

**Appendix 3: Report on the consultation feedback**  
**(Proposed changes to Children’s Centres and Children’s**  
**Centre Services)**

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This report summarises what the public, Children's Centre staff, School staff, Governors, Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations told the Council during its consultation on proposed changes to Haringey's Children's Centres and Children's Centre services. The consultation took place between 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2011.

## **Why we consulted**

The Government's spending review, as a response to the national financial climate, reduced the amount of money that will be available for councils to spend over the next three years. Haringey Council, like all local authorities, has difficult decisions to make about how to continue to provide high quality services with fewer resources. Haringey Council is taking steps to reduce its spending over the coming years and we have already started the process of reducing management and administrative costs in our Children and Young People's Services.

Haringey currently has 19 Children's Centres and three linked sites, which were funded until the end of March 2011 from the Government's Sure Start, Early years and Childcare Grant.

The huge scale of spending cuts imposed on local government means that the council will have to make savings of £84m over three years on its £308m annual budget to spend on services. Because of government demands to make early spending cutbacks, £41m of this saving has to be found immediately, for 2011/12. As part of this, the Children and Young People's Service is restructuring in order to reduce spending by £14.1m while protecting services to the borough's most vulnerable children. This includes having to reduce funding for Children's Centres.

A Cabinet paper was presented to elected members on 8 February 2011 and set out some initial proposals for the reorganisation of Children's Centres. The models agreed by elected members were based on the following principles:

- maintaining a full Children's Centre service offer in our most deprived areas
- ensuring services on offer, and how they are delivered, reflect local needs
- shared management and other jobs across centres
- flexibility – staff working across Children's Centres
- closing centres if the financial appraisals suggest that we are unable to maintain high quality, effective services across all centres.

The consultation asked for views on these principles and the model outlined in the consultation document (Annex 1).

## **How we consulted**

The consultation was published on the Council's website ([http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/children\\_and\\_families/eyc/cc-consultation.htm](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/children_and_families/eyc/cc-consultation.htm)) on the 16<sup>th</sup> April. An email outlining the consultation process, including the

Consultation Paper was then sent to all Children's Centre Heads, Primary and Secondary School Heads, Governors, professional partners, commissioned services, voluntary organisations, Haringey's Councillors and Members of Parliament.

A variety of methods were used to engage parents, carers, staff and stakeholders in the consultation process. They included an on-line and paper questionnaire, consultation meetings for parents and carers, Children's Centre staff, School staff and Governors, Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations, as well as individual meetings with Children's Centre's management where requested. In addition the public and stakeholders had the opportunity to submit individual responses and proposals to the Children's Centres Consultation mailbox or write to the Council. All responses have been collated and analysed and will be considered as part of the decision making process.

The Council received 976 completed questionnaires and 65 emails and letters from parents and carers, school governors, staff and managers of Children's Centres, Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations from partners and from Members and Councillors up to and including the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2011. In addition the Council received one petition from parents and carers at Highgate, a set of posters made by children from Earlsmead Children's Centre and a video response from parents and carers who use Broadwater Farm Children's Centre.

## **The Consultation Process**

### **Background**

#### ***The proposed changes***

The Council have looked at retaining the current number of Children's Centres in Haringey as full service centres, but found that this cannot be achieved within the available budget. The Council therefore put forward a proposal which would:

- Develop clusters based on all 19 designated centres
- Provide a mixture of a 'full' and a 'standard' service offering across the borough
- Combine Children's Centre management and administration.

For a full description of the proposed changes see the Consultation paper on proposed changes to Haringey's Children's Centres and children's services in Annex 1. On the 5<sup>th</sup> April an Addendum to the consultation was published (see Annex 2). This was due to legal advice suggesting that at that point the Council should name centres that are potentially at risk of closure or where

substantial changes are likely to be made to the existing service offer. The list and full detail can be found in Annex 2.

## Activity

### *Questionnaire*

An on-line and paper questionnaire was produced for each of the following groups:

- Parents and carers
- Children's Centre Staff
- School Staff and Governors
- Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and voluntary organisations

Separate questionnaires were produced in order for questions to be targeted at the groups outlined. There were a number of standard questions which were used for all four questionnaires around the proposed principles, funding, service offer and proposed model. Parents and carers were asked specific questions on the centre(s) they use, their services and child care fees. All other groups were asked questions on staffing. The questionnaires and results can be found in Annexes 3-11.

