

# **Harrow Children's Centre Survey and Focus Group Report**



September 2011



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## Introduction

There are currently 13 Children's Centres located within the Harrow Council area focusing on delivering services such as childcare, early education, health support, family support, employment and training. They seek to build and sustain partnerships between agencies to deliver better outcomes for Children's Centres, and play a central role in reaching the most disadvantaged groups, improving accessibility and the quality of child services for the local community and develop preventive and intervention approaches.

Harrow Children's Centres are rethinking the way they distribute their funds. In order to do this, the Council has commissioned research to examine how the centres can ensure that these valuable services can continue. This research focuses on establishing how the Children's Centres are used, their value for parents, and residents' views on how the Centres could continue to function efficiently. The research took place between the dates of 17<sup>th</sup> May and 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011. There are two elements to this research:

### 1. Focus groups/interviews

Three focus groups were conducted with service providers and staff, and face-to-face interviews were conducted with parents in five different Children's Centres. The interviews took place in the following Children's Centres:

Whitefriars	Kenmore Park	Grange
Pinner Centre	Hillview	Cedars

A summary of the focus group and interview findings, the topic guide for interviews with parents/guardians/carers are available in the appendices, alongside a table breaking down various measures by the Children's Centre most used by parents.

### 2. Surveys

Paper questionnaires were distributed to all 13 Children's Centres. They were completed by 501 parents/guardians/carers, 30 partners and 39 staff. Additionally, 26 parents completed the questionnaire online, totalling 596 responses overall.

This report focuses to a greater extent on responses from parents as the sample is much larger and, therefore, signifies a more representative view of parents than is indicated in the relatively small number of responses from staff and partners. However, the latter results are included where appropriate.

Full results from the survey can be found in the appendices. The percentages are based on all those who answered each question, as although 527 questionnaires were completed by parents for example, they were not required to answer every question. Furthermore, where percentages do not add up to 100% this can be explained by the rounding up of figures and certain questions allowing for multiple answers. A full list of verbatim comments is available separately.

## Executive Summary

Parents, partners and staff all value the Children's Centres highly, and this opinion was repeatedly raised within questionnaires and during focus group and interviewing sessions. To support this, the questionnaire responses indicate that **almost all (97%) parents say they value the Children's Centres either a great deal or a fair amount.**

The value and benefits of Harrow Children's Centres to parents and children are frequently acknowledged and highly rated. Over three quarters (77%) of parents say what they most value about the Children's Centre is the **helpful and welcoming staff**. The beneficial effects of the centre cited by parents, staff and partners are mostly related to child/self development. Therefore, the most common effect of the centre is cited by parents as **allowing children to make more friends**, at almost half (45%). A similar proportion, (44%) say that through attending the centre they have a better understanding of how to support their child.

Partners of Harrow Children's Centres are **positive about the benefits of co-locating with the centres**. Two thirds (70%) cite the main benefit being improving child behaviours. Similarly, three quarters (74%) of partners say the main reason they chose to deliver their service within a Children's Centre is for improved coordination between their service and other complimentary services.

Parents, staff and partners provide a number of suggestions on how the Children's Centres could be improved. Many of these were collected during focus groups and interviews, and mainly focus around **attracting more underprivileged families to the centre**, broadening the age range to provide a wider range of services for more children, and also **advertising the services offered by the centres in public spaces**, such as GPs waiting rooms and libraries.

A number of ideas to ensure the future of the Harrow Children's Centres were proposed within the questionnaire. On the whole, parents, staff and partners are **positive about the suggestion of youth groups, voluntary groups/charities and local groups of residents using the centre**, providing increased revenue and further establishing the centre within the local community. Of these groups, the incorporation of youth groups was the most popular, at over one quarter (28%) of parents when asked which *one* they would like to see the Children's Centres used for.

Over half (51%) of **parents support charging for some services at the centre** and although **doubts are expressed by parents/staff/partners surrounding whether this measure would discourage underprivileged parents** from attending sessions, they feel it may be an essential measure. To try and decrease this impact on less privileged families, some respondents suggest implementing a membership fee in which parents pay an annual sum to attend any of the services available at the Children's Centres.

Of all these suggestions, **parents were most positive about the idea of parents getting involved in helping run the service**. Over two thirds (70%) of parents support this idea and the same proportion (70%) say they would be very/fairly interested in volunteering at the centre themselves. However, this type of **volunteering would require a routine time commitment** and during the interviews many parents explained that the practicality of this, while also looking after young children, may be difficult. Furthermore, respondents highlight that professional staff should

not be replaced by volunteers, as parents should receive professional advice from trained staff during the sessions.

The research indicates that **Harrow Children's Centres are a vital resource within the community** as respondents repeatedly cite that they should not close. Although parents, staff and providers have concerns regarding the various proposals, such as excluding underprivileged families if charges are implemented, during focus groups and interviews the majority say they are willing to accept these changes to ensure the future of the Harrow Children's Centres.

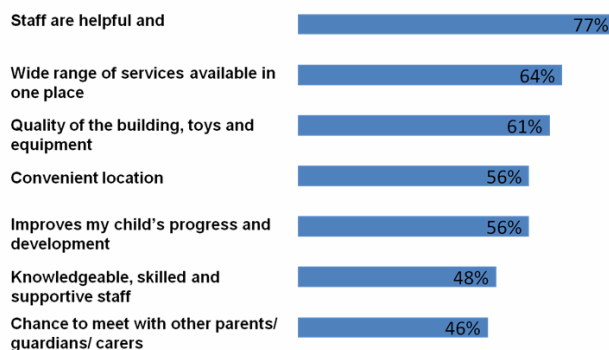
## 1. The value of the centres

### 1.1. What is the value of the Children's Centres for parents and their children?

Three quarters (77%) of parents say they value the Children's Centres a great deal and a further one in five (20%) say they value them a fair amount. Only ten (2%) parents say they do not value the Children's Centres, and the rest say they do not know.

Parents were also asked what they most value about the Harrow Children's Centres. Over three quarters (77%) of parents identify the staff as being helpful and welcoming. Three in five (64%) value the wide range of services available in one place and a similar proportion (61%) value the quality of the building, toys and equipment. Just over half (56%) say they value the convenient location of the centres, and the same proportion (56%) value the improvement in their child's progress and development. These figures are shown in the chart below.

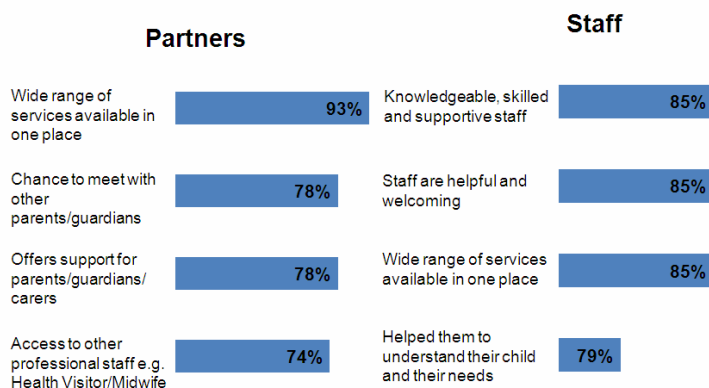
#### What do parents value most about the children's centres?



**Question:** What do you value most about Harrow Council's Children's Centres?  
**Source:** 478 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Staff and partners were also asked what they thought parents value most about the centres. The chart overleaf indicates these responses. Like parents, staff are most likely to think parents value the staff at the centre, as over four in five (85%) say they most value the knowledgeable, skilled and supportive staff. Partners are most likely to think that parents value the wide range of services available in one place, at over nine in ten (93%) responses. This is the second most popular choice for parents themselves, suggesting that both partners and staff have a good understanding of the value of the Children's Centres for parents.

### What do parents value most about the children's centres?



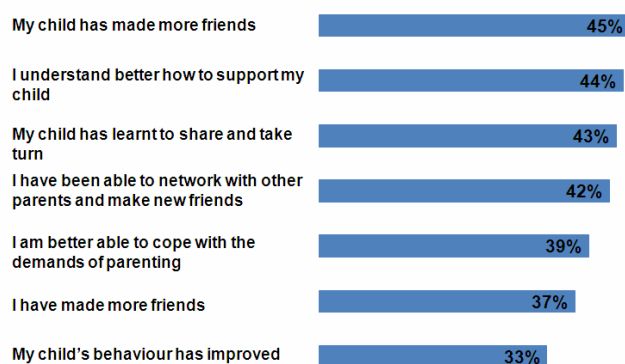
**Question:** Thinking about the people who use the children's centres, what do you think THEY value most about Harrow's children's centres?  
**Source:** 27 partners and 39 staff who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

### 1.2. What are the benefits of the Children's Centre for parents and their children?

The majority of parents say that using the services has had a positive impact on the quality of their lives (90%), and the lives of their child/children (90%). These results are also reflected within the staff and partners questionnaire responses. For example, nine in ten (90%) staff say the services offered at the centre have a positive impact on the quality of life of parents/guardians/carers. A slightly larger proportion (95%) say it improves the quality of life of their child/children.

