



Derby City Council



# Derby Children's Centre Consultation

Final Report

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# Executive Summary and Key Findings

## Background to the Consultation

The Consultation started on **4 March 2016** and finished on **27 May 2016**. During this time **473 responses** were received from an online and paper survey (39% online and 61% paper). The majority of respondents (82%) who took part in the survey said that they had visited or used a Children's Centre in Derby in the last 12 months.

Four focus groups took place on **11 May** and **12 May 2016**; two were held with Children's Centre users and two with other stakeholders who were a mix of people who worked for local schools, the local advisory boards and other partnership organisations such as local charities. In total **22 people** took part in the focus groups over the two days, with between five and six participants attending each focus group.

A series of in-depth telephone interviews was also undertaken with users and stakeholders between 16 May and 27 May 2016.

## Key Findings

**For those who use them, Derby Children's Centres play an important role in families' lives in terms of the support they provide to parents and the early development opportunities they provide for children**

Although it should be noted that eight in ten respondents to the survey were Children's Centres users (i.e. they had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months) and two-thirds visited one at least once a week, the importance that families and other people responding to the survey (such as people who work for partner organisations including charities and schools) attach to them is clear given the response received to the survey and the feedback provided.

Respondents to the survey used a range of different services on offer at the Children's Centres, such as attending Stay and Play sessions, assessment checks, parenting support, activities, groups and accessing advice and guidance. Some had also attended adult education and training sessions as well as using childcare on offer there. There were also numerous comments left by respondents asking the Council not to close their local Children's Centre, detailing the negative impact this would have for them and their families.

Amongst focus group and interview participants, there was an overwhelming sense of the importance of Children's Centres in society, with people citing that they were important places for parents to go to with their children. Participants felt that attending groups and activities at Children's Centres plays a vital role in children's early development, allowing them to socialise with other children at an early age. In addition parents can socialise with other parents at Children's Centres, which has a positive impact on the mental well-being of parents who may otherwise feel isolated.

Stakeholder participants (people who worked for partnership organisations such as charities and local schools) stressed the essential role that Children's Centres play in the lives of vulnerable families in terms of providing a safe and welcoming environment for accessing services such as Stay and Weigh and other important assessments and check-ups, as well as providing support to parents such as guiding them to achieve parenting skills. There was a sense that, as a result, they are an important part of the community and they play a positive role in society.

There was a general consensus amongst all participants of the focus groups and telephone interviews that usage of the Children's Centre service is high and that the Centres are often very busy with many groups and activities being full or over-subscribed. In people's experience, new people are starting to use and rely on the service more and more in certain areas of the city.

**The majority of users regularly visit their preferred Children's Centre because it is close to home and many walk there with their children**

Eight in ten survey respondents said they preferred their Children's Centre because it was close to home and two-thirds of respondents said they usually walked to their preferred Children's Centre. Those who walked to their preferred Centre were also more likely to have visited just the one Centre in the last 12 months.

Most survey respondents said they go regularly to their preferred Children's Centre; more than eight in ten survey respondents said they visited their preferred Children's Centre at least once a month, with two-thirds saying it was at least once a week.

Amongst focus group and interview participants who were Children's Centre users, the majority of people visited their local Centre because of the convenience of being able to walk there.

**However, some users go regularly to more than one Children's Centre, choosing to so because of the services on offer there**

Just over half of survey respondents said that they had visited more than one Children's Centre in the last 12 months and this tallies with the feedback from the focus groups and interviews that some people travelled to different Centres to attend different groups, sessions and activities, as well as access different services on offer.

However, those who visited more than one Centre in the last 12 months were more likely to drive to their preferred Centre. By contrast, those who usually walk to their preferred Centre were more likely to have visited just the one Centre in the last 12 months.

**Most of the Children's Centres users are female that attend with their child or children**

The majority of respondents who participated in the survey and said they visited or used Children's Centres were female, as were all of the participants in the user focus groups.

Focus group and interview participants (a few of whom were male) pondered why it was that females attended the Centres with their children more than males and it was concluded that it was not that males felt excluded from using services, but it was simply that females were more often the primary care giver within families than males.

**Although most believe that Children's Centres should prioritise providing support and services to the more vulnerable families in society, services are often used by those who could be seen as 'affluent' and many believe that Children's Centre services should be available to everyone regardless of their background**

Just over half of survey respondents said they agreed that Children's Centre services should be targeted at those most in need. However, four in ten said they disagreed with this, particularly those who said they used the service. This supports the general consensus amongst focus group and interview participants who were users of the service, that the Centres were often used by those who could be seen to be 'middle-class' and 'affluent'.

However, they agreed that the Centres should be accessible for all families in Derby and that all parents needed support regardless of their background.

Conversely, survey respondents who worked for the service or were from a partnership organisation such as a school or charity were much more likely to agree that services should be targeted at those most in need. Focus group and interview participants from this group concurred that there should be priority groups and the service was set up for vulnerable families in the first place. Some went on to say that in some cases because of the number of people using the services who were from non-priority groups, some people who are most in need of the services are missing out.

**More reject the proposals for reconfiguration than support them and support is very low amongst service users, particularly those who use one or more of the listed Centres**

Six in ten rejected the reconfiguration proposals and users of Babington, Mickleover / Littleover and West End were most likely to reject them (all of which are Centres that would be affected by the proposed reconfiguration). A small percentage of users supported the proposals, but support was higher amongst those who had a professional interest in the Children's Centre Service and even higher amongst those who said their only relationship with the service was that they pay Council Tax. Two-thirds of respondents also said that they disagreed that reducing costs by delivering services from 10 buildings instead of 17 was acceptable and more than four in ten disagreed that transferring management of Children's Centre buildings to school ownership was acceptable.

