



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Cabinet

18 APRIL 2011

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

*Councillor Helen
Binmore*

**RECONFIGURATION OF SURE START
CHILDREN'S CENTRES NETWORK**

**Wards:
All**

For a decision on the proposed reconfiguration model of children's centres taking into consideration the views expressed in the public consultation.

CONTRIBUTORS

DFCS
ADLDS
DCS

Recommendations:

1. That the commissioning of 16 Children's Centres as outlined in sections 53 to 58 of the attached report for the period of the funding (i.e. until March 2013) be agreed.
2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services of £133,000 for spot purchasing of additional services to support the new configuration of Children's Centres across the borough to ensure the delivery of appropriate services.
3. That Cabinet delegate to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services the approval of details of the service specification for the future commissioning of Children's Centres.

**HAS AN EIA BEEN
COMPLETED?
YES – available
electronically**

**HAS THE REPORT
CONTENT BEEN
RISK ASSESSED?
YES**

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

1. Central government is committed to the Sure Start Children's Centres programme indicating that they wish to see them operating along the lines of the original principles of the Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) initiative i.e. that they should focus on their original purpose of supporting the most vulnerable families. At the same time, the Council has confirmed its commitment to Children's Centres to provide services to families, including the most vulnerable across the borough.
2. Funding for the Sure Start Programme is included in the Early Intervention Grant. This grant is 12.9% less than previous equivalent provision. In addition to this, Children's Services has to make significant savings in the next spending review period. However, as the funding is no longer ring-fenced, the Council has the opportunity to take a fresh look at services and reconfigure its offer, building upon lessons learned from the past as well as current research to find a better way to support families, including through Children's Centres. This approach will identify and support vulnerable families at the earliest opportunity whilst maintaining a level of universal support.
3. The Council has developed its investment in families with children under the age of five and supported them in two key areas: building based family focused services delivered in Children's Centres and in outreach/home based work with vulnerable families who are less likely to access building based services.
4. The Council's plan is to build upon the valuable work that has already taken place and to invest further in the outreach model (Family Support Programme) with the development of localities based, multi-disciplinary teams in the north, centre and south of the borough. These teams will focus their efforts on the most vulnerable families with children from 0-19 years of age, supporting them with a wide range of identified issues such as parenting, housing, health and education and employment and over time encourage families to access universally delivered community based services. This will simplify access to services for vulnerable families, and bring together professionals enabling them to work together in a more joined up cost effective way. The reconfiguring of the Children's Centre programme has been designed to work with and complement the Family Support Programme.

RESEARCH EVIDENCE

5. National findings for the impact of Sure Start programmes from the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) have shown a mixture of positive and negative effects, and many non-effects, especially with regard to children's development.
 - The positive effects include: greater life satisfaction for parents, parents reported providing a more stimulating and less chaotic home environment for their children, and discipline methods improved. In physical health children appear to benefit directly with lower Body Mass Indices and better general physical health. By the age of three, children showed greater self-regulation than their peers. There was also a greater decrease in workless households.
 - However nationally no Sure Start Local programme effects emerged in the case of 'school readiness' defined in terms of children's early language, numeracy and social skills needed to succeed in schools.
 - The National Evaluation of SureStart research team concluded that although the value of Sure Start Children's centres is improving, greater emphasis needs to be given to focusing services on child outcomes, particularly language development, if school readiness is to be enhanced for the children served¹.
 - National research has shown strong evidence of economies of scale. Small Sure Start local programmes spend more per head overall, more on non-service costs, and more on each key service than do medium sized and larger programmes.²

LOCAL SUCCESS

6. Locally there has been some emerging evidence of better outcomes at Foundation stage for children who have benefited from activities run in Children's Centres (e.g. on a small sample at Cathnor Park and at Randolph Beresford).
7. Courses for parents have also been well received – e.g. attendees on 'Take Three Days courses' indicated that as a result they were taking positive steps towards training or employment. Parents who attended Triple P parenting courses indicated that they have increased confidence

¹ The impact of Sure Start Local Programmes on five year olds and their families DFE RB067 November 2010

² Cost Effectiveness of Implementing SSLPs: An Interim Report – Feb 2006

in their ability to parent effectively and have raised family expectations.

LESSONS DRAWN FROM CURRENT DELIVERY MODEL:

8. Centres have been expected to deliver universal services in a targeted area informed by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Services delivered have developed based on identified local need by professionals and parental input. However, some of the services offered (baby yoga, baby massage for example) are particularly attractive to local residents who are more able and whilst their children benefit from these services these parents are often able to pay and could obtain such services elsewhere (or on site for a small fee). These parents are often the first to apply, leaving the more vulnerable less well organised families without access to a service.
9. Engagement with Health organisations and JobCentre is valued by service users. The Baby Café, for example, attracts mothers with very young babies and having Health Visitor input has been invaluable as they are on hand to answer questions and support parents, often spotting warning signs of issues, such as post natal depression, at an early stage.
10. Money Made Clear sessions in partnership with the Financial Services Authority have been very well received and have assisted parents in better managing their financial situation. It is clear that there is more work to be done to support parents back into employment. For example, parents who are ready to enter the employment market need to understand that work pays and how to budget and manage their finances and childcare. Parents who are not yet skilled sufficiently to enter the employment market need training particularly in basic skills and potentially in vocational training courses which will prepare them for employment so that they are prepared before their benefits change.
11. Of the 15 Children's Centres the 3 currently run directly by the council are currently funded to a higher level compared to the rest which are run by schools or specialist voluntary sector organisations.

THE PROPOSED FUTURE MODEL

12. There is more to be done to continue to develop centres of excellence that can meet local needs within resources. Centres will need to continue to support a range of families that are often just coping, vulnerable and isolated. They should, at the same time, be able to increase confidence, build resilience in both children and their parents and gradually move unemployed families into employment thus reducing child poverty (a statutory requirement placed on councils). Centres will focus on three

main priorities: parenting skills, school readiness for children, (especially communication skills), and work readiness for adults.

13. Children's Centres are well placed to take forward programmes that will continue to deliver not only positive outcomes for young children but increasingly deliver better outcomes for their parents/carers.
14. The proposal is to reconfigure Children's Centre delivery by moving to a hub and spoke model which will complement the Family Support Programme.
15. Spokes will deliver the universal offer and also provide space for targeted work and courses/sessions delivered by hubs and other partners. They will also be places where locality team members can meet and work with families and where assessments of children can take place. Hubs will also have a universal offer but will concentrate their delivery on preventative and early intervention services for vulnerable families which will provide a complementary and seamless service for families in concert with the work of the localities teams.
16. This new model where all 16 centres are commissioned will also result in economies of scale and back office efficiencies whilst ensuring a full geographical network of centres.
17. Childminders are self-employed professional childcarers who are registered with Ofsted. Their ratings are reported and included in the local authority's reports. There are a total of 39 in the H&F Childminding Network, they are qualified with at least a Level 3 early years and childcare qualification but these only form a small portion of the number of currently registered childminders. There are 192 registered self-employed childminders in the borough. They generally charge between £130 and £300 per week to provide full time childcare to support working parents. Many of the childminder drop-in groups are already managed by childminders themselves.
18. For the past 6 years we have funded a network of 5 part-time coordinators to support these childminders across all children's centres. Given the passage of time and the reduced amount of public funding we consider that childminders should now be able to manage their own support networks and market forces will determine which providers continue to deliver a quality service and remain in business.
19. Our Family Information Service data suggests that 82% of registered childminders currently have spare places. The Children's Centres development worker will be required to support the creation of at least two self managed childminder network groups and Children's Centre venues

will be made available at no cost (for the first two years at least) in order to enable these meetings to occur. Children's Centres will therefore provide space for childminders to hold their groups but the childminders themselves will be required to undertake risk assessments, prepare and tidy away rooms and develop a programme of activities to support their development as childcare providers.