Parents were then asked to identify what the effect has been. Just under half (45%) say that it has allowed their child to make more friends and a similar number (44%) say they better understand how to support their child. Two in five (43%) say their child has learnt to share and take turn and slightly less (42%) say they have been able to network with other parents and make new friends. These results are indicated in the chart below.

### What effect has the centre had on you/ your child?

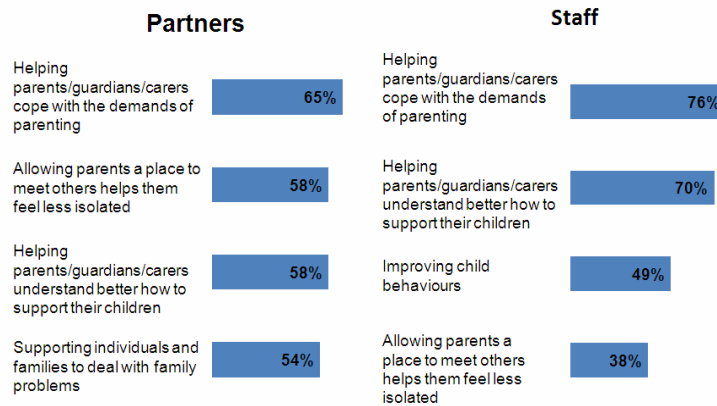


**Question:** If yes, what positive effect has having access to these services had on you and your child?  
**Source:** 433 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Staff and partners were also asked what they thought parents value most about the centres. The most significant effect of the Children's Centres for both staff and partners is considered to be helping parents/guardians/carers with the demands of parenting, at two thirds (65%) of partners and three quarters (76%) of staff.



## What effect do you think the Children's Centres have?



**Question:** If yes, what positive effect do you think the children's centres have?

**Source:** 26 partners and 37 staff who say using the services at the Children's Centres had a positive effect on parents/guardians/carers and/or children, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Respondents were also asked about the benefits of the centre during interviews and focus groups and the findings support those found within the questionnaire responses. The beneficial effects of attending sessions at the Children's Centres on both parents and their children are generally perceived by all respondents (parents/partners/staff) to focus on development.

### **Child development**

Parents frequently cite that their child has learnt to be around other children, becoming less shy and adapting to other people. Parents also note that the centre has aided the development of their child with regard to socialising and improving their English.

*"It allows my child to explore and be creative. I don't have to be worried about her making noise. Because of the centre she's become more connected and adventurous. It's had a very positive outcome. It allows my child to play with other children. It's like a family. She wouldn't have opportunities for her to play with other children anywhere else"* (Parent)

*"It is an opportunity for my child to speak English. Before he didn't speak a word of English, and now he's starting to learn a few words. My child has started to be less selfish since going to the centre. Now he starts to share toys and interact with others. Before he wouldn't really interact with other children"* (Parent)

*"It enabled my son to build confidence with other children before starting school and he also learnt a lot. In terms of development, it has taught my son many things"* (Parent)

### **Self-development**

Parents enjoy meeting other parents who are in similar situations to themselves. They share parenting tips and benefit from the knowledge that they are not alone. Many parents also say attending sessions has helped them to improve their English and many have also attended the adult education classes.

*'You get to hear the experiences of other dads and what they've been through. You gain knowledge and it boosts you skill levels' (Parent)*

*"It gives me a break and some social interaction. It's good to see other people and know there are other people in the same situation" (Parent)*

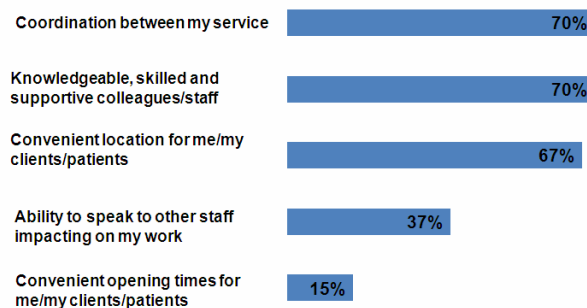
*"It's good to practice speaking English as we only speak Tamil at home. It's good for both me and my child to interact and use English more and hear it spoken in a real way. It's also nice to be able to make a mess and noise without worrying about neighbours. Being a parent can be lonely so it's good to get out and just be around other people even when you don't understand English very well" (Parent)*

### 1.3. What are the benefits of the Children's Centre for partners?

The main reasons partners choose to deliver their service in a Children's Centre include better coordination between their service and other complimentary services (74%) and a convenient location for themselves, their clients and patients (74%).

Partners of the Children's Centres were asked what the benefits of co-location are for themselves as service providers. Again, just over two in three (70%) cite better coordination between my service and other complimentary services. The same proportion (70%) cite knowledgeable, skilled and supportive colleagues/staff and a slightly smaller proportion (67%) say the centres offer a convenient location for themselves, their clients and patients.

#### What are the benefits of co-location?



Question: What do you think the main benefits are of collocation for you as a service provider?  
Source: 27 partners who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Partners were also asked what the main benefits of co-location are for their service users. The top benefit, by a considerable proportion, is identified as the wide range of services available in one place, by two in three (70%) partners. Other benefits, identified by providers, include staff being helpful and welcoming (37%), access to other professional staff (33%) and the convenient location (33%).

Additionally, the questionnaire asked partners the main reasons they chose to deliver their service in a Children's Centre. Again, the most popular responses are improved coordination between my

service and other complimentary services (74%) and a convenient location for themselves, their clients and patients (74%).

A number of partners subsequently list several ways in which co-location has impacted upon their ability to meet delivery targets. The vast majority of these comments were positive and relate to greater accessibility to their clients.

*"More children are accessing our service and we have received improved attendance rates"*  
(Partner)

*"It has made our service more accessible in terms of physical location, as well as other barriers to entry (i.e. drop in rather than referral). It allows parents to access other support that compliments a specialist service, including preventative work"* (Partner)

*"It has enabled us to deliver services in areas where we do not have a building- reaching out to a wider cross section of the community"* (Partner)

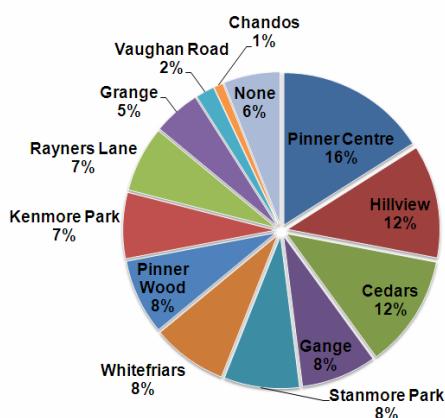
*"It allows us to access to several child and family related services under one roof, promotes strong working relationships and trust between both the staff themselves and between staff and the families they set out to serve. Assessing the services available leads to happier, healthier children with more positive chances in life"* (Partner)

## 2. General use of the Children's Centres

### 2.1. Which Children's Centre do parents usually use?

One in six (16%) of the parents who completed the questionnaire say they usually use Pinner Centre and just over one in ten (12%) use Hillview and the same proportion cite Cedars (12%). Other popular centres include Gange (8%), Stanmore Park (8%), Whitefriars (8%) and Pinner Wood (9%).

#### Which children's centre do you usually use?



Question: Which children's centre do you usually use?  
Source: 522 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Over half (52%) of parents attend their usual Children's Centre one to two times per week and one in five (20%) attend three to four times per week. This indicates that the centres have a high level of repeated attendance.

Additionally, when asked which other Children's Centre they use, just over one in ten (13%) parents cite Pinner Centre. Similar proportions cite Gange (11%), Cedars (11%) and Pinner Wood (9%).

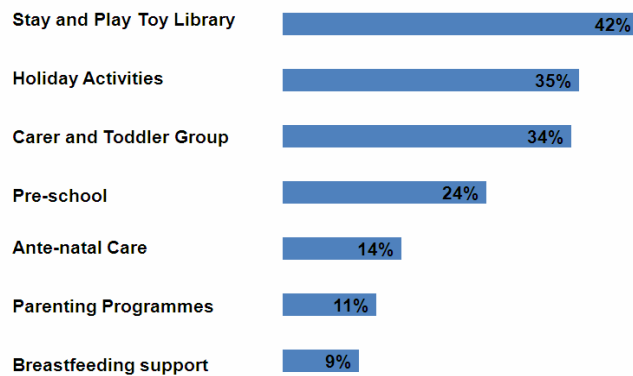
The majority of parents (83%) say they do not know if they can access similar services locally to those provided at Harrow's Children's Centres. Less than one in six (17%) know of providers offering similar services locally, including GPs surgeries, church-run children's groups and library services.