The online questionnaires went live on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March. An email was sent to all Children Centre heads asking them to make parents, carers, their staff and governors aware of the questionnaire.

In addition to the online questionnaire there were a substantial number of paper copies printed to enable those without internet access to take part. Copies of the consultation paper, parents and carers questionnaire and professional partners, commissioned services and voluntary organisations questionnaire were made available in all Children's Centres and linked sites from the 25<sup>th</sup> March. Questionnaires were also distributed at consultation meetings.

Children's Centre staff were asked to make parents and carers aware of the consultation and encouraged them to respond to it. All centres were provided with a summary note outlining the consultation process.

Following requests from Children's Centres the questionnaire was translated into the top 6 languages spoken in the Borough and distributed to all centres. Parents and carers were told that if they were unable to write answers in English they could write them in their mother tongue and this would then be translated.

In addition to our communications on the Haringey website and through Children's Centres the consultation was extensively covered by local newspapers. We are confident that this contributed to the high number of responses as set out in the following table.

Table 1: Breakdown of completed questionnaires

Questionnaire	Total completed	Completed online	Completed on paper
Parents and carers	790	134	656
Children's Centre Staff	57	40	17
School Staff and Governors	82	44	38
Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and voluntary organisations questionnaire	47	14	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>744</b>

### *Consultation meetings*

In order for open dialogue with service users, staff and stakeholders to take place consultation meetings were held across the Borough. Each meeting had a panel which consisted of senior managers from the Children and Young People's Service and the Lead Member or Early Years Champion Member. A note taker was present at each meeting to take down what was discussed. These discussions have been analysed and included as part of the results.

Table 2: Attendance at consultation meetings

Consultation meeting	Total number of meetings	Estimated total number of attendees*
Parents and carers	7	190
Children's Centre Staff	3	68
School Staff and Governors	2	15
Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and voluntary organisations questionnaire	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>283</b>

\* These estimated figures do not include children

## **What you said about proposed changes to Children’s Centres and Children’s Centre services**

The analysis of results other than questionnaire responses began during the consultation period and continued once the consultation period ended and all data was entered for paper questionnaires received up to (and including) the 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Those received after the closing date have not been analysed but can be found in Annex 11.

To assist the analysis specialist programmes including SNAP, SPSS and Excel have been used. In addition analysis was supported by the Council’s Business Intelligence Team.

All correspondence, consultation meeting notes and free text answers to the four questionnaires have been considered and responses have been grouped together under themes. These can be found in annexes 7-10. In addition all responses to closed questions in the questionnaires have been analysed and themed (see annexes 7-10). The Council has also reviewed alternative proposals put forward by Headteachers, Governors, Centre Heads and Partners.

This analysis is a summary of all consultation responses, which have been grouped together under the following headings:

- Principles
- Proposed model (as set out in the consultation paper)
- Service offer
- Funding
- Childcare Fees
- Staffing
- Governance
- General comments
- Your alternative proposals

The following analysis makes reference to questionnaire results. Unless otherwise stated the percentages and total number of respondents figures are an aggregate of results from the Parents and carers, Children’s Centre Staff, School Staff and Governors, Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and voluntary organisations questionnaires. It should also be noted that the number of respondents per question varies as not all respondents have completed every question.

### ***Principles***

The proposal set out five principles upon which the model was based. We asked your views on these principles and your responses were:

- 94% of all 934 respondents either supported or strongly supported maintaining a full Children’s Centre service offer in our most deprived areas. In addition support for targeting the most vulnerable was

particularly expressed at consultation meetings in Highgate, Northbank, Earlsmead and Rokesley.

- 95% of all 891 respondents either supported or strongly supported ensuring services on offer, and how they are delivered, reflect local needs
- Just under half of all respondents (49% of all 872 respondents) either supported or strongly supported the principle of shared management and other jobs across centres. 30% either did not support or strongly did not support this principle. There was general support at consultation meetings for the principle of keeping a high proportion of the resources for front line service delivery.
- 51% of all 868 respondents either supported or strongly supported there being greater flexibility with staff working across Children's Centres. This figure rises to 55% when figures for respondents from Children's Centre staff and School staff and Governors are combined. Respondents of the Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and voluntary organisations questionnaire were particularly supportive with 62% either strongly supporting or supporting the principle
- Respondents were less supportive of closing centres if the financial appraisals of options suggest that we are unable to maintain high quality, effective services across all centres. 54% of 872 respondents do not support or strongly do not support this principle. However 64% of school staff and governors did support this principle.