HUB KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

20. Every hub centre will be expected to analyse the demographic profile and needs of local families in their catchment area against the following key outcome areas – some measures for these are illustrated and LBHF will help provide baseline data on local need to each Hub:

- Preventing children from coming into care e.g. number of under 5s with Child Protection plan
- Child safety e.g. number of repeat domestic violence incidents for parents of children under 5
- In the long term preventing children from getting into trouble e.g. numbers of first time entrants to criminal justice system
- Preventing school exclusions, improving life chances through attainment at school e.g. proportion achieving target level at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, following on from readiness for school
- Better health for families e.g. % child population registered with GPs, immunisation rates, dental health, rate of obesity
- Better long term outcomes for families and children e.g. employment rate for parents of 0-5s

21. Hub Sure Start Children's Centres will then be expected to tailor and prioritise their provision of support to local need in line with this analysis, whilst providing some universal services. An illustration of the types of provision that might meet needs for each priority outcome area is listed below

	Hubs	Spokes/ Satellites
Preventing Children from coming into care		
Provide outreach services for parents/carers and children	Yes	No
Information and advice to carers about the range of family support services and activities available in the area	Yes	Yes
Activities to increase families' understanding of child development	Yes	Yes
Activities to develop parenting skills	Yes	Yes
Opportunities to provide early identification of children with special needs and disabilities with inclusive services and support for their families	Yes	Yes

Work in partnership with tier three and tier four services by offering step down support and to contribute to Children In Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) plans and to identify early families in need of more intensive services delivered by the family support locality teams and statutory services	Yes	Yes
Information and advice to parents/carers on a range of subjects, including local childcare, early years provision, and education services for three and four year olds	Yes	Yes
Child Safety		
Early identification of families experiencing Domestic Violence and referral to DV support services	Yes	Yes in part
Support to teenage parents and their children Bump to Baby groups are significant and link with Family Nurse Partnership work.	Yes	Yes
Parenting programmes addressing all key target groups.	Yes	Yes
Preventing children from getting into trouble		
Citizenship and community safety sessions. Restorative approaches to problem solving for family and community difficulties – linking to work in schools; Police surgery and drop in sessions.	Yes	No
School readiness sessions e.g. speech and language therapy	Yes	Yes
Quality crèche provision to support adult learning	Yes	No
Parenting sessions	Yes	No
Preventing school exclusions, life chances through attainment at school		
Provide access to focused support for children with special needs and disabilities, including speech and language support.	Yes	Optional
Establishing good habits of school attendance and where appropriate tracking attendance	Yes	No
Activities for children and carers at the centre, for example pre-school groups, stay and play, parents' groups, drop-in sessions.	Yes	Yes
Bringing together and analysing information on children attending the centre covering their needs and progress	Yes	Data collection only
Better Health for families		
Checking and encouraging GP and dental registration for Children's Centre clients; Provide a venue for Child Friendly Dentists	Yes	Yes
Access to health services including ante and post-natal support; Provide a venue for Midwifery, Health Visiting, Speech and Language and CAMHS services to be delivered	Yes	Yes
Targeted information, guidance and support on breastfeeding, nutrition, hygiene, healthy lifestyles, safety and smoking cessation	Yes	No
Childhood obesity preventative programmes for young children and their families	Yes	No
Better outcomes for families		

Links with Job Centre Plus to encourage and support parents/carers who wish to consider training and employment Work in partnership with the Early Years Foundations Service and the Jobcentre Plus offering venues for parents to access benefit advice, childcare brokerage services and support for completion of benefit applications Offer sessions on debt management, living on a budget, money management, CV preparation and interview skills	Yes	Yes, in part
Support to childminders (to ensure a good local network of child care provision for those returning to work or study)	Yes	No
Access to basic skills courses Become centres for delivery of adult learning – particularly English as a Second Language (ESOL) and basic skills and offering information, advice and guidance sessions	Yes	No
General		
Referring/signposting families to further services Engage with under-represented groups; specifically teenage parents, Black and Minority Ethnic groups and fathers Continue to provide accommodation for Young Carers	Yes	Yes
During opening hours, staffed by someone who is able to offer information and advice to families and can help families to access the services they need	Yes	Yes
Provide volunteering opportunities for parents in the local community	Yes	Yes
Centre open for a minimum of 5 days a week, 10 hours a day and 48 weeks a year	Yes	No

22. Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive about the types of staffing structures in the Hub centres we expect to see services delivered in line with the outcome areas and areas of provision set out above.

SPOKE CENTRES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

- Links developed with local hub centre and locality team and provision of a venue for some of their service delivery
- Links developed with Midwifery, Health Visitors, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, GPs and Dentist services and provision of a venue for some of their service delivery
- At least one stay and play session delivered weekly and one child development focused session delivered weekly (building on reading to children, speech and language development, healthy eating, physical development) based upon locally identified needs
- Provide venue for training and other universal services e.g. childminders

- Referrals made to hubs and locality teams
- Published delivery programmes accessible to parents produced termly
- Signposting information provided for service users for other services and initiatives
- Provide venue for voluntary organisation activity relating to children and families

OFSTED INSPECTION OVERVIEW

Performance management of children's centres

23. Local authorities must manage the performance of their children's centres against local and strategic targets. Local targets should be based on the identified needs within the centre reach area; the take up of services; and the impact of those services on outcomes for children and their families. It is important that the centres priorities work to locally align to the central government targets.
24. Inspectors make a number of inspection judgements when assessing the effectiveness of each children's centre. These cover the broad range of a centre's work, including the impact of a centre's services in improving outcomes for users and the wider community, including outreach services; the quality of the centre's provision; its leadership and management and capacity to improve, and also its overall effectiveness.
25. When making judgements inspectors weigh up the balance of evidence in a particular area and consider it against the grade descriptors set out in the evaluation schedule, taking into account the context of the particular centre being inspected. The judgements made are set out below. We will expect Hubs and Spokes to operate in line with Ofsted requirements. Delivering the best outcomes for all users will require the good functioning of the overall network of Hub and Spoke provision, with the Hubs delivering specialist support for the more vulnerable families. Outcomes for families will be tracked and targeted by the local Hub, irrespective of where services are accessed.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

How good are outcomes for users?

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles

The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them

The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development

The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.

How good is the provision?

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users

The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community

How effective are the leadership and management?

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood

The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community

The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties

The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults

The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities

The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide

SELECTION MEASURES FOR IDENTIFYING HUBS

26. The IDACI (Income Deprivation affecting Children Index) banding was chosen as one selection measure to ensure that hubs were in the highest areas of deprivation (see map for the banding and current locations of centres).