Unsurprisingly, staff and partners have a better knowledge of similar services in the area. Three in five (62%) partners and two in five (38%) staff say they are aware of similar services, such as Home Start services, various children's playgroups across Harrow and within community venues. However, although many respondents are able to identify similar services, they cannot identify any venue in the local area, other than Harrow Children's Centres, that provides so many children's services under one roof.

### 2.2. Which are the most popular Children's Centre services?

The chart overleaf shows the most popular services at the Harrow Children's Centres as indicated within the survey responses. Parents use the stay and play toy library the most at two in five (42%), followed by holiday activities (35%) and then the carer and toddler groups (34%). It is likely that the popularity of the holiday activities is higher than usual due to the questionnaire being circulated during the school holidays.

## Which services do parents currently use?

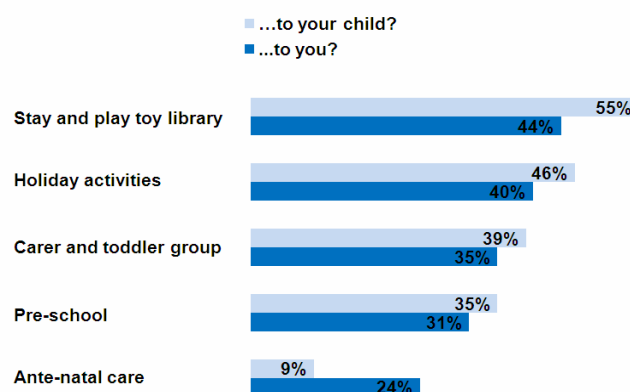


**Question:** Which of the following services do you or your children currently use at these children's centres?  
**Source:** 458 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Parents were asked to identify the three most important services for themselves and their child. The highest proportion of parents state that the stay and play toy library is most beneficial for both themselves (44%) and their child (55%). Again, holiday activities are rated highly, at two in five (40%) citing its importance for parents and just under half (46%) identifying its importance for their child. Important services also include the carer and toddler groups, at one in three (35%) for parents and two in five (39%) for children, and also the pre-school, at one in three (31%) parents and a similar proportion (36%) for children.

Within the questionnaire parents, staff and partners were asked what, in their opinion, are the most important services to parents/guardians/carers and their children. The responses throughout the three respondent groups are similar. The stay and play toy library is cited as the most important service by parents, with over half (55%) identifying it is important for their child/children and over two in five (44%) saying it is important for themselves.

## What are the most important services...



**Question:** What are the most important services to you/to your child?  
**Source:** 475 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

These results are supported by those within the staff and partners questionnaire. With regard to staff, the carer and toddler group is cited as the most important service for children, at three in five (61%) and parenting programmes are identified at the most important service for parents, at half (50%) of responses. Partners are more likely to think parenting programmes are the most important service for parents, at over four in five (85%) respondents, while the most important

service for children is perceived to be the pre-school, at three in five (58%). Ante-natal care is also cited as an important service, at two in five (42%) for children and one in three (35%) for parents.

These results suggest that, although there is slight variation, on the whole parents, staff and partners agree on the most important services for parents and their children.

### **2.3. How do parents find out about the centre?**

The interviews with parents who attend the Children's Centre found that they were first introduced to the centre through a number of different channels. One parent described how she was first given the address by the centre's manager and another parent says she found the centre through searching online. Others were advised to visit by health professionals or were introduced to the service through a friend.

*"I found out about the centre from a library pamphlet. I did some internet research but there's not much information on there. Not many people know about it and I think they could get more fathers over the week days"* (Parent)

*"When I first had my daughter two years ago I was given a leaflet from my health visitor. That's how I found out about it. I started going to a breastfeeding session at Chandos, then I went to the toy library and from there started going to other sessions"* (Parent)

### **2.4. How could the centre be improved?**

Across all the focus groups, parents, staff and partners were positive about the Children's Centres and the benefits they provide for both parents and their children through providing accessible services. As a result, a number of respondents state their opinion that the Children's Centres should not close as they play a vital role for parents in the community.

*"If the council does reduce the number of Children's Centres, this will take away much of the preventative work to ensure children have the best start in life. Problems will more likely come up later in life and cost more to the system then. More child protection cases will come up"* (Staff)

During the focus groups, a number of suggestions were put forward for how the centres could be improved. One prominent idea which came from the focus groups with partners and staff members, and was also cited by a number of parents during the interviews, is for the centres to broaden their focus and incorporate a wider age group. This would attract more people to the centres and further engage the centres within the local community.

*"Debt advice and other services should be available for parents of children over five"* (Partner)

*"They could provide activities for all ages such as teenagers and the elderly - not just for kids. They could have a drop in centre for child minders"* (Partner)

The Harrow website states that Children's Centres play a central role in reaching the most disadvantaged families. However, many respondents (staff, partners and parents) feel that the

centres do not consistently reach these parents who would most benefit from the service. To support this suggestion, questionnaire responses indicate that one in five (19%) parents identify their household income as £52,000 or more, while only one in eight (13%) say their household income is £10,399 or less. Respondents feel that many parents in the community are not aware of the services offered by Harrow Children's Centres and, therefore, targeted promotion of the services available at Harrow Children's Centres could address this issue.

*"We need to decide on the target group. Is the centre aimed at underprivileged families or not? It started that way but I don't know whether that's their focus anymore. If it is, they're not succeeding in it. More educated parents are coming in and getting free sessions" (Partner)*

To publicise effectively respondents suggest having posters in public spaces, such as doctor's surgeries and libraries, and also encouraging health professionals to refer more parents to the centre. This is particularly important for patients who are pregnant, to ensure that these patient receive professional advice from the beginning of their pregnancy and encourage sustained use of the centres as their child grows older.

*"Before my daughter came here I didn't know about the other services available. The timetables could be in newspapers or in the local library. I found out about the pre-school from a list of Children's Centre, then when I got here I found out about the other sessions they offer" (Parent)*

*"We need verbal, face-to-face contact with parents to give guidance. A hands-on approach between staff and parents is important... You need to get information to people who see your clients, such as doctors" (Partner)*

However, respondents suggest that in some areas language barriers present an obstacle to wider engagement and prevent certain audiences finding out about useful services for their child.

*"If interpreters were available more parents would use the centres. For example, the Polish community have been engaged at one centre where there is a support worker who speaks Polish. Language barriers are the most obvious problem to uptake" (Staff)*

In contrast to the dominant idea that increased promotion is needed, one parent cites the popularity of some sessions and suggests that enough people already know about the services offered. Parents are frequently turned away from sessions if they are full and, subsequently, they arrive early to secure a place in the session.

*"I don't actually think they need to publicise anymore because I find that in Chandos, and here, they're so busy that you have to arrive 10-20 minutes early to get a place. So clearly people know about it" (Parent)*

One staff member suggests that the informal nature of the Children's Centres is less daunting than a visit to health professionals, and therefore they are able to reach groups which would otherwise not seek help.

*“Formal procedures can be scary for some. Coming to the Children's Centre to see professionals is much less intimidating and more relaxed. The centre means parents who would not go for help at the doctors, for instance, would come to a Children's Centre, meaning groups are being reached who would not be otherwise” (Staff)*

Additionally, within the parents questionnaire responses, those parents who say they have never used a Children's Centre were asked what would encourage them to use the centres. The majority of these suggestions focused upon better advertising of the services available at the centres.

*“Advertise to parents what the Children's Centres do and what activities take place.  
Advertise more widely and have information more accessible” (Parent)*

*“I'm not sure where their services are publicised. Hillview looks a bit scary from the outside too! I think they could publicise services better” (Parent)*

*“Advertise where they are and what services they provide more visibly. I have never seen adverts for them” (Parent)*



### 3. The future of Harrow Children's Centres

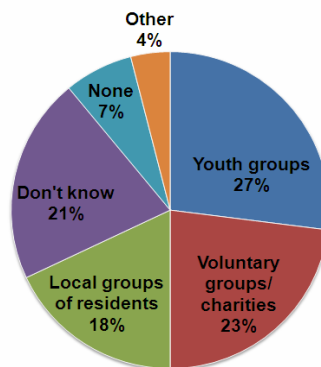
#### 3.1. External groups using the Children's Centres

From both the questionnaires and interviews, responses from staff, parents and service providers suggest that our respondents are generally in support of other groups (such as youth groups, voluntary groups/ charities and local groups of residents) using the centres.

With regard to parents only, support for the use of the centres by other groups is fairly even. For example, two in five parents support voluntary groups/charities (43%), youth groups (43%) and local groups of residents (42%) using space within the Children's Centres. Less than one in ten (7%) say the centre should not be used by any other group.

Parents were then asked to specify just one group they would like to see using the centre. These results are shown in the chart overleaf. The highest proportion of parents would like to see youth groups (27%), followed by voluntary groups/charities (23%) and then local groups of residents (18%).