Amongst focus group and interview participants, initial reactions to the proposals were varied with most users rejecting them outright and most stakeholders questioning why those particular Centres had been chosen. Although most people recognised that cost savings needed to be made, some felt that the Council had made the wrong choice in choosing the Centres for reconfiguration and there was widespread frustration in regards to the number and quality of services being reduced by the Council.

However, there were some that agreed with the proposals, one in five in the survey and some focus group and interview participants. It was suggested that the reconfiguration could have a benefit for some of the local schools and many recognised the need for the Council to save money.

**The proposed reconfiguration would make it much more difficult for users of those Centres to use other Children's Centre services, many would stop using the Service altogether and the reconfiguration may have more of a negative impact for those who are from a minority ethnic background and those who do not have access to a car or do not drive**

Almost nine in ten survey respondents who use one of the affected Centres said that if services moved out of the Centres listed, it would make it more difficult for them to access Children's Centre services. Four in ten of these users said that they would stop using Children's Centres altogether and a further four in ten would use them less frequently. When asked why they would stop using the services, six in ten said they would not be able to travel to other Centres and a third would not be able to find the time to travel the extra distance. Almost six in ten also disagreed that they would be willing to travel further to visit another Centre if the number of Centres in Derby reduced.

Seven in ten respondents who were from a non-White ethnic background and who said they use one of the affected Centres said the proposed reconfiguration would definitely make it more difficult for them to access services. A larger proportion of those from a non-White ethnic background said they would stop using Centres altogether if the reconfiguration went ahead

than those from a White ethnic background. The survey results also show that respondents from a non-White ethnic background were also more likely to say that they were users of the Service than those from a White ethnic background.

A larger proportion of those who walked to their preferred Children's Centre also said that the proposed reconfiguration would definitely make it more difficult for them to access Children's Centres compared to those that drive. Respondents who walked to their preferred Children's Centre were also more likely to say that they would stop using Centres altogether if the proposed reconfiguration went ahead. This is corroborated by the finding that a larger proportion of those who had visited more than one Centre in the last 12 months usually drive to their preferred Centre and so therefore are able to use services at other Centres more easily, whereas those who usually walk were more likely to have visited just one in this time period.

It was felt at the focus groups and amongst interview participants that people would struggle to use other Centres if their local one closed, particularly those who would have to rely on public transport. It was discussed that some people would struggle to use buses to visit Children's Centre, given the practicalities of taking push chairs on buses, and for some journeys across the city it is necessary to take more than one bus. Some would also not be able to afford the additional cost on their family's budget. It was suggested that for the Council to make it easier for families to access other Centres, bus services in Derby would need to be improved or new services introduced, with parents being provided with passes to keep the costs down for them.

Participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews also discussed the lack of alternative services available to them in their local area and places to go with their children.

There was also a general consensus amongst focus group and interview participants that if the affected Centres stopped providing the services to the local community, this would have a negative impact for many parents, particularly those who are classed as 'vulnerable' and 'most in need'. Professional stakeholders mentioned that previous cuts had been detrimental to partnership working with the Children's Centre service and that further cuts would have further negative impacts.

**There is general confusion as to the impact the reconfiguration would have and whether this would mean services would no longer be available to the general public at the affected Centres or whether schools would continue to provide the same services themselves**

In the survey, one in six respondents said they did not know whether they supported the proposals and one in five said they did not know if they agreed that the transfer of management of buildings to school ownership was acceptable to reduce costs. This was explored further with focus group and interview participants and it was found that this same level of confusion was prevalent. Some participants accepted that it was likely that service provision at these buildings would cease as schools would use the buildings for their own purposes, but there were some that held out hope that schools would continue to provide the same sort of services to the local community from the buildings that the Council does currently.

The Council will want to make clear the impact the reconfiguration will have on the services on offer at the Centres and how the buildings will be used by schools in the future as at the moment this is unclear to the general public and those who have a professional interest in the Children's Centre service, such as those who work in schools, in the Centres themselves, for local charities and other organisations that work in partnership with the Service.



## **Others ways of bringing in revenue to the Children's Centre Service or saving money were identified**

These included:

- Introducing a small fee or donation for attending group sessions
- Seeking donations of toys and other resources
- Seeking sponsorship from local businesses or other organisations
- Raising revenue through fundraising
- Using more volunteers to deliver services, particularly from amongst service users
- Generating income from renting out rooms to local groups, classes, businesses and for birthday parties
- Working in partnership with other organisations to apply for grants and other sources of funding
- Working in close partnership with other organisations to deliver services more effectively and efficiently through sharing of information and other resources

## **Conclusion**

This consultation has provided a wealth of interesting and useful results regarding usage of the Children's Centre Service in Derby, the opinions of people who use the Centres and who work in partnership with the Centres on the Council's proposed reconfiguration model, and the potential impact the reconfiguration may have for families and the community as a whole. The results and findings will be used by the Council to inform and further shape the proposals for the reconfiguration of the Children's Centre Service, with the aim of reducing costs whilst ensuring that the service continues to meet the needs of families who have young children, particularly those families who have been identified as being most in need and vulnerable.



# The Consultation Programme

## Introduction

Derby City Council is responsible for the management and service delivery of 17 Children's Centres in Derby. These Centres host child and family health services, play an important role in supporting child development and school readiness for children in Derby, and help promote parenting aspirations and the development of parenting skills.