27. The geographic distribution of contacts to children's social care, children subject to child protection orders, and looked after children, were also taken into consideration to ensure accessible provision for those vulnerable children and families most at risk of harm.
28. The starting point was to continue Hub provision in existing children's centre locations (where it made economic sense to do so) to enable continuity of service for as many of the most vulnerable local families as possible. As well as seeking an overall geographic distribution across the borough with two Hub centres in each locality, and proximity to greatest need, the 'travelling time' for service users to Hub provision was considered. In addition the quality and nature of existing provision in existing centres was considered.
29. Whilst there were often several centres to choose from, choices were made based on a variety of factors; including whether centres were prepared to become Hubs, size of facilities and the fact that the council would no longer directly manage the three former Sure Start Local programmes (Cathnor Park, Broadway and Fulham South) instead moving to a commissioning model.
30. Current research based on the number of current registered users was also a determining factor. Current registered numbers based upon February 2011 figures are as follows:

Name of the centre	IDACI bandings of location	Registered numbers of current users	Locality area
Old Oak	0-30%	521	North
Randolph Beresford	20%	250	North
Wendell Park	20-40%	215	Central
Cathnor Park	20-40%	1,586	Central
Flora Gardens	20-40%	518	Central
Masbro Centre	20-40% with some 60-80%	515	Central
Broadway Centre	Majority 20-40% with some 60-80%	719	Central
Shepherds Bush Families Project	20-40%	105 from the area	Central
Melcombe	Primarily 20-40% with some 40-60%	565	Central
Bayonne (Rouzanna)	20-40%	494	South
Normand Croft	20-40% with some 40-60%	356	South
Fulham Central	20-40% with some 40-60%	87 (phase 3)	South

New Kings	20-100% with majority 40-60%	88 (phase 3)	South
Bishops Palace	20-100% with half 20-60%	199 (phase 3)	South
Fulham South	20% majority with some 20-100%	950	South

31. Building size and availability was another selection factor. Additional families are expected to access hubs so there had to be consideration of suitable available space and facilities. Wendell Park, Bayonne and New Kings for example are small and unlikely to be able to meet the needs of an expanded hub intake. Fulham South is located in Sands End Community Centre (approved for disposal) and therefore the premises are not available in the long term, which is also the case for Shepherd's Bush Families Project located in the Bulwer Street property, also identified for disposal.
32. Willingness to continue to deliver a full service was also taken into consideration. Normand Croft stated that the school wished to concentrate on school business and therefore was willing only to play a limited part in future development and would welcome being a spoke/satellite.
33. Bayonne initially stated interest in being a spoke, then changed to a hub preference so it was difficult to be sure that they had a long term commitment to hub activity – their major interest is in running a Forest School. New Kings wants to be more than a spoke, as does Wendell. However the size of both premises is limiting.
34. Officers have met with each Centre Manager or Leader individually to explore options for the future. The majority agreed with the proposed options publicly consulted on and all have been asked to submit draft staffing structures and plans based upon their preferred option presenting a rationale for any change from the options discussed. In the light of revised proposals as now set out, further conversations are in progress.

CONSULTATION

35. The Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to undertake a consultation with residents, service users and professional agencies prior to proposing changes to children's centres. The requirements for a lawful consultation process are set out at paragraph 10. Officers are of view that a lawful consultation process has been carried out and the product of the consultation is set out below and in the following Appendix 1 for consideration by Cabinet. The consultation ran from the 22 January until the 28 February. The consultation was on the Council's

website and advertised. Hard copies of the consultation were also placed in every Children's Centre and staff actively encouraged parents, carers and childminders to fill them in.

36. Residents were asked for their view of a range of existing services delivered within the current children's centre model and on the proposed 'hub' and 'spoke' delivery model. 667 full and partial responses were received out of 7,168 registered users of Children's Centres, and 617 of these have been analysed in depth. A series of focus groups were held with a particular emphasis on young parents and on fathers. In addition there were opportunities for residents to meet with officers to discuss the proposals (although all 15 centres were offered this option only 4 accepted). The Lead Member visited all the Children's Centres prior to the consultation starting and also held 2 focus groups for parents (of the 15 Centres only two elected not to send any parent representatives). Officers also met with two resident led local action groups.
37. Most respondents to the consultation were female (88%) and in the 25-44 age range (83.5%). A majority of those who expressed a view agreed that support should be targeted at the most vulnerable families. Most of the children of respondents were under 5 years old (70%) and a significant number of respondents (14%, totalling 77) had children with disabilities. There was an even split between respondents who were employed or unemployed (48% to 52%). 91.4% of respondents were registered with a Children's Centre. There was a variance on responses by individual Children's Centres areas with Masbro making up 18.8% and Cathnor Park making 16.7% of responses, totalling a third of responses. Only 0.6% of responses were from users of the New King's centre, and under 3% each from Old Oak and Randolph Beresford. The table set out below reports the number of respondents to the consultation questionnaire, compared with the number of families registered at each centre.

Children's Centre	Number of families who completed the questionnaire	Number of families on Estart in March 2011	% of the numbers registered who completed the consultation
Rouzanna/Bayonne (494)	45	494	9%
Bishop's Park (201)	64	201	32%
Broadway (724)	79	724	11%
Cathnor Park (1587)	103	1,587	6%
Flora Gardens (330)	42	330	13%
Fulham Central (89)	31	89	35%
Fulham South (956)	42	956	4%
Masbro (533)	117	533	22%
Melcombe Park (568)	120	568	21%

New Kings (90)	14	90	16%
Normand Croft (361)	28	361	8%
Old Oak (531)	19	531	4%
Randolph Beresford (160)	28	160	18%
Shepherds Bush Families Project &CC (104)	27	104	26%
Wendell Park (215)	39	215	18%

38. Generally respondents to the consultation regarded all the services they had accessed as important, with every service getting a response of over 60% judging the service as either 'important' or 'very important'. The highest 'very important' score overall was for universal drop-in type ('stay and play') services at 83%. Child development programmes and convenient opening hours were the next two highest responses at just under 79% and at 74% respectively. The lowest areas were in relation to employment support activities with under 50% judging these very important, although the lowest individual score was for computer access at 38% judging this 'very important', but with a further 25% judging this 'important'.
39. This pattern changed slightly when respondents were asked about the priority services for their local community. All areas were still regarded as important (by over 70%) but with relatively higher support for child development and outreach activity to help prevent children coming into care (e.g. 66% thinking outreach services very important, and over 70% for activities to increase families understanding of child development, and early identification of special needs). The highest 'very important' score was activities for children and carers at the centres (77%).
40. On the overall proposal of creating 6 hubs and 10 spokes, over 30% of respondents agreed, with 44% disagreeing and just over 23% not sure. Question 7 asked for responses on whether there should be children's centre 'spokes' or 'satellites'. Approximately 47% of respondents did not answer this question. Over 40% agreed that smaller services should decide themselves but more agreed there should be spokes linked to hubs (25.9%) than said they should be independent satellites (15%).
41. There was slightly more support for charging for universal services (44%) (with concessions) than disagreement (35.8%), although there was concern about the impact on low income families. In general most responses were against making any cuts in Children's services, instead suggesting alternative routes of raising revenue.
42. 39% of respondents tended to agree or agreed strongly that support should be targeted at the most vulnerable families, compared to 31.8% who disagreed, with 22.7% 'not sure'. However in comments made there was strong support for maintaining an overall mix of users rather than

losing universal provision.

43. Officers met with all the 12 partner providers (3 centres previously being council run at a higher cost). Of these the 6 proposed hub partners were all content to accept additional funding and to deliver an enhanced programme.
44. Of the others:
 - 3 Centre Leaders said they did not want to operate a hub because it would divert from their main priority service
 - 1 third sector provider is also being asked to deliver a hub and said they would like to combine the resources for two ventures, one hub and one spoke
 - 1 third sector provider said that they had found that the high level of funding for the Children's Centre activities had previously made it more difficult for them to fundraise for other (non Children's Centre) activities which they wished to develop and so chose to be a spoke/satellite.