#### Which would you like to see children's centres used for?

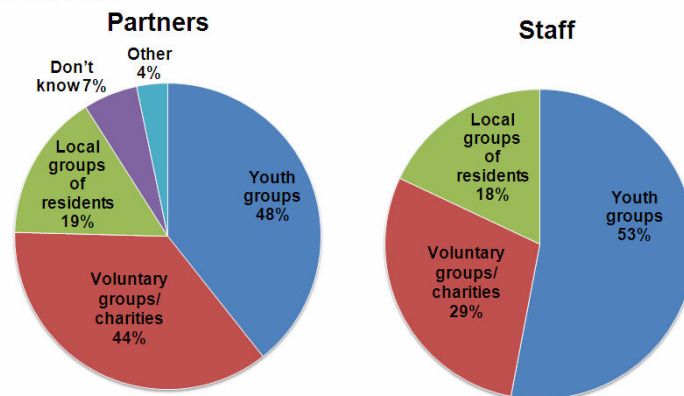


**Question:** And, which ONE if any, would you most like to see children's centres used for?  
**Source:** 415 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

A number of parents provide suggestions for which types of groups they would like to see using the Children's Centres for private usage and for community events. These suggestions include children's birthday parties, exercise classes and after school activities. This would maximise the usage of the centre and provide increased revenue.

Partners and staff were also asked within the questionnaire which groups they would like to see using the centres. The chart overleaf indicates which group parents and staff would most like to see using the centres. Although both staff and partners would like to see youth groups using the centres, a greater proportion of partners are in favour of voluntary groups and charities using the centre than both staff and parents.

## Which would you like to see children's centres used for?



**Question:** And, which ONE if any, would you most like to see children's centres used for?  
**Source:** 27 partners and 38 staff who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Discussions around this topic were also raised during the focus groups. The majority of staff, partners and parents agreed that the use of the centres by youth groups, voluntary groups/charities and local groups of residents would be beneficial. These potential benefits include providing a wider range of activities for different age groups, further establishing the centres within the community and producing increased revenue.

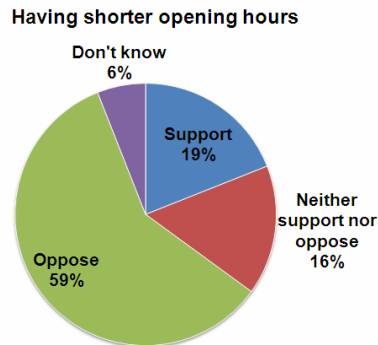
*"They could rent out rooms for exercise classes or homework clubs. It would make the centre more grounded in the community"* (Partner)

*"Have other groups for teenagers. It's definitely a good thing and we could have more in the evening. It would be brilliant for the kids not to be on the streets"* (Parent)

### 3.2. Having shorter opening hours

The questionnaires proposed several potential ideas in order to insure the future of Harrow Children's Centres. These ideas were having shorter opening hours, charging for some services and parents and carers getting involved in helping to run the service. Three in five (59%) parents are opposed to having shorter opening hours, while one in five (19%) are in support of it. A further one in six (16%) neither support nor oppose this suggestion and the rest say they do not know.

**To what extent do you support/oppose the following ideas for keeping our children’s centres running?**



**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our children’s centres running?  
**Source:** 453 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

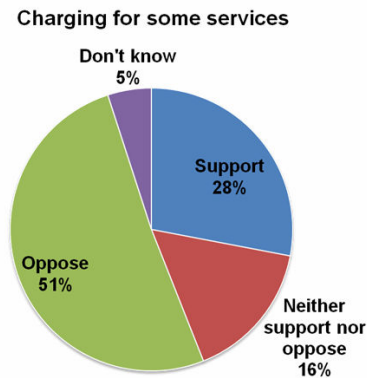
Through the focus groups and interviews with partners, staff and parents, the majority say they did not feel having shorter opening hours would be a worthwhile measure as the varying Children’s Centres across Harrow have varying opening hours and therefore, attempting to limit the hours of all the centres may be problematic.

Questionnaires from partners and staff show that, like parents, they are more likely to oppose the suggestion of shorter opening hours, at just over half (53%) when these scores are combined, to produce a greater response count of 69. One in four (29%) partners and staff say they neither support nor oppose the suggestion, while one in six (16%) support it. The rest say they do not know.

**3.3. Charging for some services**

Half (51%) of parents are opposed the second suggestion of charging for some services, while one quarter (28%) of parents support it. The chart below shows these scores.

**To what extent do you support/oppose the following ideas for keeping our children’s centres running?**



**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our children’s centres running?  
**Source:** 453 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

During the interviews, parents displayed greater willingness to pay for the services than the questionnaire responses suggest. This may be a result of the interviewer explaining the potential cost of services would be at a couple of pounds.

*"It's okay with me if they need to charge for the services in order to keep the centres open. One or two pounds would still be a lot cheaper than other groups I go to!" (Parent)*

*"I would be happy to pay a small fee as it really benefits the kids" (Parent)*

Nevertheless, a number of respondents are opposed to this idea, suggesting that services for children should be free. Others expressed concern that charging for services would discourage underprivileged families from attending. In order to counteract this problem, one staff member suggests that free membership for those who volunteer could be an incentive for these parents.

*"I think some things should just be free, nothings free now and if you're at home all day it's nice to have somewhere free to come. It's off putting for a lot of parents. If there trying to reach out to the underprivileged than they shouldn't force people to pay. It's a barrier for them" (Parent)*

*"I think charging for some services would be beneficial but I also think this would exclude families who couldn't afford it. In some cases these families are the ones we are trying to reach and support" (Staff)*

*"Low income families may be put off. Could incentives be offered to those who say they cannot afford the centre – they could volunteer?" (Staff)*

The questionnaire responses from both partners and staff indicate that both are more likely than parents to support charging for some services, at three in five (60%) partners and staff when their responses are combined. Additionally, one third (34%) of partners and staff oppose this suggestion, resulting in a difference of 17 percentage points between staff/partners and parents.

During focus group sessions, partners and staff were also asked how they thought the Children's Centres could continue running. Many were in support of charging for services and feel parents may appreciate the service to a greater extent if this measure was to be implemented. This may also encourage parents to consistently attended the sessions and encourage greater commitment and loyalty to the centre. A number of respondents say that those parents who can afford to pay, should be encouraged to do so.

*"Free services can devalue what they mean to the user, they are less respected and don't value the centre if it is free" (Staff)*

*"We have to start saying to parents, if you don't pay you can't come. This needs to be enforced with staff" (Partner)*

However, one problem recognised by staff and partners included how to identify those parents who can afford to pay for the sessions and what exactly the centre would charge for. For example, would parents be charged per child, per session or an annual fee. The notion of a membership was popular amongst partners and staff. It was also cited by a number of parents.

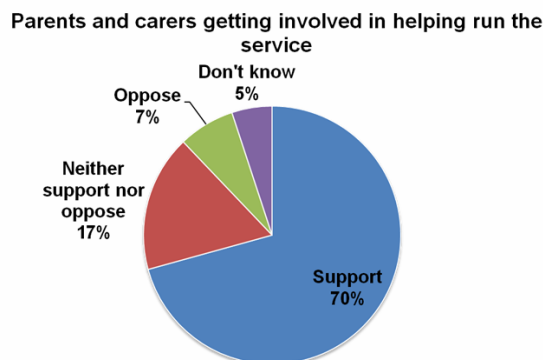
*"Payment cannot be a blanket rule—you need to look at different areas and services and then decide which should charge depending on the needs of users"* (Partner)

*"We could introduce voluntary payments for those who can afford it. It might make people appreciate the centre more. People don't always realise what a resource it is"* (Partner)

### 3.4. Parents and carers getting involved in helping run the service

Volunteering by parents at the centre would require a regular time commitment on behalf of the volunteers in order to ensure the services are run by sufficient numbers. Nevertheless, this option received the most support from parents at almost seven in ten (70%) parents. One in six (17%) parents neither support nor oppose this suggestion, while seven percent are opposed to it.

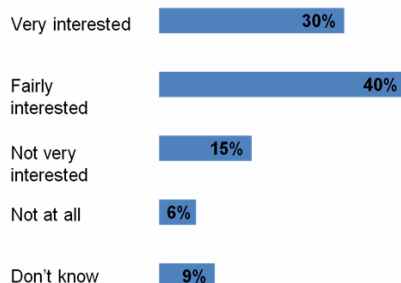
#### To what extent do you support/oppose the following ideas for keeping our children's centres running?



**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our children's centres running?  
**Source:** 453 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Seven in ten (70%) parents say they would be fairly or very interested in helping to run the services available in the Children's Centre and one in five (21%) say they are not very/not at all interested.