Derby City Council continues to face a challenging financial situation and is required to make further cuts of £45m to its budget by 2019. The Children's Centre budget has already been reduced by 67% in the last three years, but the financial pressure the Council is under means that it is necessary to explore further options to make more savings by delivering services differently. The Council is therefore exploring making changes to the buildings where Children's Centre services are delivered from in order to reduce the cost of maintaining and running them.

The Council is proposing:

1. To reconfigure Children's Centres so they operate from 10 rather than 17 designated buildings
2. To consider how the current Children's Centre buildings can be used more effectively for services for families with children under five with a focus on Centres based on school sites
3. To consider the handover of ownership, running costs and management responsibility of seven Children's Centres to the schools they are located at or near

The seven Children's Centre buildings the Council is proposing to handover to schools are:

- Mickleover / Littleover
- Chellaston
- Oakwood
- Meadow Lane
- Babington
- Spondon
- West End

The Council is not proposing that any frontline services will be stopped. Staff will continue to be employed by the Council and the service will continue to meet the needs of families in Derby who have children under the age of five by maintaining the delivery of Centre based and outreach services.

Derby City Council wished to conduct a public consultation with people who live and work in Derby in order to understand Children's Centre usage, seek opinions on the Council's proposals for the reconfiguration of the service and explore different strategies that could enable the service to make a substantial contribution to Council cost saving targets, while continuing to meet its statutory obligations and people's needs, particularly some of the more vulnerable and disadvantaged families in Derby. The Council required statistically valid and in-depth research to provide an overall picture of current service usage, opinions on the

proposed reconfiguration of the Service and the future needs of families in Derby, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable.

This report presents the findings from the public consultation conducted for Derby City Council by independent market research agency Enventure Research.

The findings from the consultation will be used by the Council to further develop the proposals for the future of the Children's Centre service.

## Research objectives

The aim of this research was to explore the effects the proposed reconfiguration may have on Children's Centre service usage and understand whether the reconfiguration is viable and will allow the Council to meet the needs of families with children under five in Derby, particularly those identified as most vulnerable. Within this overall aim, the research objectives were to:

- Consult with both users and non-users of Children's Centre services
- Gain feedback from as many people who live and work in Derby as possible
- Gather feedback from people who work for the Service, local schools and partnership organisations
- Gather high quality, robust and statistically valid evidence
- Gather in-depth qualitative evidence
- Explore current service usage, opinions on the proposed reconfiguration and potential additional options for future service delivery and introducing cost savings
- Include consideration of all Children's Centre sites across Derby

## Methodology

A combined quantitative and qualitative methodology was chosen for this research in order to provide statistical validity, robustness and representativeness, and also depth of understanding. The quantitative element took the form of a paper and online survey, and the qualitative element involved a series of focus groups and in-depth telephone interviews.

Those who took part in the survey are referred to as 'respondents' in this report and those who took part in the qualitative research are referred to as 'participants'.

### Online and paper survey

The consultation was open to everyone who lived and worked in Derby, including people who worked or volunteered for the Children's Centre Service, worked for local schools or other partnership organisations.

A questionnaire was designed in partnership between Derby City Council and Enventure Research, asking questions which covered the following topics:

1. Children's Centre usage
2. Opinions and feedback on the proposed reconfiguration
3. Feedback on the effect the proposals would have on Children's Centre usage
4. Other ideas for reducing the cost of the service
5. Equality monitoring questions

Background information was provided within the questionnaire to give respondents further information about the Council's financial position and the proposals for service delivery being considered. Respondents were asked to read this information before completing the survey.

The survey was hosted online and was promoted widely via the Council website, social media channels including Facebook and Twitter, on posters displayed in Children's Centres and other Council buildings, and on flyers distributed at Centres and other places in Derby. An email was also sent to all those registered on the Children's Centre database inviting them to take part and providing them with a direct link to participate. A further three reminders were sent to those who had not responded to earlier mailings to encourage them to respond.

In addition to the online survey, paper copies of the questionnaire were distributed to Children's Centres and other Council managed buildings across the city. These were provided with pre-paid envelopes for respondents to return their completed questionnaires back to Enventure Research.

The survey was available in English, Urdu, Slovak, Punjabi and Polish online and in paper format on request from a Children's Centre.

The survey was live from **4 March 2016 to 27 May 2016**. In this time, **473 responses were received**, providing a robust sample size for analysis. A total of 186 responses (39%) were received online and 287 (61%) responses were received in paper format. For reference, a copy of the paper version of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendices.

## Focus groups

Two focus groups were held with Derby Children's Centre service users and two were held with key stakeholders who had a professional interest in the Derby Children's Centre service (i.e. people who worked for local schools, local advisory boards and partnership organisations). Participants of the Children Centre user focus groups were recruited via the surveys, and participants to the stakeholder groups were recruited from a database of contact details supplied by Derby City Council. Each group was attended by between five and six people, held in Children's Centres in Derby and lasted around 90 minutes. In total 22 people took part in the focus groups.

The focus groups were moderated by researchers from Enventure Research, who followed specifically designed discussion guides to allow all relevant topics to be covered. The discussion guides were designed to cover similar areas of the survey, exploring feedback from participants in greater depth to discover the reasons behind the views on the proposals for the future delivery of the service and the effect these might have for families.

Focus groups took place on **11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016** and the discussion guides that were followed can be found in the Appendices.

## In-depth interviews

In addition to the focus groups, a series of in-depth telephone interviews was undertaken with users of the Children's Centre service and key stakeholders with a professional interest in the service. Participants were recruited via the survey in the case of Children's Centre service users and, in the case of stakeholders, from a database provided by the Council.