REVISED PROPOSALS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

45. The representations made in the consultation exercise, especially local users' views about Children's Centres have been considered carefully. The distribution of deprivation affecting children across the borough and how well the support from the planned Hub and Spoke locations will match up to that need has also been revisited and looked at in finer detail. In the light of this, the distribution of Hub locations remains the same, and the Council considers that it is important to maintain a 'critical mass' of services in Hub locations to ensure good quality all-round support for the most vulnerable families.
46. However, although the distribution of spoke and satellite children's centres is fairly even across the borough to ensure good universal provision, there are relatively few spoke outlets available in the highly deprived northern end of the borough. This could result in excess levels of resource pressure on the neighbouring spoke provision in the centre of the borough. It could also therefore potentially affect particular groups to whom we must have particular regard for equalities impact (e.g. particular ethnic groups or religious groups where these might be more prevalent in the north of the borough).. The Council therefore thinks it right to flex the model by bolstering the support available in the north in particular – through a slightly higher level of funding than for other hubs/spokes for Randolph Beresford and for Cathnor Park. For most other spoke locations, they are either in an area of relatively below-average deprivation for the borough,

or are closer to good levels of hub provision, or have another significant source of funding.

47. It is therefore proposed that each of the six hubs receives between £300k and £336k and that spokes/satellites receive between £19k and £50k each depending upon local need, parent proposals, proximity and quantity of other hubs and spokes in the locality, user numbers and relationship with neighbouring hub. (The three council run Children's Centres currently each receive £473.5k per annum, the other Centres each receives between £104k and £250k per annum. So for the new Hub sites this would represent an increase on current funding).
48. To differentiate between the hubs and the spokes/satellites it is also proposed that in future hubs should be called Sure Start Children's Centres and the others Sure Start Family Centres or Community Centres.
49. Ofsted inspections have also identified that why something is done in a Children's Centre is more important than what is done. i.e. the activities need to be linked to targets and outcomes.
50. Parents also expressed concern about the postcode lottery which prohibited them from using Centres outside of their home address locality. Therefore in future parents will be able to choose to access services from any Centre across the borough. New birth visits will still be allocated to Hubs on the basis of proximity to home address. However families will be able to use services in hubs, spokes and satellites across the borough, thus increasing resident's choice.
51. Parents identified many groups that might use the Children's Centre premises (e.g. National Childbirth Trust) and activities that they thought could be offered (e.g. yoga sessions for a fee). In response to these suggestions it has been decided to create a one year fixed term post of Children's Centre development worker to support the development of an enhanced local offer in each of the centres, particularly spokes and satellites, across the borough. This will involve working with local parents and partner agencies (e.g. health and specialist voluntary sector organisations) to determine what might be offered. Some preliminary work has been done to look at which groups might want to use centres, and to consider what space might be available. It has been assumed that during the day the focus would be on children and families groups (particularly under 5s). At the end of the day, there could be space for supplementary schools, and in the evening, for adult groups. Weekend use would also be developed, e.g. for children's parties.
52. As a result of community groups and partner responses our delivery model has been revised and the proposal is now as follows:

53. **In the Northern Locality (3)**

Old Oak Children's Centre – To be a hub with £300k funding

Randolph Beresford Children's Centre – to be a hub with £336k funding

The Locality Team (North) would also deliver targeted services from both the above venues.

Shepherd's Bush Families Project – To be a spoke with £20k funding from Children's Services and additional funding from Housing – with supported relocation to Charcroft Community Centre and 56 Minford Gardens.

Total Children's Centre (North) funding = £656k

54. **In the Central Locality (6)**

Cathnor Park Family Centre – to be a super spoke possibly to be managed by Vanessa Nursery School with £50k funding. The Hut Pre School group would remain here delivering 3 sessions per week and would receive £3k. Vanessa headteacher and chair of governors are both considering this proposal, subject to terms and agreement of full governing body. Could develop a community led model if sufficient parental interest.

Masbro Brook Green Family Centre – to be a satellite of Masbro hub Children's Centre who would receive a further £19k for this centre and deliver some sessions from this venue. The existing Addison Pre School and Step By Step day care would continue to be delivered from this Centre and the Central Locality staff team would also be based here and deliver services to targeted families.

Avonmore Community Centre – to be a satellite with £19k of funding from Children's Services and £50k from another funding source.

The Locality Team (Central) would also deliver services to targeted families from the above 3 venues.

Masbro Children's Centre – to be a hub with £300 funding to UPG.

Flora Gardens Children's Centre – To be a hub with £300k funding.

Wendell Park Family Centre – to be a spoke with £25k of funding.

Total Children's Centre (Central) funding = £716k

55. **In the Southern Locality (7)**

Bayonne Family Centre – to be a satellite receiving £19k for upkeep of the premises and to have services delivered on site by Melcombe Children's Centre

New Kings Family Centre – to be a spoke receiving £25k.

Normand Croft Family Centre – to be a spoke receiving £19k.

The Locality Team (South) would also deliver services to targeted families from the above 3 venues

Bishops Palace Family Centre – to be a satellite receiving £19k and linked with Fulham Central Children's Centre (both run by Pre School Learning Alliance and staff/services to be shared)

Fulham Central Children's Centre – to be a hub receiving £300k

Melcombe Children's Centre – to be a hub receiving £300k and delivering some satellite services at Bayonne.

Ray's Playhouse Ltd – to be a spoke receiving £19k to deliver from Sands End Playhouse in William Parnell Park. The parent led group have already identified a significant alternative funding source.

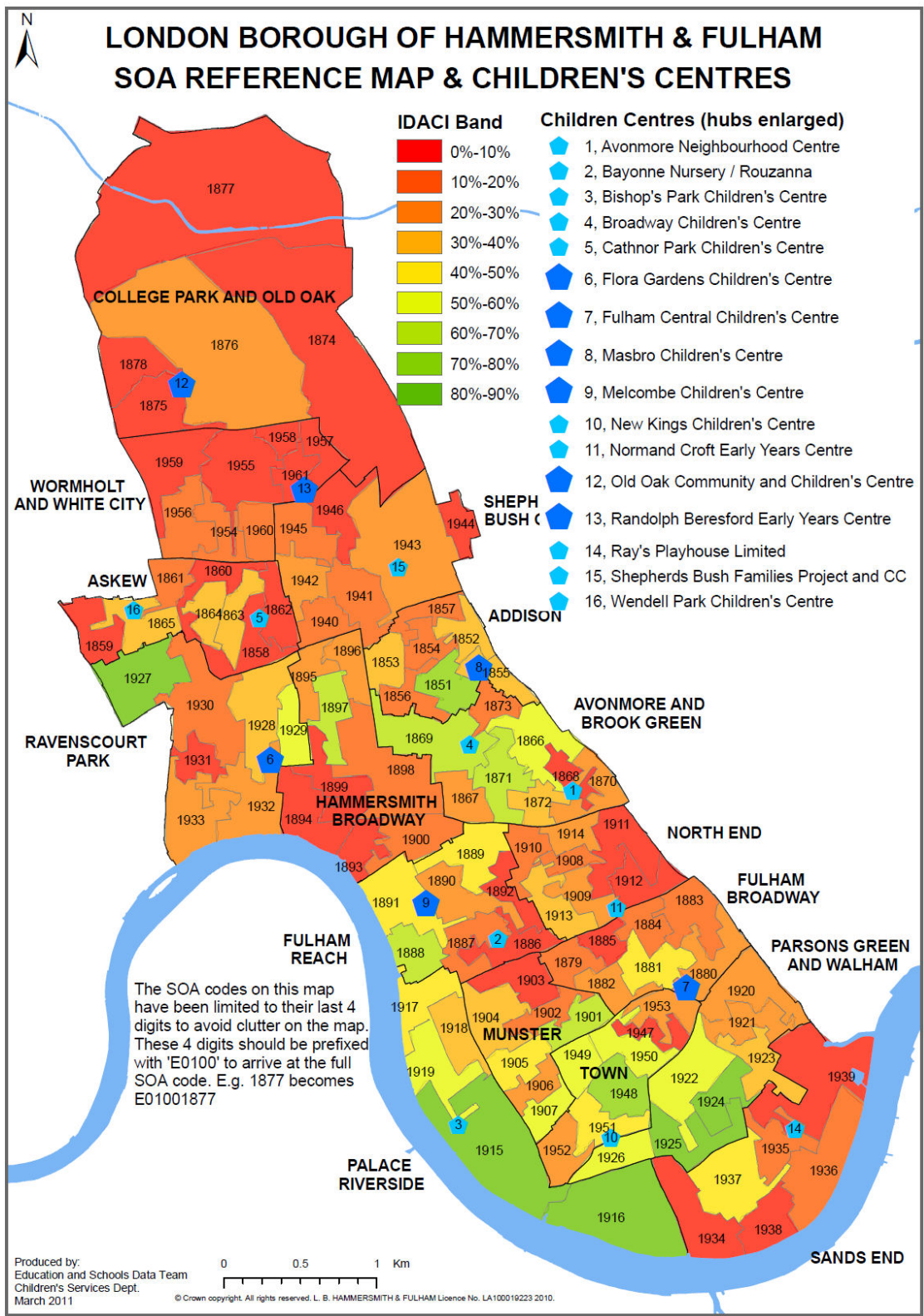
Total Children's Centre (South) funding = £701k