### *Proposed model*

The Council asked for your views on the proposed model as set out in the consultation paper and addendum:

- 48% of all 902 respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the overall proposal shown in the consultation paper. 32% were in support of it. In addition only 24% of all 146 respondents agreed that the proposal would provide sufficient capacity to reach children in our most disadvantaged communities (source: respondents from all surveys excluding parents and carers).
- The majority of respondents (71% of all 941 respondents) agreed that Children's Centres services should be targeted at the most vulnerable. This was further supported by 20 parents and carers who raised this under 'Q16 Do you have any further comments'.
- The Council asked to what extent respondents would support the following approach: detailed financial modelling might suggest the closure of some Children's Centres to ensure service for the most vulnerable were maintained. Overall 43% of all 938 respondents either

supported or strongly supported this approach. However 45% of respondents either did not support or strongly did not support this approach. The most supportive groups were school staff and governors at 73% of 81 respondents (support or strongly support) and 68% of Children's Centre staff (support or strongly support) out of 56 respondents. In contrast half of all 755 parents and carers respondents did not support or strongly did not support this approach. Overall parents have expressed strong concern regarding potential closure and cuts to Children's Centres services. This is demonstrated by individual comments in correspondence, consultation meetings held and free text answers to the questionnaire. These comments can be found in Annex 7. In addition some parents and carers raised concerns that if centres were to close (particularly in the West) they would encounter difficulties travelling to other centres

- All of the questionnaires apart from those for parents and carers asked about our proposal to introduce shared management and administration across our Children's Centres in order to reduce costs. 50% of all 185 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed and 36% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal.

### ***Service offer***

The consultation proposal set out two types of service offer – full and standard – that Children's Centres could operate in the future (see Annex 1 for full outline of proposed offers). The Council asked for your views on the service offers and you responded with:

- 48% of all 973 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to offer a full service offer in some centres and a standard offer in others. 34% were against this proposal.

Parents and carers were asked what types of services they would be willing to pay for if the Council was not able to keep all of the standard offer in their local centre. Responses included: stay and play, adult and parenting classes, childcare, drop-ins and classes for babies and toddlers (for a full breakdown of suggestions see Annex 7). 24% of respondents (of all 384) suggested that they would pay for all or multiple services provided at Children's Centres. However 24% of respondents stated that they would not be able to afford to pay and 9% said that they would not pay for any. In consultation meetings and some questionnaire comments respondents suggested that the costs of these services would be the deciding factor as to whether they would pay in the future or not.

In addition to asking parents and carers what services they might be prepared to pay for we also asked Children's Centre staff, school staff and governors and professional partners, commissioned services and voluntary organisations what they believe could be charged for. Their suggestions included: childcare, stay and play, things that are 'nice to have' rather than 'necessary' and ESOL. Some - like parents and carers - suggested that no



services should be charged for, whilst other have suggested flexible fees as an alternative option.

Children's Centre staff were asked what services they consider to be essential in supporting improved outcomes for children. The majority (93%) said Stay and Play. Over 80% indicated the following: post natal support/new parents groups, parenting programmes, one-to-one family support, childcare, early education for 2 year olds, speech and language support and ante natal support.

### ***Funding***

As part of the consultation questionnaire all respondents were asked given the reduction in the budget available for Children's Centres what extent they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements. Their responses were:

- 42% of all 901 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that some funding should be allocated to all centres in each cluster. This will mean reduced levels of services are offered across all Children's Centres. 44% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement
- 22% of all 894 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that funding should be allocated to the lead centres only who will manage the delivery of services across the cluster. This will mean no direct funding will be given to associated centres. 63% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this approach
- 43% of all 892 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that funding should be allocated to centres in areas of greatest need only. This will mean that some centres may close. 48% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this approach
- 53% of all 898 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that funding should be withdrawn from centres in more affluent areas and other options for keeping these centres open should be explored.

The consultation meetings similarly reflected a tension between a general desire to keep Children's Centre services intact and a recognition that in times of reduced budgets the Council will need to consider targeting its resources.

### ***Childcare Fees***

The consultation paper outlined the new childcare costs which are to begin from September 2011. Parents and carers were asked for their comments on these changes which can be summarised as:

- 72% of all 349 respondents commented that it is too expensive or that they are against the increase

- 9% of all 349 respondents suggested that higher income families could pay more and a further 7% supported some form of means testing for those on lower incomes
- 7% of all of all 349 respondents commented that the increase is fair

### *Staffing*

As a result of the proposal and most alternative proposal put forward by stakeholders and service users the staffing composition across centres will have to be reviewed and restructured. As part of its proposal the Council put forward some core staffing roles (see Annex 1 for full breakdown) and asked stakeholders their views on the these roles and their suggestions for alternative compositions.