The interviews were undertaken by a researcher from Enventure Research, who followed the tailored discussion guide that can be found in the Appendices. The in-depth interviews took place between **16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016**.

## Interpretation of the survey data

This report contains tables and charts that present survey results. In some instances, the responses may not add up to 100%. There are several reasons why this might happen:

- The question may have allowed each respondent to give more than one answer
- Only the most common responses may be shown in the table or chart
- Individual percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number so the total may come to 99% or 101%
- A response of between 0% and 1% will be shown as <1%.

As the survey was completed by a sample of people who live and work in Derby (473 people), and not the entire adult population, all results are subject to sampling tolerances.

Based on a total population of around 248,700 people living in the City and Unitary authority area according to the 2011 Census, a sample of 473 respondents will give results that are accurate to approximately  $\pm 4.5\%$  at the 95% confidence level. This means, for example, if 50% of respondents responded with a particular answer to a question, we can be 95% sure that if all residents of Derby had responded to the survey, the actual result would be between 45.5% and 54.5%<sup>1</sup>.

As a self-completion questionnaire was used, not all respondents answered all of the questions. Therefore the base size varies for each question. It is important to remember that as a self-completion questionnaire was used, the sample is over-representative in regards to Children's Centre users and those who have a professional interest in the service and so therefore the results in this report more strongly reflect the views of these groups.

For the analysis of some questions, we have amalgamated some of the responses together in order to interpret the data. We have done this in cases where responses can be added together to indicate a level of agreement or support for a statement or idea e.g. "Strongly agree" and "Agree", and "Strongly support" and "Support".

Subgroup analysis has been undertaken to explore the results provided by key subgroups such as gender, ethnic group, presence of young children in household, preferred Children's Centre in Derby and relationship with the service (i.e. a user or professional). This analysis has only been carried out where the sample size is seen to be sufficient for comment (over 12), however caution should still be taken when interpreting small base sizes. Where sample sizes were not large enough, subgroups have been combined (such as ethnic groups) to create a larger group.

In order to compare results between subgroups, statistical analysis was undertaken. This allows us to be confident that any difference between scores is real and is not due to chance. Results between subgroups have been tested at a 95% confidence level. Only those differences that are statistically significant according to the z-test have been commented on within this report. The z-test is a commonly used statistical test to highlight whether differences in results are 'significant'. By 'significant' we mean the likelihood that two results would still be different if everyone in the city had responded to the survey.

There were a number of open-end questions in the survey which allowed respondents to write their own response rather than tick a box. To analyse these answers and present them in an understandable way, responses to each open-end question have been sorted into a number of categories and themes, allowing them to be visually presented as charts and tables.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that is an example only and does not refer to any question in the survey.

## Interpretation of the qualitative feedback

Verbatim feedback was recorded during the focus groups and in-depth interviews. Notes were prepared based on the feedback and the notes were then subsequently themed for analysis.

When interpreting qualitative research feedback, which for this research has have been collected via focus groups and in-depth interviews, it is important to remember that these findings differ to those collected from the survey. Qualitative findings are collected by speaking in much greater depth to a select number of participants.

It should be remembered that qualitative findings are not meant to be statistically accurate, robust or representative, but instead are collected to provide additional insight and greater understanding based on in-depth discussion and deliberation, something not possible to achieve via a quantitative survey. For example, if the majority of participants in a series of focus groups hold a certain opinion, this does not necessarily apply to the majority of the Derby population.

Throughout this report, those who took part in qualitative research (focus groups or in-depth interviews) are referred to as 'participants', whereas those who took part in the survey are referred to as 'respondents'.

# Respondent Profile

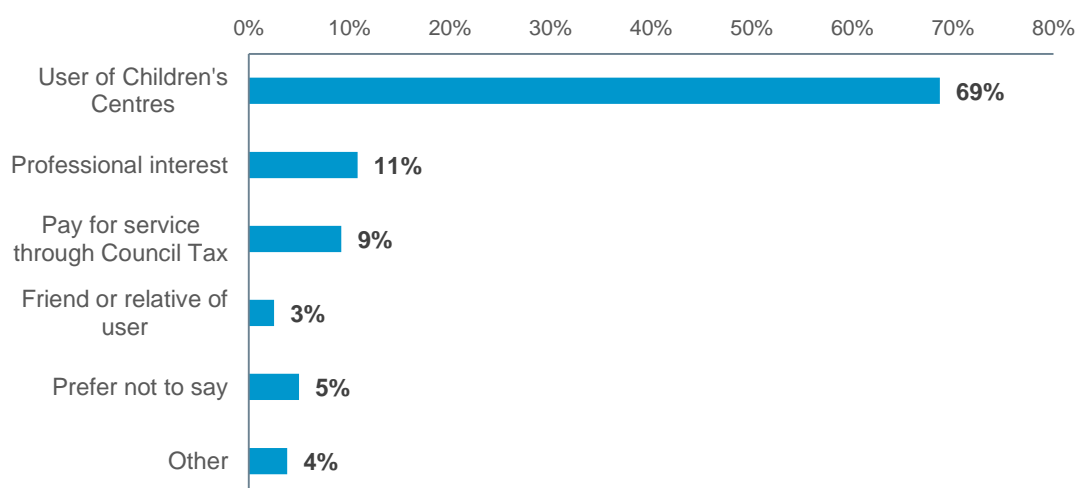
## Survey respondent profile

A total of 473 people who live, work and study in Derby took part in the online and paper survey.