56. Across the borough the 16 contracts would use £2,073,000 of the proposed budget. £133,000 would be retained to provide additional financial support to any of the 16 Centres as determined by local need and as service delivery evolves. Authority to be delegated to Lead Member for Children's Services for the dispersal of this amount.

57. Continuity of service was also raised by many parents who have developed relationships and support networks both with staff and other parents. The retention of provision in all previous sites ensures that a local offer is retained. Children's Centre staff will be subject to staff reorganisations both under Children's Centre proposals and as part of the cohort delivering the Family Support Programme localities work. Where possible and subject to exigencies for the service, staff will be asked to identify where they have an ongoing relationship within a local community and will where possible be redeployed in that area. Thus families may see familiar faces either in a reconfigured Children's Centre hub or spoke.

58. Advantages of the revised proposal:

- tighter fit in distribution to resource to match local need, especially deprived north of borough, having regard to need to protect and prioritise support for vulnerable groups (supported in consultation) and equalities duties
- development worker to enable an enhanced local offer by working with parents and partner agencies; this will ensure maximum use made of the resources available, and responds to some of the points raised in consultation about making more of volunteering
- retention of a central fund allows further flexibility of the model during the year to supplement support through any centre as service delivery evolves; this makes the approach a safer transition from current provision
- redeployment of staff where possible to existing local sites supports the issue of continuity of support raised in consultation.



CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

59. Each hub centre, satellite and spoke centre will receive a Service Level Agreement with a service specification which outlines the key performance indicators and expected outcomes.
60. The initial responsibility for the development and monitoring of the Service Level Agreements for the hubs and spokes/satellites will sit within the Early Years team in the Localities Service who will also be responsible for the Children's Centre Strategic Board, made up of representation from Children's Centres, social care, health providers, JCP and the Pre-School Learning Alliance.
61. Work is underway to investigate a three borough approach to contract management which could be implemented in 2012/13.

RISK MANAGEMENT

62. Risks for the project to implement changes to the reconfigured network of children's centres are included in the risk register for the wider Family Support Programme.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

63. A full EIA is available and will need to be considered by Cabinet in conjunction with this report. The main equalities implications are summarised below.

Age - Children's centres actively encourage involvement of grandparents services to the youngest children will be enhanced – access to outdoor play
no youth provision affected

Disability - All locations will remain fully accessible with disabled toilets and signage. Some disabled users may have to travel further to access a full range of services but universal offer will remain available at centres. Some impact in short term as users become familiar with new locations and travel routes.

Gender reassignment - Services work under council policies on equal opportunities.

Marriage and civil partnership - Services work under council policies on equal opportunities.

Pregnancy and maternity: all centres actively encourage breast feeding and make provision for women to feed while on site. Encouraging and promoting breast feeding are key health indicators and will be monitored by health partners delivering services within the centres.

Race: Hubs will deliver services based on identified local needs – these should therefore be tailored to the local population whatever its ethnic makeup. Promotion of equal opportunities will continue as centres will either follow council policies or develop policies mirroring these.

Religion/ belief: The Children's centres make provision for prayer and will continue to do so as required.

Sex: Services work under council policies on sex discrimination. Fathers and male carers as well as mothers and female carers are encouraged to access services within centres.

Sexual orientation: All centres will continue to work under policies and procedures in line with the council's policies

64. Analysis of the consultation showed that the universal activities valued by families are those still planned to be delivered in all centres. Parents expressed concerns about being restricted to certain centres because of their postcode boundaries. As a result we are proposing to enable parents to access services at centres of their choice.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES

65. The Family Support Programme is part of a wider review of Tier 2 and 3 services provided by the Children's Services Department, as part of the medium term financial strategy.
66. The operating model proposed under the Family Support Programme is significantly different from current arrangements. The programme approach was to restructure current tier 2 and 3 children's provision into locality based multi-disciplinary locality based teams, and to reconfigure Children's Centres provision as described in this report. Once the structure of these teams was finalised it became possible to compare the cost of the new provision against current arrangements.
67. The cost of current provision totals £25.926m, of which £11.736m is received in the form of grants, contributions from the PCT, schools and other authorities leaving a net spend of £14.189m.

68. It is currently assumed that to operate 6 Hub children's centres and 10 spoke centres would cost £2.073m. In addition there would be a central fund to be held initially in reserve of £133,000.
69. The Programme Board are currently receiving monthly monitoring statements to monitor the implementation plan and achievement of savings.

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)

Consultation

70. In proposing significant changes to current children's centres delivery the Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to undertake a consultation with residents, service users and professional agencies prior to proposing changes to children's centres.

There is case law guidance as to what constitutes proper consultation. Consultation should include the following:

It should be carried out when the proposals are still at a formative stage.

- Sufficient reasons should be given for the proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response..
- Adequate time must be given for responses.
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken

71. The consultation process followed is outlined in sections 35 to 58 of the report, and the associated Appendix 1 sets out the outcome of the consultation.. The product of the consultation was also used to inform the Equalities Impact Assessment which is available and can be read electronically. Officers are of the view that an extensive and lawful consultation process has been carried out.

Equalities Duties

72. The timing of this report means that the decision is likely to straddle the replacement of the separate general equality duties with the new single duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 which is expected to be in force on 5th April 2011. Both sets of duties are therefore set out for consideration by Cabinet.
73. Until s.149 comes into force the Council must, when making a decision in relation to any of its functions such as to changes in service provision

comply with its general equality duties imposed by each of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 ("SDA"), Race Relations Act 1976 ("1976") and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ("DDA"). These provisions in similar, but not identical, terms require public authorities in the carrying out of their functions to have due regard to the need among other things to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity.

74. The specific matters to which the authority needs to have due regard in the exercise of its functions are set out in the relevant sections as follows:

DDA - s 49A General duty

- (1) Every public authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to:
- (a) the need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under this Act;
 - (b) the need to eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
 - (c) the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
 - (d) the need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons;
 - (e) the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- and
- (f) the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.

