems the best as 3 children's centres are left open with more delivery suites than option 1. Option 3 only has 2 children centre's leftopen. I'm for the most left open aspossible.at the moment the system is workingyou will only cause more problems forthe future if these valuable centresclose'

'I don't drive so ideally things wouldstay as they are. I wouldn't bother totravel on a bus for a stay and playsession, but in fortunate in that i don't"need" that session. I worry this disadvantaged parents who need thisservice will be..'(unfinished)

'Out of the 3 option 3 is best but is also a Semtex back from today'.

'I don't think any of the above will be enough. Think this over very carefully'.

'The best model would be prioritising early intervention services instead of cutting them. The options given are likely to result in more money being spent supporting families when their needs have become greater'.

'Leave Children's Centres alone!!! Why are children services being targeted for the councils lack of budgeting. Cuts need to be happening from the top over paid managers and directors'.

**Question 11:** To what extent do you agree with the **suggested centres to be retained** in each of the proposed options?

**Option 1**

**Children's Centres: Kenmore Park, Cedars and Grange**

**Delivery Points: Elmgrove, Stanmore Park, Earlsmead and Hillview**

- 31.34% strongly agree or agree
- 25.79% strongly disagree or disagree
- 13.89% were neutral
  
- 28.97% offered no response.

**Option 2**

**Children's Centres: Kenmore Park, Cedars and Hillview**

**Delivery Points: Gange, Chandos, Stanmore Park, Whitefriars, Grange and Pinner Wood**

**Additional buildings: The Pinner Centre and Elmgrove (for community-run projects)**

- 43.85% strongly agree or agree
- 14.29% strongly disagree or disagree
- 12.70% were neutral

- 29.17% offered no response

**Option 3:**

**Children's Centres: Cedars and Hillview**

**Delivery Points: Kenmore Park, Gange, Chandos, Stanmore Park, Whitefriars, Grange, Elmgrove and Pinner Wood**

**Additional building: The Pinner Centre (for community-run projects)**

- 54.16% strongly agree or agree
- 12.11% strongly disagree or disagree
- 10.52% were neutral
  
- 23.21% offered no response.

**Option 3 is the overall preferred option**, option 2 was considered an acceptable option and option 1 was less favourable in meeting needs – it appears that retaining centres was the main view offered through responses, the highest % for each option was strongly agree or agree; the highest % strongly disagree or disagree was for option 1.

Closures of any centres were raised as not being acceptable in these responses. There were views expressed about individual centres being closed and which some would prefer were staying open. It was evident that this question was responded to on a personal level. Views also covered the perceived impact on children, if centres are closed.

There were 74 additional comments received to this question.

Examples are:-

'Option 2 is the best option out of these but less closures of children's centres is even better'!!!

'I use Rayners Lane so would like to see this in there'.

'Pinner needs a centre with an already established preschool that has been in situ for over 40 years, has a waitinglist & children with additional needs, which is under threat due to these proposals'.

'Chandos needs to stay - no other centre in local community is walking distance for Edgware residents'.

'Every centre matters!!'

'Any closures would have an affect on me, my colleagues, children who attend and families. It would be a great loss if any of the children's centres do close'.

'As previously stated, losing Pinner Centre and St Joseph's will be very sad and will be a very big loss to the community this would mean that for my families there would be no site within easy access of our community'.

'I drive so I don't really mind which stay open but I think a few should definitely stay open'.

'Too many local centres being closed'.

'Why St Joseph's? Where is it on this list?'

'I want St Joseph's Centre open – near for walking and convenient'.

'Cedars and Hillview have the largest impact on our family. The least reduction in centres will have the least impact on the groups and sessions we attend'.

'Hillview - only problem is car parking facilities. Needs to be consider this facilities. When we come with kids, we have to park the car very far distance then we have to walk to Hillview'.

'Option 3 is the better option'

'None of these options secures my centre!'

'I chose option 3 because I believe it will keep the Pinner Centre Pre School open'.

'It seems like you have already decided to close or reduce the services at the Pinner Centre which is ridiculous, it is one of the better attended centres and has many groups I have used in the past. It is also a good location accessible by public transport unlike several of the others proposed to stay open. Grange, Chandos and Elm Grove in my experience are used much less than Pinner.