- 56% of 175 responses from Children’s Centre staff, school staff and governors and professional partners, commissioned services and voluntary organisations did not believe that model for core staffing is correct.
- 93% of school staff and governors stated that Centre Manager is an essential post for Children’s Centre.
- Among Children’s Centre staff there was little consensus about the roles to be included in the core staff team with 27% of all 56 respondents citing Outreach Workers/Information Officer, 13% On-site manager, 11% Finance Officer and 11% Receptionist/Administrator
- Children’s Centre staff, schools staff and governors and professional partners, commissioned services and voluntary organisations felt that Family Support Worker is an essential role at 94% and 82% and 72% respectively for partnership/multi-agency working. More than half of respondents indicated that Outreach Workers and Health Visitors are also essential.
- Parents and carers particularly raised concern that if staffing across centres was reduced would this impact on service quality and the Centre’s ability to safeguard children. One parent at a consultation meeting raised a concern that it is the ‘invisible stuff that Children’s Centres staff do that may be lost’.
- At the three staff consultation meetings held staff and Trade Unions raised concerns regarding the impending restructure. Discussions centred around numbers affected, single status, job descriptions, what happens if they are on a school contract, timescales and who would be ring-fenced. They were assured that their comments would be taken into consideration by management

and that they would have more opportunities to be consulted on during the staffing consultation period.

### ***Governance***

The consultation paper outlined that under the proposed clustering of centres governance arrangements would need to be revised. Potential options include the merging of advisory boards or the establishment of joint local governance arrangements or the establishment of new advisory board to reflect the cluster. We asked your views on governance arrangements which included:

- 27% of all 56 school staff and governors respondents suggested that there needs to be accountability to the wider community and to where the centre is based
- 23% of all 56 school staff and governors respondents suggest that there should be a governing body sub committee of the lead site which consists of a governor representative from all sites, a Children's Centre parent representative and a member of senior leadership team from each site clustered
- At parents and carers consultation meetings they raised a variety of issues regarding governance including: how will it work if a different centre is the lead, who will be accountable and how will parents be involved
- Children's staff at their consultation meetings raised: who will lead the development of the new governance arrangements, could the governing body be made up of representative from schools, Children's Centres and parents and who will be accountable
- In order to support multi-agency working school staff and governors suggested participation from the Health visiting team in cluster meetings (30% of all 47 respondents) and joint training/regular meetings (23%). 28% of all 43 Children Centre staff respondents suggested that simplified working arrangements could be put in place, such as: regular meetings, joint workshops and coordinated working at the local level. In addition 21% felt that partnership working could be improved as a result of improved communications.

### ***General comments***

Through all consultation methods the Council asked stakeholders and service users for their general comments on the proposed changes. The following is a summary of the feedback received. For a fuller breakdown see Annexes 7-11.

- 22% of all 254 parents and carers respondents made comments inferring that the Council should not make cuts or changes to Children's Centres
- 15% of all 254 parents and carers respondents commented on fees
- 11% of all 254 parents and carers respondents commented that Children's Centres provide valuable support. This was further supported by parents and carers who wrote to the Council with 30% of all 40 respondents commenting that they like the centre and its services
- 6% of all 254 parents and carers respondents commented that Children's Centres should offer universal services and maintain the social mix of service users
- Parents and carers of Highgate Children's Centre submitted a petition 'Support Highgate Children's Centre!'. The majority of comments praised the centre and highlighted how much they value the services and support they receive
- 18% of all 32 Children's Centre staff respondents commented that they have concerns regarding staffing
- 46% of all 37 school staff and governors respondents raised concerns that the proposed model will not necessarily deliver economies of scale.

Stakeholders and parents and carers have through the consultation suggested that the clusters set out in the consultation paper are not the right ones. Instead some have advocated that the Broadwater Farm as part of the Inclusive Learning Campus should be a cluster lead. Others have proposed that the South West Cluster should remain in its current form, whilst some have promoted the idea of having a Wood Green cluster. Some governors raised concerns that linking two school based centres such as Earlsmead and Welbourne would not lead to economies of scale. Concerns have been raised that the proposed clusters are in some cases too big (such as cluster one) and that there should be no stand alone centres. There was however some support for clustering, as one Children's Centre staff member said at a consultation meeting 'working in clusters has to be the future'.