When asked the capacity in which they were involved with Derby's Children's Centre Service, the majority of respondents (69%) said that they were Children's Centre users and 9% said they paid for the service through their Council Tax. One in ten (11%) said they were a staff member of the service, a staff member or governor of a school, or a representative of a partner organisation. When interpreting the results in the report, it should be kept in mind that they are more representative of the views of users of the Children's Centre Service and those who have a professional interest in the Service, rather than the general public as a whole.

**Figure 1 – Respondent type**

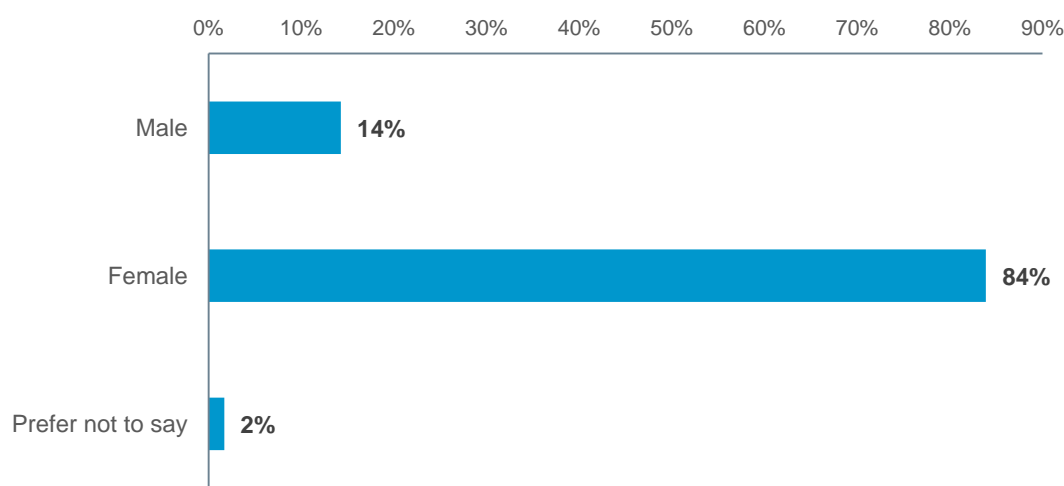
**Base: 444**



Eight in ten respondents (84%) were female and 14% were male. The figure below shows the breakdown of respondents by gender.