## Parents views on helping to run services



**Question:** How interested, if at all, are you in helping run the services available in children's centres?  
**Source:** 459 parents who expressed an opinion, aged 16+, 17<sup>th</sup> May till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Parents were also asked about volunteering during interviews. Although initially parents were optimistic about volunteering, once the interviewee explained the regular time commitment which volunteering would require they became less enthusiastic. Many cite the difficulties of having to look after their own child whilst also running a session and not being able to run sessions when their child is ill. Therefore, many parents could not commit to volunteering routinely, although were happy to help informally during sessions.

*"Volunteers would need to be CRB checked. I wouldn't mind volunteering for certain tasks but I've also got my own child to look after. The mums help out on an informal basis anyway"* (Parent)

A small number of parents object to sessions being run by volunteers, as they come to the centre for the professional advice of staff and this, they feel, cannot be offered by parents untrained in such areas. Other parents tell us that they do not have time to volunteer.

*"Volunteers shouldn't be used at the expense of paid staff. It's not sustainable, they cannot commit to coming every week... There is a place for volunteering and we should encourage mums to help out but they shouldn't replace the need for paid staff"* (Parent)

*"I don't have time to volunteer. The centre wouldn't be the same if it was run by volunteers. I want to feel like I'm getting professional advice (which I do at the moment)"* (Parent)

The partners and staff questionnaire results indicate that two thirds (69%) of partners/staff support parents helping out in sessions while only one in ten (12%) oppose this suggestion. Significantly, within the questionnaire results no partners were opposed to this idea.

The focus groups highlighted the positive views of partners surrounding parents helping out in sessions. A number cite how volunteering could help parents or students develop the skills needed for employment. They also explain that a number of parents already help to run some sessions, although volunteering is not appropriate within sessions where expert advice is essential, such as

in the stop smoking classes. They were keen to point out that professional staff should not be replaced by volunteers, who should only assist in sessions.

*"Volunteering here could help people who are not working to improve their skills base"* (Partner)

*"There are some sessions which people just couldn't volunteer for such as stop smoking classes. But others are very volunteer friendly, such as the Cookery Classes"* (Partner)

#### **4.5. Other ideas for ensuring the future of the Children's Centres**

Within the questionnaire, parents and staff were asked what they think is the best way to keep the Children's Centre service running. Many of these verbatim comments provided by respondents focused upon the ideas which have already been noted, such as renting out rooms, charging for some services and encouraging parents to volunteer. Although some additional ideas were also proposed at this stage, such as more advertising of the available services in the local area, maintaining good and quality services, and gaining sponsorship from private businesses.

*"Partnerships with other centres and groups to share staff, back room costs and resources"*  
(Parent)

*"Use more junior (less expensive) staff where appropriate. Attract private funding through sponsorship and advertising. Get volunteers to help with some sessions"* (Parent).

*"Group sessions need to develop a program over the course of a half term, to encourage carers/parents to continue to attend. The program of events needs to be publicised to those who attend the centre. Further promotion of some centres which are underutilised needs to happen"*  
(Parent)

*"Make sure we receive a grant for services to disabled people e.g. for Lip Reading"* (Parent)

*"Get investment and sponsorship from local businesses, such as Boots or Mothercare"* (Parent)

The focus group and interviews with parents, service providers and staff offered more ideas for how Harrow Children's Centre could ensure their future. They include saving money on food by providing less snacks and encouraging parents to bring along food to share in sessions. As with the questionnaire responses, a number of interviewees also suggest gaining sponsorship from private companies.

*"We could reduce costs in other ways too. We could pay for equipment through sponsorship and funding... We could save money on food. We don't need to pay for breakfast as parents could contribute their own food"* (Partner)

*"Food is wasted at the centres; there should be a better system of buying food"* (Staff)

*"Liaise with local businesses who may sponsor a centre, particularly if their staff have children who are looked after by the centre, or who are involved with children/ education in some way"* (Staff)

The table below shows the Children's Centre that parents/guardians/carers say they usually use, alongside five different responses from the parents questionnaire. It shows that parents who usually attend Stanmore Park are the most likely to support charging for some services (42%), those who usually attend Whitefriars are most likely to support parents/carers getting involved in helping run the service (79%) and that the stay and play toy library is the popular service across nine of the thirteen centres.

Children's Centre usually used	Base size	Most popular service (%)	Most valued quality (%)	% support having shorter opening hours	% support charging for some services	% support parents/carers getting involved in helping run the service
<b>Pinner Centre</b>	86	Stay and Play Toy Library (18%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (12%)	17%	38%	63%
<b>Hillview</b>	64	Stay and Play Toy Library (26%)	Wide range of services available in one place (12%)	18%	19%	69%
<b>Cedars</b>	62	Holiday Activities (21%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (14%)	16%	24%	68%
<b>Pinner Wood</b>	40	Stay and Play Toy Library (24%), Holiday Activities (24%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (11%)	32%	21%	66%
<b>Whitefriars</b>	43	Carer and Toddler Group (17%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (11%)	16%	26%	79%
<b>Gange</b>	43	Stay and Play Toy Library (20%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (12%)	20%	23%	68%
<b>Stanmore Park</b>	43	Stay and Play Toy Library (25%)	Wide range of services available in one place (12%)	11%	42%	78%
<b>Rayners Lane</b>	34	Stay and Play Toy Library (31%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (12%)	23%	28%	71%
<b>Kenmore Park</b>	34	Stay and Play Toy Library (29%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (11%)	21%	25%	72%
<b>Grange</b>	28	Stay and Play Toy Library (32%)	Staff are helpful and welcoming (11%)	25%	37%	65%
<b>Vaughan Road</b>	9	Pre-school 30%, Holiday Activities (30%)	Quality of the building, toys and equipment (15%)	40%	20%	67%
<b>Chandos</b>	3	Stay and Play Toy Library (33%), Carer and Toddler Group (33%)	8 qualities identified (each at 13%)	33%	33%	100%
<b>St Josephs</b>	2	Holiday Activities 100%	9 qualities identified (each at 10%)	0%	100%	50%



## Appendix 1: Parents interview/focus group topic guide

Below is a copy of the main topic guide used for during interviews and focus groups. Three topic guides were used in total, one for each of the groups we interviewed (parents, partners and staff). However the topic guide used when interviewing parents encompasses all the important topics and was used the most. The focus groups lasted approximately, 30-40 minutes. The individual interviews were shorter in length and lasted around 5–10 minutes.

### Harrow Children's Centres (parents/guardians/carers) - Discussion Groups Topic Guide – (Summer 2011)

Section 1: Introduction	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce self. Explain fire exits and any other safety issues</li> <li>• Explain format of discussions, the use of the discussion guide, and the role of the moderator. Explain confidentiality and confirm permission to audio/video record the discussions.</li> <li>• Ask everyone to informally introduce themselves – name, where they are from, occupation and anything else the group might think is interesting.</li> <li>• Ask if anyone has any questions before everyone introduces themselves</li> </ul>	To set the ground rules
Section 2: General use of Harrow Children's Centre services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you find out about the centre?</li> <li>• What services are available at the Harrow Children's Centres?</li> <li>• How do you find out about services offered by the centre? PROBE leaflets, friends/family, word of mouth, etc.</li> <li>• How would you prefer to find out about the services offered by the Centre?</li> <li>• Do you need more information?</li> </ul>	To warm up the discussions and collect information about parents use of the centre

<b>Section 3: Opinions of services at Harrow Children's Centres</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which services do you use at Harrow Children's Centres?</li> <li>• How often do you use them?</li> <li>• What do you like/dislike about these services? PROBE: time of classes, location, etc</li> <li>• In your opinion, which services are the most/ least effective or useful... for you/ for your child/in general - all people?</li> <li>• Do you know anywhere providing services similar to Harrow Children's Centres locally? PROBE: Where? What do they offer?</li> </ul>	To collect information on the use of services
<b>Section 4: Value of the centre</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think is good and what is bad about the centre?</li> <li>• Which services are most important to you/ your child? Why?</li> <li>• What effect have the services you use had on you/your child? PROBE: Why? Positive/negative</li> <li>• Have you/your child learnt anything valuable from use of the centre?</li> <li>• In what way do the services offered help you in your daily life?</li> <li>• How valuable would you say the centre is for you? PROBE: Why?</li> <li>• How would you cope without these services?</li> </ul>	To gauge value of Children's Centres for parents
<b>Section 5: Knowledge of services</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any services which you are interested in that you do not already use?</li> <li>• What would encourage you to use the services more? PROBE: More information, better locations/times, etc</li> <li>• Do you think the centre could improve the services it offers? How?</li> </ul>	To collect information on the knowledge of available services