'Save all of them - please close nothing. All are necessary for the future of children and families'.

'Please don't cut back on these facilities. They provide valuable knowledge for our children and children are our future'.

'My 8 year old, is performing really well in school. He is a math genius, all because he used to fill rice in muffin tray and counting them, playing Mr Wolf and counting jugs of water to fill a bucket. All activities we used to play at children's centres. As a parent of two, I know children's centres have a range of services to offer, which are crucial for early years. My 3 year old is so confident to staff and activities. She recently started nursery, settled from the first day. She knows a range of phrases/vocabularies, because she is ready to move on to school, all because I was coming to children's centres since she was 5 months old'.

**Question 12:** Are there any **further comments** you would like to contribute to the consultation?

90 comments were received to this question. There were brief messages and some fuller comments both of which contained strong views; demonstrated frustrations, and in some cases anger at the proposals and the content of the options. There were comments about the survey itself, ideas and views for the use of buildings (the latter will be reported on under a different heading) Comments were also received about the impact on children and individual families who shared their experiences.

Examples are:-

#### **Survey comments...**

'I am worried about the efficiency of this somewhat over-complicated and opaque questionnaire and would question such important decisions being made/based on its results I think it requires simplification and at least a re-think'.

'This is not a purposeful consultation. Where are the stats and data? No figures'.



'The questions asked are over worded, perhaps less complicate questions to prevent having to read them numerous times to understand them'.

'This is quite a confusing and inaccessible survey which means it will be difficult for people to complete. Which may serve your purpose. As amum of 2 who experienced post natal depression, the Pinner Children's Centre was my lifeline and got me through. It continues to provide myself and my family support through its groups and access to HV via the baby clinic'.

'Some of the questions are a bit confuding and not worded very well'.

### **Options/proposals comments...**

'DON'T CLOSE ANY OF OUR CHILDREN CENTRE'S'

'Very disappoited with therestructure – appalling'.

'I am furious that you're even proposingto axe our centres – FURIOUS'.

'I would like to see maintained as manysites (centres or delivery points) aspossible, even with reduced services '.

'I find it sad that 5000+ signatures saves the Arts Centre but an essential service to a vulnerable group that has real worth is being cut. Unfortunately the prophylactic effect of this service is difficult to quantify. The parents of toddlers and the unborn in poorer areas are less able to mount a campaign compared to the supporters of an arts centre in the middle of an affluent community'.

'I don't believe any of these options will be positive. However, option 3 seems to be the less bad option. I'm also really concerned about the future of the Pinner Centre Preschool. They do a great job and I believe don't represent a cost to the council. This is a charity that provides great and affordable care. Please do not force them to close'.

'Childcare for under 5 is so costly these days. Children centres give children a good base before they start school'.

'Do not want centres to close – English not first language'.

'Children centres play an important part in the community and are vital for kids. Closing too many down will have detrimental affect'.

'Delivery points like Gange, Elmgrove, Grange are in some of the deprived areas where people need centres to explain and help them about society and their rights'.

'Harrow should be proud of its children's centres. I cannot understand the logic of reducing this service'.

'Some of the centres appear to have capacity for other services to be provided also. Perhaps you should consider multi use buildings that could house a children's service, library, coffee shop, voluntary agency access and GPs or such like in one place. Instead of sole children's centre usage. This would increase social contact and be buildings that are well used and could become hubs of the community. That would save a lot of money'.

### **Impact on individual families comments...**

'Families would like to have their local children's centre open as if they have older siblings they can drop them and go straight to children's centre. Also families who don't drive can also use their local children's centre services'.

'It's very sad at the thought of the centres closing, not only are they great for the children but for parents from all cultures to come together and meet. It's a great socialising time for parents to discuss universal problems, like toileting, feeding etc and a great developmental opportunity for our children'.

'Keeping the children's centres helps parents that are young to be a good parent. Plus the centres help the children to develop the right way'.