SDA - s 76A Public authorities: general statutory duty

- (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to the need:
- (a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and
 - (b) to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

RRA - s 71 Specified authorities: general statutory duty

- (1) Every body or other person specified in Schedule 1A or of a description falling within that Schedule shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need-
- (a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
 - (b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

75. Case law has established the following principles:

(i) Compliance with the general equality duties is a matter of substance not form.

(ii) The duty to have "due regard" to the various identified "needs" in the relevant sections does not impose a duty to achieve results. It is a duty to have "due regard" to the "need" to achieve the identified goals.

(iii) Due regard is regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances, including the importance of the area of life of people affected by the decision and such countervailing factors as are relevant to the function that the decision-maker is performing. The weight to be given to the countervailing factors is a matter for the authority.

(iv) The general equality duties do not impose a duty on public authorities to carry out a formal equalities impact assessment in all cases when carrying out their functions, but where a significant part of the lives of any protected group will be directly affected by a decision, a formal equalities impact assessment is likely to be required by the Courts as part of the duty to have 'due regard'.

10.6 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available electronically for Cabinet's consideration. The Equality Impact Assessment was informed by the consultation process.

76. Parts of the Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1st October 2010 but not those parts of the Act which cover the new public sector equality duty, which has been the subject of recent consultation by the Government. When the public sector equality duty provisions in s.149 of the Act come into force, expected on 5th April, it will widen the general equalities duties with which a local authority has to comply. It will (among other things) include age as one of the protected characteristics to which the general equality duties will apply and will amend slightly the factors to which authorities will need to have due regard if they are to comply with those duties. Section 149 of the Act provides (so far as relevant) as follows:

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

(3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) tackle prejudice, and

(b) promote understanding.

(6) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

The expanded protected characteristics under the Equality Act are as follows:-

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

77. In addition, local authorities will be under a duty by virtue of s 29 of the Equalities Act 2010 not to discriminate against, victimize or harass any person to whom they provide services on any of the protected grounds. The protected grounds will include age as well as the grounds on which the existing equalities legislation already protects people from discrimination by local authorities (i.e. disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and sex). Discrimination means (1) treating someone less favourably because of a particular protected characteristic (or for a reason related to it, in the case of disability) ("direct discrimination") or (2) applying a provision, criteria or practice equally to everyone but which puts people of a particular protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage (indirect discrimination). An authority may rely on a defence of justification (i.e. that the discrimination was a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate end) in response to a claim of indirect discrimination, or in response to a claim of direct discrimination on grounds of age. Otherwise, direct discrimination cannot be justified.

Conclusion

78. In reaching a decision Cabinet must take into account all relevant matters, both general and particular, which are set out in the report. Cabinet will need to pay particular regard to the outcome and product of the consultation exercises described in the report. Cabinet must also have due regard to the positive and negative aspects of its equality duties set out above. It should be noted that the duty is to have due regard to the need to achieve the desired outcomes rather than to achieve a particular result and the Cabinet will need to balance these with countervailing matters including the council's financial position. Cabinet members should consider the detailed Equalities Impact Assessment which is available electronically as part of the decision making process.

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PROCUREMENT

79. No procurement-related issues are anticipated until 2012-13 when the service is due for re-tendering.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	Children's Centre statutory guidance Consultation document Consultation feedback EQIA Sure Start national research programme (online)	Gill Sewell, Pat Bunche gill.sewell@lbhf.gov.uk pat.bunche@lbhf.gov.uk	Children's Services Department
CONTACT OFFICER:		NAME: Gill Sewell EXT. 020 8753 3608	

Appendix 1

SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES CONSULTATION

1. There were 667 responses out of 7168 registered users of children's centres, of which 617 could be analysed (answered the questions beyond demographics). Most respondents were female (88% and in the 25-44 age range (83.5%). A majority of those who expressed a view agreed that support should be targeted at the most vulnerable families.
2. Respondents judged all the services they had accessed as important or very important (over 60%). The highest overall score was for drop-in type ('stay and play') services at 83%. Child development programmes and convenient opening hours were the next two highest responses at just under 79% and at 74% respectively. This pattern changed slightly when respondents were asked about the priority services for their local community. All areas were still regarded as important (by over 70%) but with relatively higher support for child development and outreach activity to help prevent children coming into care.
3. On the overall proposal of creating six hubs and 10 spokes over 30% of respondents agreed with 44% disagreeing and just over 23% not sure. Question 7 asked for responses on whether there should be children's centre 'spokes' or 'satellites'. Approximately 47% of respondents did not answer this question. Over 40% agreed that smaller services should decide themselves but more agreed there should be spokes linked to hubs (25.9%) than said they should be independent (15%).

INTRODUCTION

4. In proposing significant changes to current children's centres delivery the Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to undertake a consultation with residents, service users and professional agencies prior to proposing changes to children's centres. The consultation was implemented from 22 January until 28 February. The consultation was on the Council's website and advertised. Hard copies of the consultation were also placed in every children's centre. Staff actively encouraged parents, carers and childminders to fill them in and computers were made available for on-line completion at Children's Centres.
5. Residents were asked for their view of a range of existing services delivered within the current children's centre model and on the proposed 'hub' and 'spoke' delivery model. 667 responses have been received. A series of focus groups were held with a particular emphasis on young parents and on fathers. In addition there were four opportunities for residents to meet with officers to discuss the proposals (although all 15 centres were offered this

option only four accepted). The Lead Member visited all the children's centres prior to the consultation starting and also held two focus groups for parents (of the 15 Centres two elected not to send any parent representatives). Officers also met with two resident led local action groups.

6. There was slightly more support for charging for universal services (44%) (with concessions) than disagreement (35.8%), although there was concern about the impact on low income families. In general most responses were against making any cuts in Children's Services, instead suggesting alternative routes of raising revenue.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Overall findings

7. There are currently 7168 registered users of children's centres on the estate database. There were in total 667 responses. There were in addition four comprehensive written responses from:
 - The Primary Care Trust
 - A member of staff
 - Hammersmith Community Gardens Association
 - Active Planet

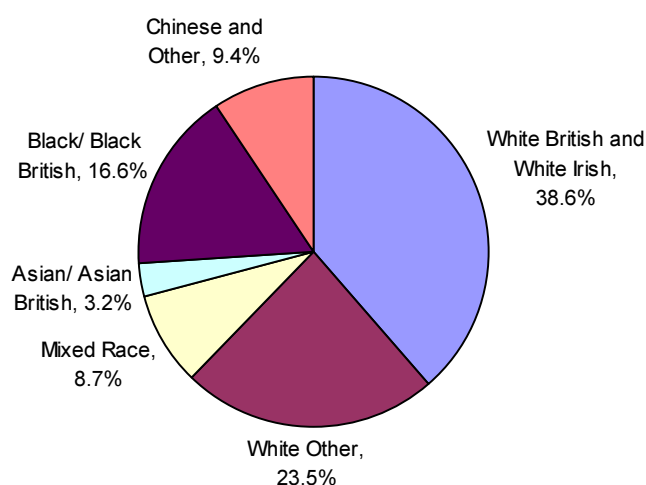
In addition, proposals were received from New Kings, Rouzanna and Wendell Park

8. Of the 667 responses 50 did not then answer any questions beyond the required demographic information so these have been omitted from the analysis giving a total of 617 responses. For many questions however there were some 'nil' returns – these have not been highlighted in the summary below but mean that the figures reported on some questions may not sum to 100%.