In order to keep more centres open it has been suggested by parents and carers (within the questionnaire free text answers<sup>1</sup>, correspondence and consultation meetings) that some services could be charged for or a donation

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<sup>1</sup> 11% of all 277 parents and carers who answered Q12 (We are interested in your views. Please tell us if you have other ideas for a children's centre model for the borough) suggested that the Council should increase prices for childcare/other services/ means-testing / flexible pay contributions / funding from other sources.

could be made. A number of parents and carers were wary that charging may lead to some service users being unable to use the services and therefore suggested that some form of means testing could be used. They did however warn that this could in itself be an expensive system to run.

One parent/carers suggestion was that 'the four centres that are in more affluent areas (which are currently proposed to be 'standard service' and remain open) should be closed and those funds used for the centres in more deprived areas. We think it is better that all the remaining centres are properly 'full service', and run as much as possible as they are at present, rather than what is proposed at present'. This view was however contradicted by 10 parents/carers who wrote to the Council requesting consideration that closures and or reductions to services in the West should not be agreed. This view was supported by some parents and carers who completed the questionnaire, with one expressing concerns that 'not everyone in these so called well-off areas is wealthy'.

Partners in Health individually via the questionnaire and as collective responses have expressed their desire to work in partnership with the Council to keep Children's Centres open in order for Health services to continue to be widely delivered across the Borough. Nevertheless they do acknowledge that services for the most vulnerable is a priority, however universal services are key to ensuring that this group is identified as early as possible.

### ***Alternative proposals***

This is a summary of proposals made by the existing children's centres and the Liberal Democrat party and does not reflect every point raised by every centre. A detailed response will be made to individual respondents. Ten written responses were made from individual or clusters of Children's Centres. One written response was also received from the Liberal Democrats.

- Clusters should be larger than the proposed model with a mixture of different types of Children's Centres included. There should be no stand alone Children's Centres.
- Doors should be open all the time/ services should be planned across a cluster so that families can always access somewhere/ individual centres should only be open when there is sufficient staffing on-site to provide high quality and safe service
- Integration with host centre/school – schools/centres should have day to day responsibility for staff working at the centre and safeguarding arrangements.
- Governors should maintain full control of services delivered from the school site as the responsibility rests with them and should be given more control over the buildings so that they can generate income from them

- Universal health services should remain at all centres
- Local services should reflect the needs of the local population which schools and Children's Centres are best placed to assess/know
- All centres should remain open providing a range of services
- The level of funding should reflect the levels of deprivation in each area reflected in the index of multiple deprivation. Clusters should be informed of their budgets.
- Funding should reflect all costs, schools cannot afford to cover the cost of site managers, cleaners etc.

## Annex

- Annex 1 Consultation paper
- Annex 2 Addendum 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011
- Annex 3 Parents and carers questionnaire
- Annex 4 Children's Centre staff questionnaire
- Annex 5 School staff and Governors questionnaire
- Annex 6 Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations questionnaire
- Annex 7 Parents and carers consultation results:
  - 7.1 Parents and carers questionnaire results
  - 7.2 Parents and carers free text questionnaire results
  - 7.3 Summary of responses from consultation meetings held with parents and carers
  - 7.4 Parents and carers consultation meeting dates
  - 7.5 Parents and carers comments received by email or letter
- Annex 8 Children's Centre staff consultation results
  - 8.1 Children's Centre staff questionnaire results
  - 8.2 Children's Centre staff free text questionnaire results
  - 8.3 Summary of responses from consultation meetings held with Children's Centre Staff
- Annex 9 School staff and Governors
  - 9.1 School Staff and Governors questionnaire results
  - 9.2 School Staff and Governors free text questionnaire results
  - 9.3 Summary of responses from consultation meetings held with School staff and Governors
  - 9.4 School Staff and Governors Consultation meeting dates
- Annex 10 Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations
  - 10.1 Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations questionnaire results
  - 10.2 Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations (PPCSVo) free text questionnaire results
  - 10.3 Summary of responses from consultation meetings held with Professional Partners, Commissioned Services and Voluntary organisations
  - 10.4 Professional Partners, Voluntary Sector and Commissioned Services consultation meeting date
- Annex 11 Consultation questionnaire results received after 22nd April

**The annexes for this report can be found at:**

<http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=435&MId=5182>