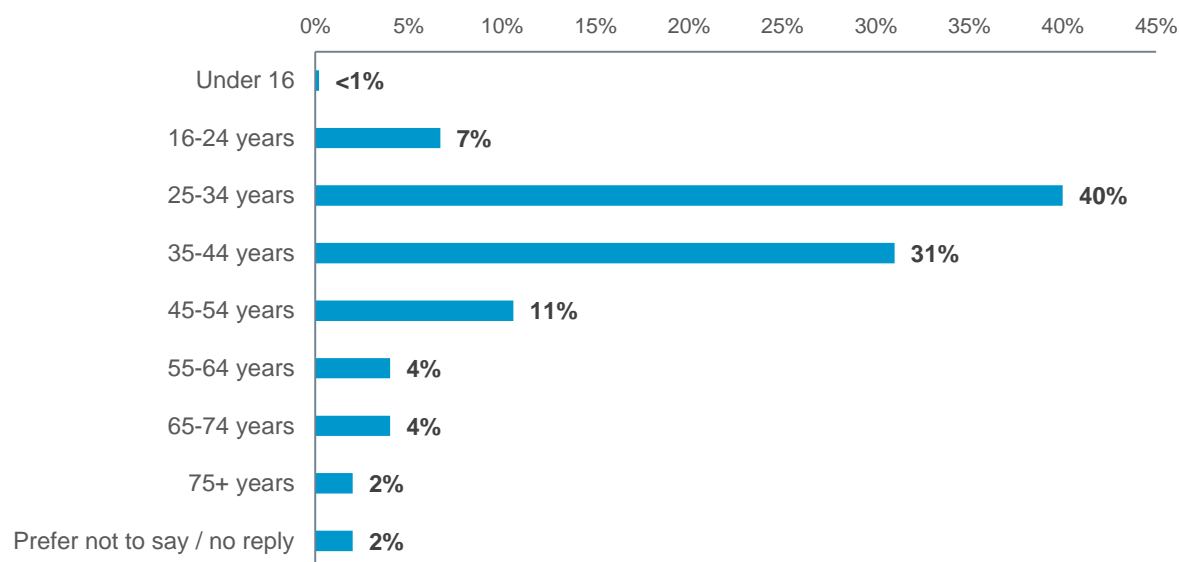
**Figure 2 – Gender**

**Base: 460**

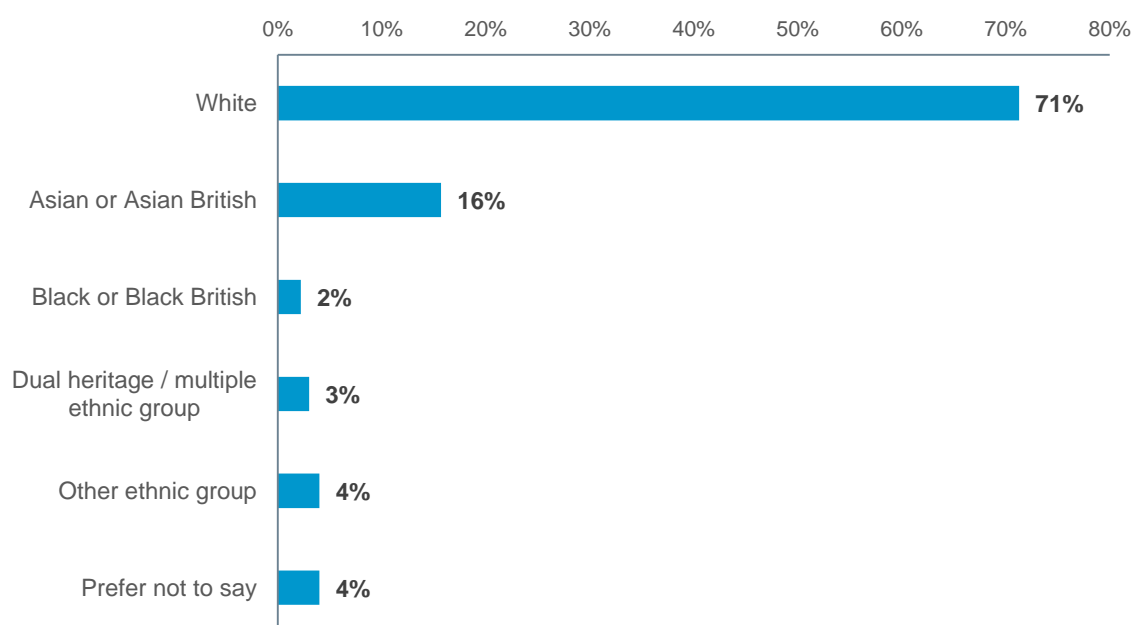


The figures below present the age breakdown and ethnic backgrounds of respondents to the survey. As shown in the charts below, the majority of respondents (78%) indicated that they were under 44 years old. Whilst the majority of survey respondents were from a White background (71%), a few responses were also received from people of other ethnic backgrounds, particularly those from an Asian or Asian British background (16%).

**Figure 3 – Age**  
**Base: 462**



**Figure 4 – Ethnic background**  
**Base: 460**

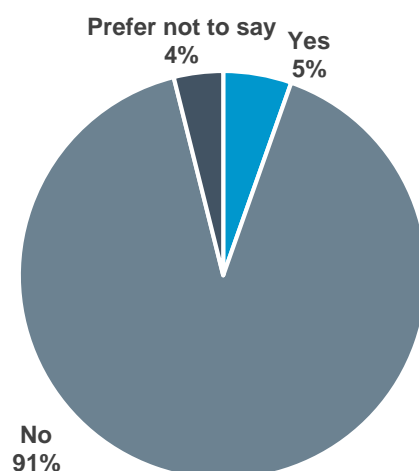




The majority of respondents (91%) did not consider themselves to be disabled.

**Figure 5 – Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

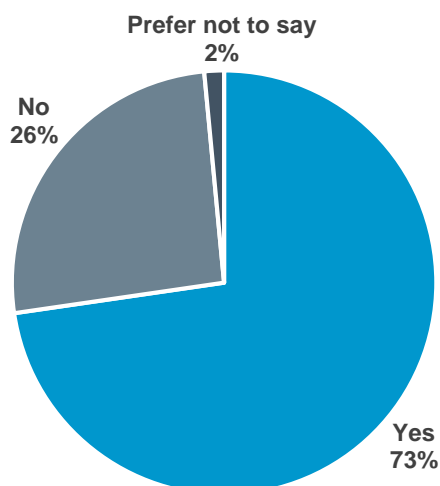
**Base: 461**



Seven in ten respondents said they had, looked after or cared for children aged five or under (73%), and a quarter said they did not (26%).

**Figure 6 – Do you have or look after / care for children aged five or under?**

**Base: 458**



# Consultation Findings

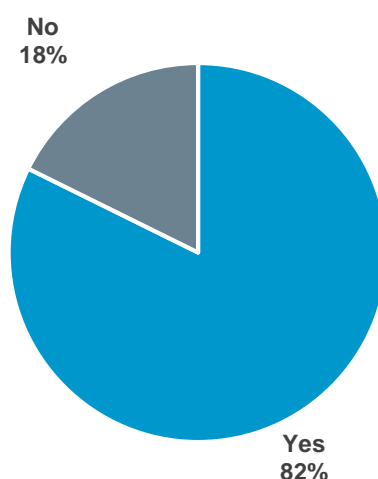
## Current Children's Centre usage

### Quantitative findings

Respondents to the survey were first asked if they and their family had visited a Derby City Council Children's Centre in the last 12 months. As can be seen in the chart below, the majority of people (82%) who took part in the survey indicated that they had visited a Children's Centre in Derby in the last 12 months. When interpreting the results in the report, it should be kept in mind that they are more representative of the views of users of the Children's Centre Service, rather than the general public as a whole.

**Figure 7 – Have you / members of your household visited a Derby City Council Children's Centre in the last 12 months?**

**Base: 470**



A much larger proportion of those aged under 24 and 25-44 said that they had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (94% and 91%) than those aged 45-54 and over 65 (55% and 13%). This is unsurprising, as respondents from the two younger age groups are more likely to have or look after children under the age of five compared to those from the older age groups. Females were also more likely than males to have visited a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (86% compared to 61%). The survey results also show that those from a non-White ethnic background were more likely to say that they had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (93%) compared to those from a White ethnic background (79%).

### Qualitative findings

All of the participants in the public focus groups were Children's Centre users and there was representation of users from different Centres. Some went to their local Children's Centre on a regular basis and others only went as and when they needed to use a service there, or to attend a group or session.