Children's Centre	Number of families who completed the questionnaire	Number of families on Estart	% of the numbers registered who completed the consultation
Rouzanna/Bayonne (494)	45	494	9%
Bishop's Park (201)	64	201	32%
Broadway (724)	79	724	11%
Cathnor Park (1587)	103	1,587	6%
Flora Gardens (330)	42	330	13%
Fulham Central (89)	31	89	35%
Fulham South (956)	42	956	4%
Masbro (533)	117	533	22%

Melcombe Park (568)	120	568	21%
New Kings (90)	14	90	16%
Normand Croft (361)	28	361	8%
Old Oak (531)	19	531	4%
Randolph Beresford (160)	28	160	18%
Shepherds Bush Families Project &CC (104)	27	104	26%
Wendell Park (215)	39	215	18%

9. Of the 546 registered users of children's centres who responded on demographic questions, most (88%) were female. The vast majority of all respondents were in the 25-44 age range (83.5%). Just seven users, all female, who responded to the question identified themselves as under 20 years old. Five respondents, all but one registered with a children's centre, identified themselves as over 65. 70% of the children of respondents were under 5 years old, with a further 24% in the range 5-11 years old. A significant number of respondents (14% of respondents, totalling 77, all but 2 registered with a children's centre) had children with disabilities. There was quite an even split between respondents who were employed or unemployed (48% to 52%). Respondents came from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, with 38.6% identifying themselves as White British or White Irish, 23.5% as White Other and 16.6% as Black or Black British.



10. All but 2% of respondents (11) who answered the question (511) had a home postcode within the borough.

11. 91.4% of respondents in the analysis were registered with a children's centre. There was a variance on responses by individual children's centres areas with Masbro making up 18.8% and Cathnor Park making 16.7% of responses, totalling a third of responses. Only 0.6% of responses were from users of the New King's centre, and under 3% each from Old Oak and Randolph Beresford.

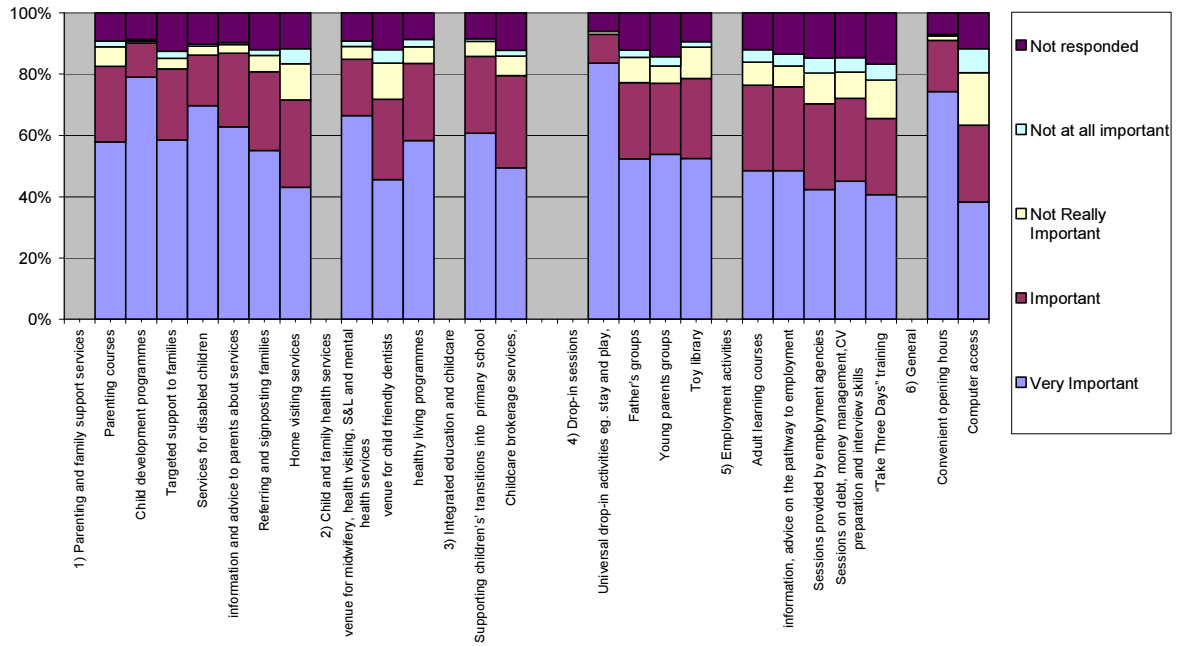
12. In response to question 11, 39% of respondents tended to agree or agreed strongly that support should be targeted at the most vulnerable families, compared to 31.8% who disagreed, with 22.7% 'not sure'. However in comments made there was strong support for maintaining an overall mix of users rather than losing universal provision.
13. Generally respondents to the consultation regarded all the services they had accessed as important, with every service getting a response of over 60% judging the service as either 'important' or 'very important'. The highest 'very important' score overall was for universal drop-in type ('stay and play') services at 83%. Child development programmes and convenient opening hours were the next two highest responses at just under 79% and at 74% respectively. The lowest areas were in relation to employment support activities with under 50% judging these very important, although the lowest individual score was for computer access at 38% judging this 'very important', but with a further 25% judging this 'important'.
14. This pattern changed slightly when respondents were asked about the priority services for their local community. All areas were still regarded as important (by over 70%) but with relatively higher support for child development and outreach activity to help prevent children coming into care (e.g. 66% thinking outreach services very important, and over 70% for activities to increase families understanding of child development, and early identification of special needs). The highest 'very important' score was activities for children and carers at the centres (77%).

Services for you and your family

Importance of Services

15. Over 90% of respondents agreed children's centre services were beneficial to them and their family. To explore what services were beneficial the consultation survey then asked residents to rate how important or not important the current range of services they accessed were in children's centres. This was under the children's centres core offer services:
 - Parenting and family support services
 - Child and family health services
 - Integrated education and childcare
 - Drop-in sessions
 - Employment activities
 - General

Importance of services



Parenting and family support services

16. Residents rated child development programmes as the most important activity under this core offer with over 90% stating these were important/very important. The next most important/very important activity is information advice and guidance to parents about the range of family support services and activities in the local area. Parenting courses (86%), services for disabled children (81.9%) and targeted support to families (81%) were next in ranking order with home visiting services ranked least important in this section, although with over 70% judging it at least important.

Child and family health services

17. Providing a venue for midwifery, health visiting, speech and language and child and adult mental health services and providing a range of child and family healthy living programmes were rated as the most important/very important activities at 84% and 83.4% rating. Providing a venue for child friendly dentist was ranked least important. However, dental health is a major concern, with very poor rates of dental health in the borough, and a high rate of hospital admissions for dental caries in children.

Integrated education and childcare

18. 84% of participants rated 'supporting children's transitions into schools' as important/very important with childcare brokerage rated at 79% important or very important.

Drop-in sessions

19. Universal drop-in activities were the highest rated service with 93% stating it important/very important with 83.6% rating it as very important. This was strongly reflected in the comments from users. Toy library, fathers group and young parents groups all rated at over 77% important/very important.

Employment activities

20. The services under this core offer had the lowest overall importance ratings with adult learning being the most valued at 76.5% important/very important rating. Next at just under 60% is information, advice and guidance sessions supporting parents on the pathway to employment. Sessions on debt management, living on a budget, money management, CV preparation and interview skills and session provided by employment agencies were rated at 72.2% and 70.3%. Least rated activity was self esteem building activities.