<b>Section 6: The future of Harrow Children's Centres</b>	
<p>READ OUT: In order to continue the services offered by Harrow Children's Centres a number of ideas have been suggested to reduce costs. They include having shorter opening hours, charging for some services and parents and carers getting involved in helping run the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you feel if the centre was open for shorter opening hours? PROBE: Would you still use the centre?</li> <li>• Would you be prepared to pay for services at the centre? If so, which ones? What is a reasonable charge? PROBE: payment linked to means or standard rate for everyone?</li> <li>• Would you consider working as a volunteer at the centre? PROBE what would encourage you to volunteer? Lower costs for volunteers?</li> <li>• Have you got any other ideas on how the centre could reduce costs in order to keep the service running in a way that would not discourage you from attending? PROBE: How would that work? What do others in the group think?</li> </ul>	To discuss what improvements parents think could be made to Harrow Children's Centres
<b>Section 7: Improving the reach of the centre</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think the centres should be used by any groups that are not currently using them? PROBE: youth groups, local residents, etc.</li> <li>• What could these groups use the centre for?</li> <li>• How can we ensure other parents are aware of services available in their area?</li> </ul>	To establish the perceived reach of the centre
<b>Section 8: Conclusions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything else anyone wants to add about the centre, or anything we have discussed?</li> </ul>	To round up the discussions and to make sure all issues are covered

**THANK AND CLOSE**

## Appendix 2: Children's Centre interview/focus group summaries

The table below indicates the findings of several focus groups and individual interviews which were conducted in addition to the questionnaires. The table below shows each of the Children's Centres where focus groups and interviews were conducted and a basic profile of respondents. The table also includes a short summary of the main themes which were drawn from each of the seven centres visited. This short summary is not representative of the views of all visitors as in some cases only a small number of interviews were conducted.

Name of centre	Research method and respondent profile	Main themes
Cedars	16 Individual interviews with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-All parents especially liked the atmosphere of the Cedars Children's Centre, describing it as airy, spacious and a friendly environment to visit.</li> <li>-As the majority of these interviews were conducted at the Baby Clinic, parents were less likely to agree to charges for the services as the time which they spent at the centre during these sessions was minimal.</li> </ul>
Gange	Seven individual interviews with parents attending a fathers group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This group enjoyed meeting other fathers and gaining greater parenting knowledge and skills.</li> <li>-They explained that coming to the centre allowed their partners some time off and allowed them to bond with children.</li> <li>-Would volunteer but it is difficult to commit the time. Need to have CRB checks and training.</li> <li>-There was a feeling that the centre could attract more fathers to this group.</li> </ul>
Hillview	12 Individual interviews with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mixed feelings about volunteering and charging for services. Two parents say they want the sessions to be run by experienced staff rather than volunteers. The others would be happy to volunteer. Most are happy to pay £1 or £2 maximum for sessions, whilst others would struggle to afford that or disagree with the principle of paying for the sessions.</li> <li>-Also likely to attend sessions at Grange, Gange and Rayners Lane.</li> <li>-Publicity of the centre is good –parents found out about the sessions through an internet search or through leaflets. Some sessions very busy, in particular PAFT courses and women's support sessions.</li> <li>-Facilities seen as not as good as in some other centres, such as the quality of the food and the toy library.</li> </ul>

Kenmore Park	Five individual interviews with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Would volunteer in order to keep the services running.</li> <li>-Would pay a small charge as well if that was important, but no more than £2.</li> <li>-Children's Centre is really important within community.</li> <li>-Sessions should not be shorter as the length of the sessions would otherwise be too short and would not be worth it attending.</li> <li>-Suggest using the centre for youth clubs to raise money and keep children off the streets after school.</li> </ul>
Pinner Centre	15 individual interviews with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The majority of parents here are willing to pay £1- £2 as they feel they get good advice, although one parent says this would be difficult for her.</li> <li>-Some parents are willing to volunteer, but others say they do not currently have the time.</li> <li>-The positive impact on children and parents is noted by all, especially socialising and learning English.</li> <li>-A number suggest having more activities for different ages.</li> </ul>
Stanmore	Three sets of focus group with providers of services and Harrow Council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Volunteers could be a good idea in some sessions and could help students and parents gain the skills they need for employment.</li> <li>-The idea of charging for the services was received positively for the most part. Participants suggest having an annual/membership fee or not paying if willing to volunteer. However, it is important not to isolate underprivileged parents who cannot genuinely afford the cost. A number of participants suggested that if the centre was to charge for services, parents would value it more.</li> <li>-Could improve the centres by providing services for a wider age group. This would also establish it within the community.</li> <li>-Other ways of saving money include sponsorship and encouraging parents to contribute food rather than the centre providing it all.</li> </ul>
Whitefriars	Three individual interviews with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-These parents liked the availability of fresh fruit as it encourages their children to eat healthily.</li> <li>-They all say they would pay for sessions, but no more than £1- £2.</li> <li>-They all also say they would volunteer, but highlight the need for skilled staff within some sessions.</li> <li>-They suggest opening the building up to youth groups out of hours to provide somewhere for children to go after school.</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: Parents/guardians/carers survey results

The tables below show the top line results for the Harrow Children's Centre questionnaires completed by 527 **parents/guardians/carers**. A full list of verbatim comments is available separately.

Note: Where percentages do not add up to 100, this is due to certain questions allowing for multiple answers, and the rounding up of figures. Additionally, not all parents answered every question and, as a consequence, base sizes vary.

#### Q1. Which Children's Centre do you usually use? Please tick one box only.

Pinner Centre	16%
Hillview	12%
Cedars	12%
Gange	8%
Stanmore Park	8%
Whitefriars	8%
Pinner Wood	8%
Kenmore Park	7%
Rayners Lane	7%
Grange	5%
Vaughan Road	2%
Chandos	1%
None	6%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	522

#### Q2. Why have you never used a Children's Centre? Please tick all that apply.

I've never heard of them	38%
I don't have children under five	24%
The services they provide are not right for me/don't offer the services I am interested in	7%
They are not conveniently located for me	3%
Other Examples include: I don't have time in the day, I have recently moved, I'm not sure what service they offer and I am going to use it from next month	24%
Don't know	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	29

**Q.3 What, if anything, could we do to encourage you to use our Children's Centres?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**Q4. How often do you visit this Children's Centre? Please tick one box only.**

3-4 times per week	20%
1-2 times per week	52%
2-4 times per month	12%
Once per month	11%
Less than once per month	5%
Don't know	1%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	476

**Q5. How much do you value this Children's Centre? Please tick one box only.**

A great deal/fair amount	97%
Not very much/not at all	2%
Don't know	1%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	473

**Q6. Do you use any other of the council's Children's Centres? Please tick all that apply.**

Pinner Centre	13%
Gange	11%
Cedars	11%
Pinner Wood	9%
Rayners Lane	8%
Grange	8%
Whitefriars	7%
Kenmore Park	6%
Hillview	6%
St Josephs	5%
Stanmore Park	3%
Chandos	3%
Vaughan Road	2%
None	39%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	391

**Q7. Which of the following services do you or your children currently use at these Children's Centres? Please tick all that apply.**

Stay and play toy library	42%
Holiday activities	35%
Carer and toddler group	34%
Pre-school	24%
Ante-natal care	14%
Parenting programmes	11%
Breastfeeding support	9%
Cookery classes	6%
Speech and language therapy sessions	5%
Childminder support group	5%
Adult education classes	4%
Counselling services	3%
Benefits and debt advice session	2%
ESOL classes	2%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	2%
Dentistry service	1%
Other Examples include: stop smoking sessions, sexual health support and advice, baby clinic, health visitors and after school club	18%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	458



**Q8. What are the most important services... Please tick up to three each.**

	...to you?	...to your child?
Stay and play toy library	44%	55%
Holiday activities	40%	46%
Carer and toddler group	35%	39%
Pre-school	31%	35%
Ante-natal care	24%	9%
Parenting programmes	21%	6%
Breastfeeding support	15%	6%
Cookery classes	8%	7%
Childminder support group	7%	5%
Counselling services	7%	1%
Adult education group	6%	1%
Speech and language therapy sessions	5%	4%
ESOL classes	5%	2%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	3%	1%
Dentistry service	3%	3%
Benefits and debt advice session	3%	0%
Stop smoking sessions	2%	0%
Sexual health support and advice	1%	0%
Other	7%	5%
Don't know	1%	1%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>		475

**Q9. Do you know if you can access similar services to those provided at Harrow's Children Centres anywhere else locally? Please tick one box only.**

No, access to such services is only available at the Children's Centre	83 %
Yes, there are other providers. If so, where are they and which services? Examples of other providers include GPs surgeries, church-run children's groups and library services	17%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	426