*I use them every day. (Female, User)*

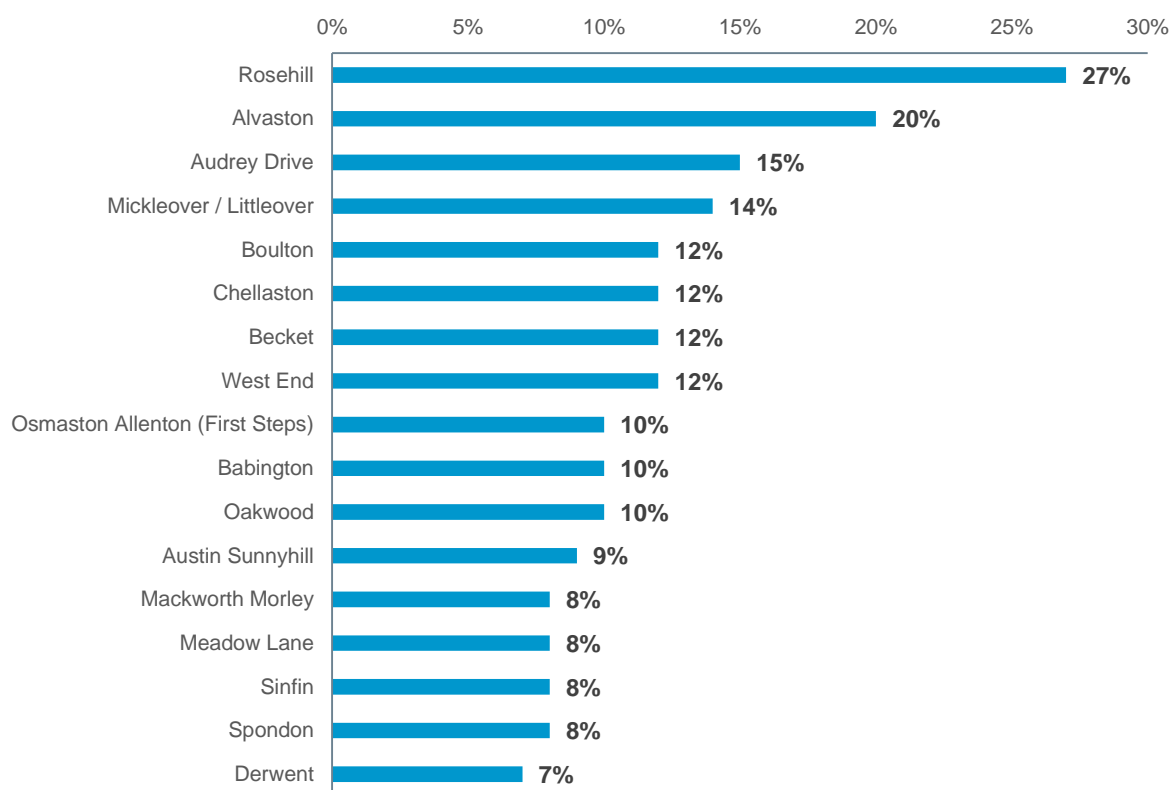
*I go to the breastfeeding group which is run by the Health Visitor. (Female, User)*

## Quantitative findings

Respondents in the survey were asked to indicate which Derby Children's Centre or Centres they had used in the last 12 months. As can be seen in the chart below, the most commonly used by respondents were Rosehill (27%), Alvaston (20%), Audrey Drive (15%) and Mickleover / Littleover (14%).

**Figure 8 – Which of the following Children's Centres have you and your family used in the last 12 months?**

**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (386)**

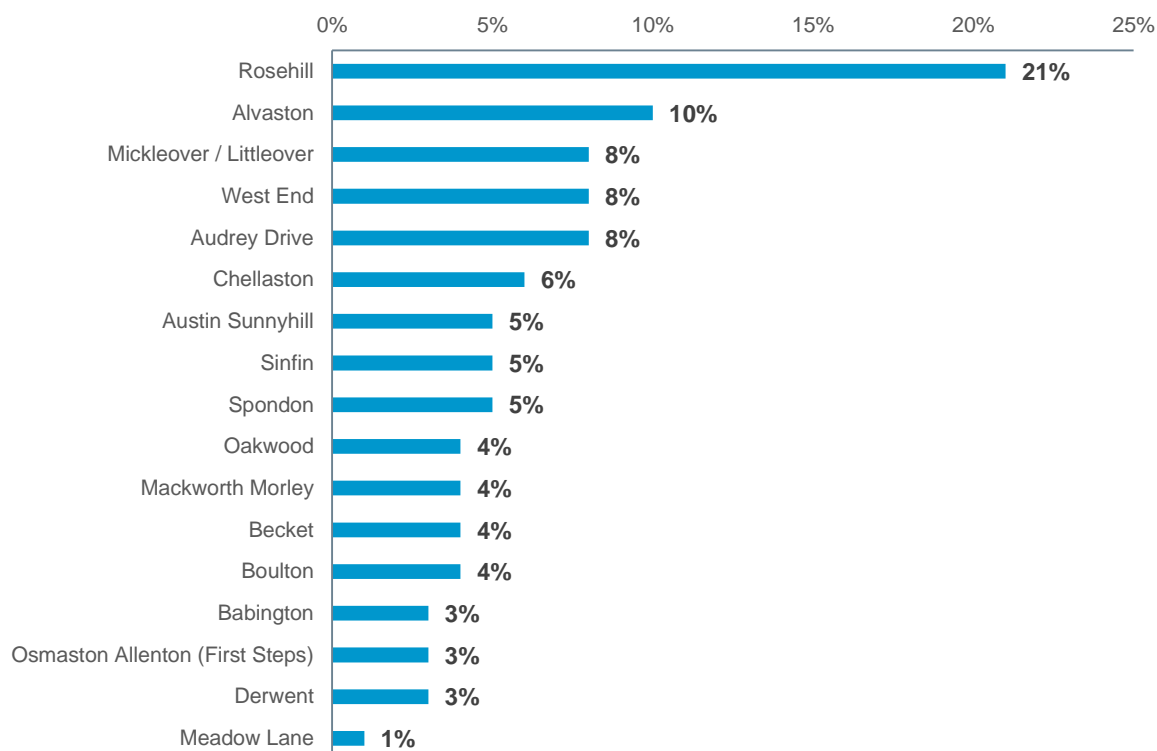


Just over half of respondents who had visited a Children's Centre in the last 12 months had visited more than one (51%), with just under half (49%) saying they had only been to one.