General

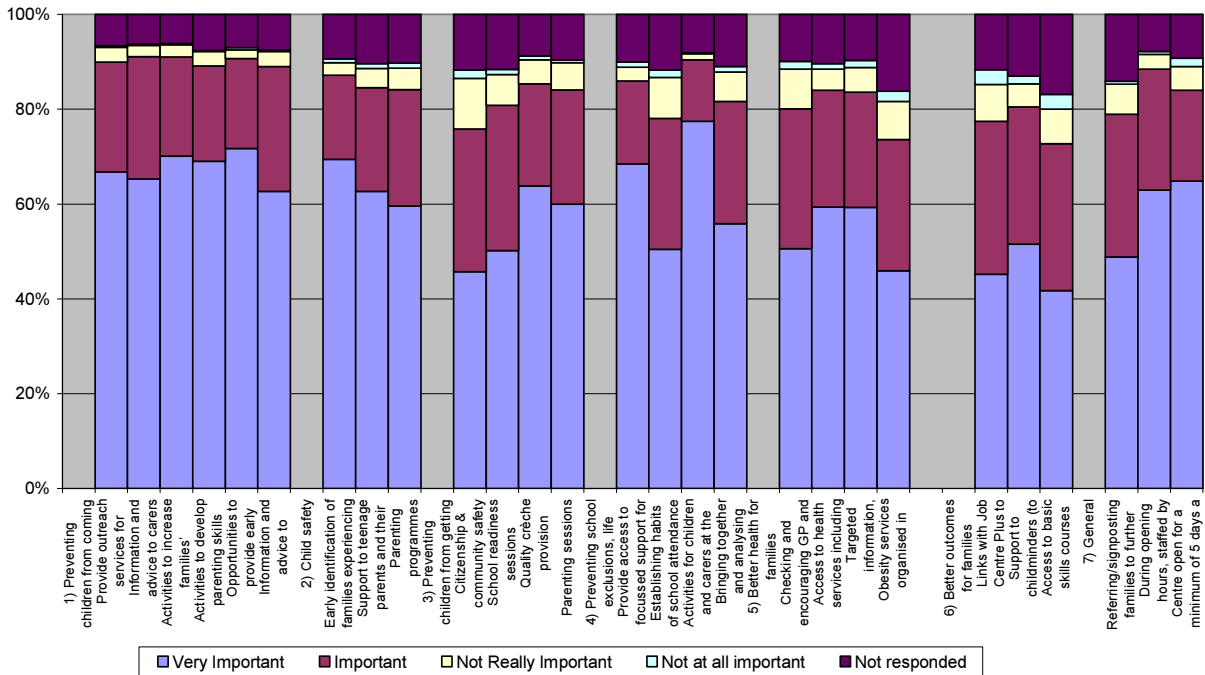
21. Over 90% of respondents rated convenient opening hours as important/very important with computer access seen as least important.

Priorities for your local community

22. The next questions asked 'How important do you feel the identified priorities outlined in the consultation document are for the local community?' This asked respondents to rate proposed activities under the following proposed priorities.

- Preventing children from coming into care
- Child safety
- Preventing children from getting into trouble
- Preventing school exclusions, improving life chances through attainment at school
- Better health for families
- Better outcomes for families
- General

Areas of activity



Preventing children from coming into care

23. All of the services were rated at over 90% as important/very important with activities to increase families understanding on child development rated as the most important/very important at 92.2%. At 90 – 91.1% important/very important rating were information and advice about the range of family support services and activities, opportunities to provide early identification of disabled children and those with special educational needs with inclusive services and support and outreach services. The services with the lowest ranking were activities to develop parenting skills and information and advice on early years and childcare.

Child safety

24. Early identification of families experiencing Domestic Violence (DV) and referral to DV support services was ranked as the most important/very important service at 87.2% followed by support to teenage parents and parenting programmes at 84%.

Preventing children from getting into trouble

25. Quality crèche provision, used when accessing children's centre services, was ranked as the most important/very important at over 85% with

parenting and school readiness ranked next. Citizenship and community safety sessions were ranked bottom.

Preventing school exclusions, improving life chances through attainment at school

26. Activities for children and carers, for example pre-schools, stay and play, parents groups and drop-in sessions were rated as important/very important at over 90% with 77.5% rating these as very important. Ranked second is access to focused support for children with special educational needs and disabilities including speech and language support. Activities regarding school attendance and tracking attendance and bringing together and analysing children's progress were ranked lower.

Better health for families

27. Encouraging GP and dental registration, access to health services including ante and post natal support and targeted information and guidance on breastfeeding, nutrition, hygiene, healthy lifestyles, safety and smoking cessation were rated from 80.1% to 83.9%. Obesity services were ranked least important.

Better outcomes for families

28. Support to childminders to support parents returning to work and links with Jobcentre Plus were ranked at 80% which is the lowest rating of services across the priorities. Access to basic skills was ranked lowest.

General

29. 88.5% rated the service of during opening hours, the centre is staffed by someone who is able to offer information and advice to families, followed by opening hours. Referring/signposting families to further services was ranked as least important.

Hubs and Spokes

30. Question 6 asks for residents' response to the Councils proposal of establishing six children's centre 'hubs' and 10 children's centre 'spoke / satellites'. Over 30% of respondents agreed with 44% disagreeing and just over 23% not sure.
31. Question 7 asked for responses on whether there should be children's centre 'spokes' or 'satellites'. Approximately 47% of respondents did not answer this question. Over 40% agreed that smaller services should

decide themselves but more agreed there should be spokes linked to hubs (25.9%) than said they should be independent (15%).

Charging, finding efficiencies and impact on particular groups

- 32.** When asked at Question 8 about implementing a charge for universal drop-in services, with concessions for low-income families over 44% agreed this would be acceptable, with 17.7% not sure, and 35.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This was reflected in responses to the question about alternative ways of making efficiencies, with 35 responses suggesting making a charge for some or all services.
- 33.** However Question 9 asked about concerns regarding the impact of the proposals for particular communities. The most responses (52) raised a concern about low income families who might be caught by any charges. 34 responses thought the proposals would affect vulnerable families. These might include homeless or families in temporary accommodation, 'new mums', teenage parents, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, disabled children and parents, and children and families in general.
- 34.** Question 10 asked about alternative ways of making efficiencies. The majority of responses were against making any cuts in Children's Services, instead suggesting alternative ways of raising revenue (such as making a charge for some or all services, hiring out buildings, or seeking business sponsorship) or making cuts elsewhere, (such as senior salaries, or other areas of council services such as road repairs). However some suggestions for making savings in Children's Services focused on shorter opening hours, parents doing more volunteering, and reducing 'giveaways' such as books to children.

Views of partner providers

- 35.** Officers met with all the 12 partner providers (three centres previously being Council run at a higher cost). Of these the six proposed hub partners were all content to accept additional funding and to deliver an enhanced programme.
- 36.** Of the others:
 - Three Centre Leaders said they did not want to operate a hub because it would divert from their main priority service
 - One third sector provider is also being asked to deliver a hub and said they would like to combine the resources for two ventures, one hub and one spoke

- One third sector provider said that they had found that the high level of funding for the children's centre activities had previously made it more difficult for them to fundraise for other (non children's centre) activities which they wished to develop and so chose to be a spoke/satellite.
- 37.** A group of parents have set up a new charity and identified a significant legacy which can provide additional funding to ensure Sure Start type services will be delivered by them in Council premises, alongside a social enterprise they are hoping to develop offering stay and play sessions.
- 38.** Legal and financial implications will be addressed in full in the report to Cabinet.