**Q10. What do you value most about Harrow council's Children's Centres? Please tick all that apply.**

Staff are helpful and welcoming	77%
Wide range of services available in one place	64%
Quality of the building, toys and equipment	61%
Convenient location	56%
Improves my child's progress and development	56%
Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive staff	48%
Chance to meet with other parents/guardians/carers	46%
Free provision of quality services	42%
Convenient opening times	41%
Flexibility over what sessions you attend and when	37%
Helped me to understand my child and their needs	35%
Offers support for parents/guardians/carers	35%
Access to other professional staff e.g. Health Visitor/Midwife	28%
Only place that offers the services I/my child/children need(s)	20%
Near to a school that my other children attend	13%
Caters for my child's cultural needs	8%
Caters for my child's disability or additional needs	3%
Other	1%
Don't know	1%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	478

**Q11. Has using the services offered at Harrow's Children's Centres had a positive effect on... Please tick one box in each row.**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
...your quality of life as a parent/ guardian/ carer?	90%	2%	8%
...your child's / children's quality of life?	90%	2%	8%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	454		

**Q12. If yes, what positive effect has having access to these services had on you and your child? Please tick up to three.**

My child has made more friends	45%
I understand better how to support my child	44%
My child has learnt to share and take turn	43%
I have been able to network with other parents and make new friends	42%
I am better able to cope with the demands of parenting	39%
I have made more friends	37%
My child's behaviour has improved	33%
My child's speech has improved	24%
My child has been able to settle into school more easily	18%
I have been able to access maternity care close to home	10%
My child's health has improved	9%
I have been supported to deal with family problems	9%
My health has improved	8%
I understand better what benefits I am entitled to and how to claim them	5%
I have been able to work/keep my job	4%
I have had support to deal with financial issues	2%
Other	3%
Don't know	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	433

**Q13. Which, if any, of the following do you think Children's Centres could be used for? Please tick all that apply.**

Youth groups	43%
Voluntary groups/charities	43%
Local groups of residents	42%
None	7%
Other	5%
Don't know	19%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	437

**Q14. And, which ONE if any, would you most like to see Children's Centres used for? Please tick one box only.**

Youth groups	27%
Voluntary groups/charities	23%
Local groups of residents	18%
None	7%
Other	4%
Don't know	21%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	415

**Q15. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our Children's Centres running. Please tick one box in each row.**

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Don't know
Having shorter opening hours	19%	16%	59%	6%
Charging for some services	28%	16%	51%	5%
Parents and carers getting involved in helping run the service	70%	17%	7%	5%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	453			

**Q16. How interested, if at all, are you in helping run the services available in Children's Centres? Please tick one box only.**

Very interested	30%
Fairly interested	40%
Not very interested	15%
Not at all interested	5%
Don't know	9%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	459

**Q17. What do you think is the best way for us to keep the service running?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**Q18. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your views on the future development of Harrow Children's Centres?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**QA. Are you responding to the consultation as a:**

Parent	81%
Lone parent	9%
Carer	5%
Younger person and service user	2%
Legal guardian	1%
Other	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	485

**QB. Are you...**

Female	93%
Male	7%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	465

**QC. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?**

Under 18	1%
18 to 24	6%
25 to 34	53%
35 to 44	31%
45 to 54	5%
55 to 64	2%
65+	2%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	496

**QD. If you are a parent, how many children do you have?**

1	51%
2	34%
3	10%
4	3%
5+	2%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	453

**QE. How old is your child/are your children?**

0-3	69%
4-7	31%
8-11	11%
12-15	7%
16+	6%
I am expecting a baby	8%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	472

**QF. What is your household income before tax?**

Up to £5,199 per year (less than £99 per week)	7%
£5,200 - £10,399 (£100 - £199 per week)	7%
£10,400 - £15,599 (£200-£299 per week)	7%
£15,600 - 20,799 (£300-£399 per week)	8%
£20,800 - £25,999 (£400-£499 per week)	7%
£26,000 - £31,199 (£500-£599 per week)	7%
£31,200-£51,999 (£600-£699 per week)	17%
£52,000 or more (£1000 or more per week)	19%
Don't know	22%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	429

**QG. How would you describe your ethnic group?**

Asian or Asian British	49%
White (British)	28%
White (other)	9%
Black or Black British	6%
Mixed ethnic group	5%
Other ethnic group	3%
Arab	1%
Chinese	1%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	<i>487</i>

### Appendix 3: Partners survey results

The tables below show the top line results for the Harrow Children's Centre questionnaires completed by 30 **partners** of Harrow Children's Centres. A full list of verbatim comments is available separately.

Note: Where percentages do not add up to 100, this is due to certain questions allowing for multiple answers, and the rounding up of figures. Additionally, not all parents answered every question and, as a consequence, base sizes vary.

**Q1. In your view, what are the most important services that Harrow Children's Centres offer... Please tick up to three each.**

	...to children?	...to parents?
Parenting programmes	50%	85%
Ante-natal care	42%	35%
Pre-school	58%	15%
Carer and toddler group	38%	35%
Breastfeeding support	27%	35%
Holiday activities	27%	23%
Counselling services	19%	27%
Stay and play toy library	50%	15%
Speech and language therapy sessions	23%	4%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	12%	19%
Benefits and debt advice session	4%	23%
Adult education classes	4%	19%
ESOL classes	4%	15%
Stop smoking sessions	4%	12%
Cookery classes	8%	8%
Childminder support group	4%	8%
Dentistry service	8%	4%
Sexual health support and advice	4%	4%
Other	0%	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>		26

**Q2. Do you know if similar services to those provided at Harrow's children centres are offered anywhere else locally?**

No, access to such services is only available at the Children's Centre	38%
Yes, there are other providers. If so, where are they and which services? Examples include: other toddler groups running within Harrow (at least 40), hospital and community venues, speech therapy services, Home Start, pre-school sessions and the Harrow healthy living centre.	62%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	26

**Q3. Thinking about the people who use the Children's Centres, what do you think THEY value most about Harrow's Children's Centres? Please tick all that apply.**

Wide range of services available in one place	93%
Chance to meet with other parents/guardians	78%
Offers support for parents/guardians/carers	78%
Access to other professional staff e.g. Health Visitor/Midwife	74%
Convenient location	74%
Helped them to understand their child and their needs	67%
Free provision of quality services	63%
Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive staff	63%
Quality of the building, toys and equipment	59%
Staff are helpful and welcoming	59%
Improves their child's progress and development	56%
Caters for their child's disability or additional needs	41%
Convenient opening times	41%
Flexibility over what sessions they attend and when	41%
Near to a school that other children attend	37%
Caters for their child's cultural needs	33%
Only place that offers the services their child/children need(s)	30%
Other	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q4. Do the services offered at Harrow's Children's Centres have a positive effect on... Please tick one box for each row.**

	Yes	Don't know
...the quality of life of parents/guardians/carers?	88%	12%
...children's quality of life?	93%	7%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	26	



**Q5. If yes, what positive effect do you think the Children's Centres have? Please tick up to three.**

Helping parents/guardians/carers cope with the demands of parenting	65%
Allowing parents a place to meet others helps them feel less isolated	58%
Helping parents/guardians/carers understand better how to support their children	58%
Supporting individuals and families to deal with family problems	54%
Improving child behaviours	50%
Offering access maternity care close to home	50%
Children learning to share and take turn	38%
Improving children's speech	38%
Allowing children to make more friends	35%
Allowing parents/guardians/carers to make more friends	35%
Helping children settle into school more easily	35%
Improving children's health	35%
Improving understanding of benefits entitlement and how to claim them	35%
Improving parents/guardians/carers health	31%
Supporting individuals and families to deal with financial issues	19%
Enabling parents/guardians/carers to work/keep a job	12%
Other	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	26

**Q6. What do you think the main benefits are of co-location for you as a service provider? Please tick up to three.**

Coordination between my service and other complimentary services	70%
Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive colleagues/staff	70%
Convenient location for me/my clients/patients	67%
Ability to speak to other staff impacting on my work	37%
Convenient opening times for me/my clients/patients	15%
Other	7%
Don't know	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q7. And, what do you think the main benefits are of co-location for your service users?  
Please tick up to three.**

Wide range of services available in one place	70%
Staff are helpful and welcoming	37%
Access to other professional staff e.g. Health Visitor/Midwife	33%
Convenient location	33%
Improves their child's progress and development	30%
Offers support for parents/guardians/carers	30%
Flexibility over what sessions they attend and when	22%
Free provision of quality services	19%
Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive staff	15%
Quality of the building, toys and equipment	15%
Helped them to understand their child and their needs	15%
Caters for their child's disability or additional needs	15%
Chance to meet with other parents/guardians/carers	15%
Convenient opening times	11%
Near to a school that other children attend	7%
Only place that offers the services their child/children need(s)	4%
Don't know	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q8. What are the main reasons you chose to deliver your service in a Children's Centre?  
Please tick as many as apply.**