'I am an NHS employee based in the centres but not employed by the council and I have been working in and from them since they opened in 2009. My midwifery colleagues and I work alongside the council employees, who are in my opinion very professional, compassionate and do a thoroughly excellent job of drawing in families from all sections of the community in such a way that no one feels singled out or that they are being 'targetted'. Most of the services are well attended and some, like our own are running at full capacity all the time, this includes a weekly clinic at the Pinner centre but we need the assistance of the admin staff in all the centres to help us to provide a good service to the families. The centres, in my opinion are extremely effective in helping with the parenting skills which are so essential to allow children to really get the best out of life and prevent costly poor lifestyle choices and antisocial behaviour. We must start early in a child's life if we really want to set them on the right path and cutting back these services is

very short sighted in my opinion. Also, providing services like Midwifery and Health visiting in the centres gives much better messages to the women/families that childbirth and child rearing is a social event and not a medical one (i.e., they are not sick as in a doctor's practice). The centres are doing a great job and have thoroughly dedicated staff, please value that and don't close them'.

'Children Centres have demonstrated their value and worth through analysis of outcomes data. Loss of this provision would have adverse effects on the families and young children of Harrow in a number of ways including fundamentally safeguarding'.

'It makes sense to keep the centres open that have preschools already in it, which can further help the community and assist in early intervention and make it easier for transition into main stream schools. Without the early intervention it will cost the Borough much more money when the children who have additional needs enter into KS1. Make more use of the centres and fill the rooms that have so much potential to bring in more money to help with the cuts'.

'I would be very disappointed as I use the children centre for personal reasons. The staff and other professionals are very helpful with the issues and queries I have'.

'While understanding the acute financial pressures on councils, we are increasingly concerned about the council's vision and support for vulnerable children, young people and their families - Children's Centres offer early intervention - some of the most cost-effective and lasting forms of interventions - Concerned about the safeguarding implications for young children if these centres are closed'.

'It is absolutely vital that there remains a constant meeting point for new babies and new parents. It would appear that there have already been extensive cuts within the child development area, no monitoring of home welfare, development of children, it would be a travesty to lose any more community based welfare'.

'My son has a diagnosis of ASD. Due to the support of my children's centre through attending groups such as PAFT, we are in the fortunate position to have an early diagnosis/intervention. I have been lucky in my ability to access services. By making these cuts, you are putting more vulnerable families at a high risk, thus making the need for support to be identified later - which in the long run will cost more to the council if the child is at school before the issue is addressed'.

**Other views...**

'Not enough info provided about which services are likely to be retained in the consultation paper. Need to understand the use of space in the buildings - maybe over 5s are catered for when buildings aren't in demand by under 5s. Need to understand how far parents can travel to centres. Need to focus on services successfully aimed at those under 5s most in need, not ESOL for parents or yummy mummies getting cheap childcare and free breakfast for their toddlers, but real learning for the under 5s and parenting skills that will benefit them by the time they start school'.

'Reduce the council's perks and wages for the top managers, get rid of the council magazine (pointless waffle) and use this money to fund projects'.

'These buildings could be used more by others in children's services and at weekends. More could be done to make them centres for families rather than children. If funding is the main concern, you can charge some of the services within children centre'.

'I hope this is the end of children's centre consultations now as this is the second one in 2 years'.

### **Next steps**

Following the decision making by cabinet further work will be undertaken to support a positive and timely implementation of the model to ensure it meets the statutory obligation of the council.

Through analysis of the information received it is clear that there are many misconceptions, myths and misunderstandings about Children's Centres; the statutory definition and its meaning, the development, governance and lines of responsibility and accountability. Work will be undertaken to develop a fuller understanding for all those using and working through centres.

There is also much learning for the staff that work in and through centres, points emerging that support improvements will be highlighted, shared and acted upon.

There were many ideas offered by respondents, most of which have been explored and decisions made about taking these forward or not. There have been some barriers in taking forward ideas and some proposed developments have been rejected by key partners. Further exploration of ideas will be undertaken and reported on.

It is also clear that further understanding by others of the data used by centres is required, especially related to Lower Super Output Area's, deprivation, and each expectations required for Children's Centres Ofsted inspections.

In the light of these points there is a plan to take the comments and respond to them via a paper which will be available to Children's Centre users, staff, partners and other interested partners.

It is intended that this work will be carried out with the support of the Children's Centre Strategic Group.

Hilary O'Byrne  
Children's Centre Project Lead