Coordination between my service and other complimentary services	74%
Convenient location for me/my clients/patients	74%
Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive colleagues/staff	48%
Ability to speak to other staff impacting on my work	44%
Convenient opening times for me/my clients/patients	33%
Other Examples include: Funding is provided (without it we could not provide services ), and PUA office situated in St Josephs	11%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q9. How has co-location impacted upon your ability to meet delivery targets?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**Q10. Which, if any, of the following do you think Children's Centres could be used for?  
Please tick all that apply.**

Voluntary groups/charities	81%
Youth groups	78%
Local groups of residents	70%
Other Examples include: let out rooms for children's parties, groups which help promote health/community support/ cohesion, yoga classes and weight watchers sessions.	22%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q11. And, which ONE if any, would you most like to see Children's Centres used for?  
Please tick one box only.**

Youth groups	48%
Voluntary groups/charities	44%
Local groups of residents	19%
Other	4%
Don't know	7%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27

**Q12. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our  
Children's Centres running? Please tick one box in each row.**

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose
Having shorter opening hours	11%	26%	63%
Charging for some services	52%	4%	44%
Parents and carers getting involved in helping run the service	85%	15%	0%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	27		

**Q13. Which Children's Centre do you usually work at? Please tick one box only.**

Cedars	39%
Stanmore Park	35%
Hillview	30%
Pinner Wood	22%
Whitefriars	22%
Gange	17%
Pinner Centre	13%
Rayners Lane	13%
Kenmore Park	13%
St Joseph's	13%
Chandos	9%
Vaughan Road	4%
Grange	4%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	23

**Q14. Do you also work at any other of the council's Children's Centres? Please tick as many as apply.**

Gange	42%
Chandos	26%
Pinner Wood	26%
Whitefriars	26%
Ceders	21%
Hillview	21%
Pinner Centre	21%
St Joseph's	21%
Grange	21%
Stanmore Park	11%
Kenmore Park	11%
Rayners Lane	11%
Vaughan Road No	11%
No	47%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	19

**Q15. Which of the below areas do you mostly work in? Tick as many as apply.**

Parenting programmes	16%
Pre-school	16%
Breastfeeding support	12%
Counselling services	12%
Stop smoking sessions	12%
Ante-natal care	8%
Carer and toddler group	8%
Cookery classes	8%
Holiday activities	8%
Speech and language therapy sessions	8%
Stay and play toy library	8%
Adult education classes	4%
Benefits and debt advice session	4%
Childminder support group	4%
ESOL classes	4%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	4%
Other Examples include: youth offending team, reception and child health services	32%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	25

### Appendix 3: Staff survey results

The tables below show the top line results for the Harrow Children's Centre questionnaires completed by 39 **staff**. A full list of verbatim comments is available separately.

Note: Where percentages do not add up to 100, this is due to certain questions allowing for multiple answers, and the rounding up of figures. Additionally, not all parents answered every question and, as a consequence, base sizes vary.

**Q1. In your view, what are the most important services that Harrow Children's Centres offer... Please tick up to three each.**

	...to children?	...to parents/guardians/carers?
Carer and toddler group	61%	32%
Parenting programmes	42%	50%
Holiday activities	58%	26%
Pre-school	34%	21%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	26%	29%
Stay and play toy library	37%	13%
Counselling services	11%	34%
Speech and language therapy sessions	37%	8%
ESOL classes	11%	32%
Ante-natal care	8%	34%
Breastfeeding support	13%	18%
Benefits and debt advice session	3%	16%
Cookery classes	18%	5%
Childminder support group	13%	8%
Adult education group	3%	16%
Dentistry service	5%	5%
Stop smoking sessions	5%	5%
Sexual health support and advice	0	3%
Other	3%	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	38	

**Q2. Do you know if similar services to those provided at Harrow's children centres are offered anywhere else locally?**

No, access to such services is only available at the Children's Centre	62%
Yes, there are other providers. If so, where are they and which services? Examples include: Parenting programmes such as HOPE, NCT classes, women's centres, Relate and church toddler groups.	38%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	34

**Q3. Thinking about the people who use the Children's Centres, what do you think THEY value most about Harrow's Children's Centres? Please tick all that apply.**

Knowledgeable, skilled and supportive staff	85%
Staff are helpful and welcoming	85%
Wide range of services available in one place	85%
Helped them to understand their child and their needs	79%
Access to other professional staff e.g. Health Visitor/Midwife	74%
Improves their child's progress and development	74%
Convenient location	67%
Offers support for parents/guardians/carers	67%
Quality of the building, toys and equipment	64%
Chance to meet with other parents/guardians/carers	62%
Caters for their child's disability or additional needs	56%
Free provision of quality services	56%
Caters for their child's cultural needs	46%
Flexibility over what sessions you attend and when	44%
Convenient opening times	41%
Near to a school that other children attend	36%
Only place that offers the services their child/children need(s)	36%
Other	8%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	39

**Q4. Has using the services offered at Harrow's Children's Centres had a positive effect on... Please tick one box on each row.**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
...the quality of life of parents/guardians/carers?	90%	10%
...children's quality of life?	95%	5%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	39	

**Q5. If yes, what positive effect do you think the Children's Centres have? Please tick up to three.**

Helping parents/guardians/carers cope with the demands of parenting	76%
Helping parents/guardians/carers understand better how to support their children	70%
Improving child behaviours	49%
Allowing parents a place to meet others helps them feel less isolated	38%
Improving children's speech	38%
Children learning to share and take turn	35%
Helping children settle into school more easily	35%
Supporting individuals and families to deal with family problems	30%
Allowing children to make more friends	27%
Allowing parents/guardians/carers to make more friends	24%
Offering access maternity care close to home	24%
Improving children's health	22%
Supporting individuals and families to deal with financial issues	22%
Improving understanding of benefits entitlement and how to claim them	16%
Enabling parents/guardians/carers to work/keep a job	14%
Improving parents/guardians/carers health	5%
Other	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	37

**Q6. Which, if any, of the following do you think Children's Centres could be used for? Please tick all that apply.**

Youth groups	82%
Voluntary groups/charities	72%
Local groups of residents	67%
Other Examples include: cultural groups, exercise groups and party room hire.	15%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	39

**Q7. And, which ONE if any, would you most like to see Children's Centres used for? Please tick one box only.**

Youth groups	53%
Voluntary groups/charities	29%
Local groups of residents	18%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	38



**Q8. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the following ideas for keeping our Children's Centres running? Please tick one box in each row.**

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Don't know
Having shorter opening hours	20%	31%	42%	8%
Charging for some services	67%	5%	23%	5%
Parents and carers getting involved in helping run the service	53%	16%	24%	8%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	39			

**Q9. How interested, if at all, are you in helping run the services available in Children's Centres? Please tick one box only.**

Very interested	67%
Fairly interested	19%
Not very interested	8%
Not at all interested	3%
Don't know	3%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	36

**Q10. What do you think is the best way for us to keep the service running?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**Q11. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your views on the future development of Harrow Children's Centres?**

Full list of verbatim comments available separately.

**QA. Which Children's Centre do you usually work at? Please tick one box only.**

Gange	34%
Whitefriars	26%
Pinner Centre	20%
Hillview	17%
Pinner Wood	17%
Cedars	14%
Grange	9%
Chandos	6%
Rayners Lane	6%
Kenmore Park	3%
Stanmore Park	3%
St Joseph's	3%

<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	35
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**QB. Do you also work at any other of the council's Children's Centres? Please tick as many as apply.**

Rayners Lane	40%
Whitefriars	33%
Pinner Centre	30%
Pinner Wood	30%
Ceders	27%
Hillview	27%
Chandos	27%
Kenmore Park	27%
Grange	27%
Stanmore Park	23%
Gange	23%
St Josephs	20%
Vaughan Road	10%
No	17%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	30

**QC. Which of the below areas do you mostly work in? Please tick as many as apply.**

Carer and Toddler Group	31%
Stay and Play Toy Library	31%
Holiday Activities	29%
Cookery classes	23%
Parenting Programmes	23%
Childminder Support Group	14%
Speech and language therapy sessions	14%
Pre-school	11%
Sexual health support and advice	11%
Adult Education Classes	9%
ESOL classes	9%
Support sessions for parents who have a child with special needs	9%
Counselling Services	6%
Dentistry service	6%
Ante-natal care	3%
Benefits and Debt Advice session	3%
Breastfeeding support	3%
Other Examples include: administration, kitchen, management and signposting parents/families	43%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	35

**QD. Which of the types of position below most closely describes your role in the council?  
Please tick one box only.**

Team member or individual specialist	61%
Line or project manager, but not senior management	17%
Senior management	8%
Other Examples include: catering, local councillor and support staff	14%
<i>Base: All those who express an opinion</i>	36

## **Appendix 7: Contact Details**

The authors have sought to ensure that this report is an accurate reflection of the research and consultation that has taken place. It is therefore important that the findings continue to be accurately reflected in any future internal or external publication. If you wish to reference the findings from this report please contact the authors to ensure that your interpretation is correct.

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