## Quantitative findings

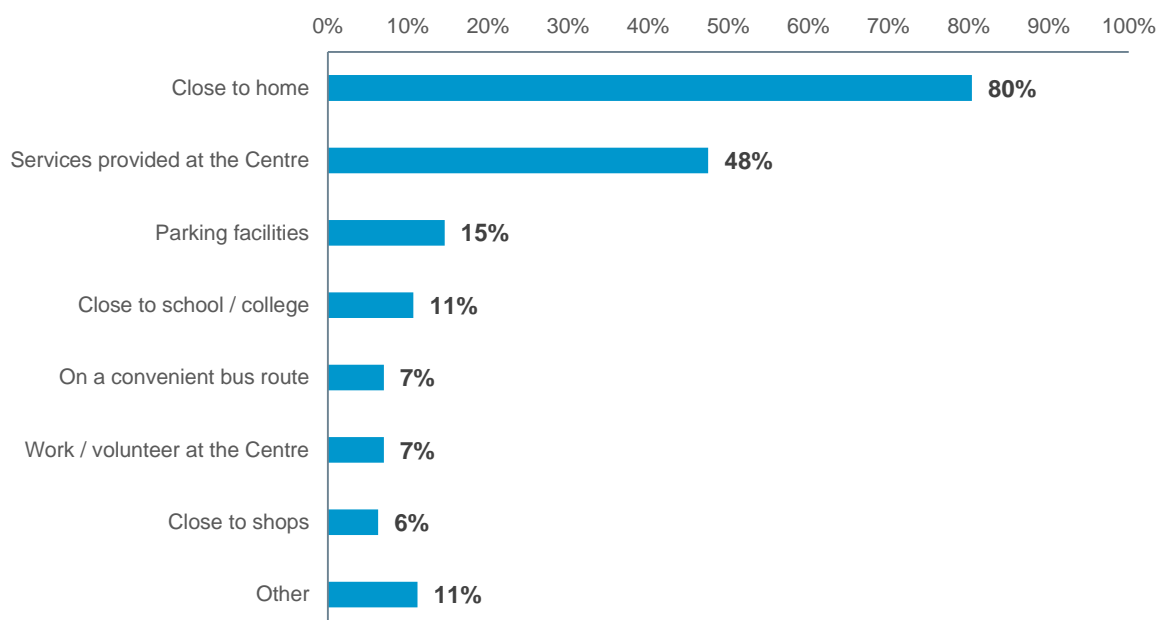
Respondents in the survey were asked which their preferred Children's Centre was in Derby. As the chart below shows, Rosehill saw 21% say it was their preferred Children's Centre and this was followed by 10% saying their preferred centre was Alvaston.

**Figure 9 – Which is your preferred Children's Centre?**  
**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (362)**



Respondents in the survey were asked why they preferred the Children's Centre they chose. As can be seen in the chart below, eight in ten (80%) said it was because their preferred Children's Centre was close to home, almost half preferred the Centre because of the services on offer there (48%), one in seven (15%) said it was because of the parking facilities, and one in nine (11%) said it was because their preferred Centre was close to school or college.

**Figure 10 – Why is this your preferred Children's Centre?**  
**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (383)**



Looking at respondents' preferred Centre and the reason why they prefer it, Oakwood was most likely to have been chosen for being close to home for respondents (100%) and this was also high for Sinfen (94%). Unsurprisingly only 54% said Becket and 66% said West End were their preferred Children's Centres for this reason as they are in fairly central locations in relation to the city centre. These were more likely to be preferred because of the services on offer there (77% and 55%), as are Babington (83%) and Audrey Drive (75%). Parking facilities at Austin Sunnyhill and Mickleover / Littleover were also drivers for people preferring these Centres (41% and 38% respectively). However, it should be noted that these results should be interpreted with caution given the small numbers of users of each Centre responding to the survey.

Females were more likely than males to choose their preferred Centre because of the services on offer (50% compared to 28%).

Those who had children under the age of five were more likely to choose their preferred Children's Centre because it was close to home (86%) than those who did not have children (54%). Those who did not have children under the age of five were more likely to say that they worked or volunteered at their preferred Centre (19%).

Some respondents chose to provide other reasons why they liked their preferred Centre (11%). The staff and the atmosphere were mentioned by three in ten (29%) of these respondents and other reasons provided included the activities, facilities, services and support on offer, the proximity to a park and attending for work related reasons.

## Qualitative findings

Amongst focus group participants and in-depth interviewees, there was a range of Children's Centres in Derby that people had recently visited, particularly amongst service users. Most visited the same Children's Centre on most occasions and this was generally the one closest to where they live so they could walk there. There were a few participants who had used more than one, although of these most used one the most frequently. Reasons for using more than one Centre were in most cases that participants travelled to different Centres to attend different groups and activities.

*I normally go to Becket but have used this one as well. (Female, User)*

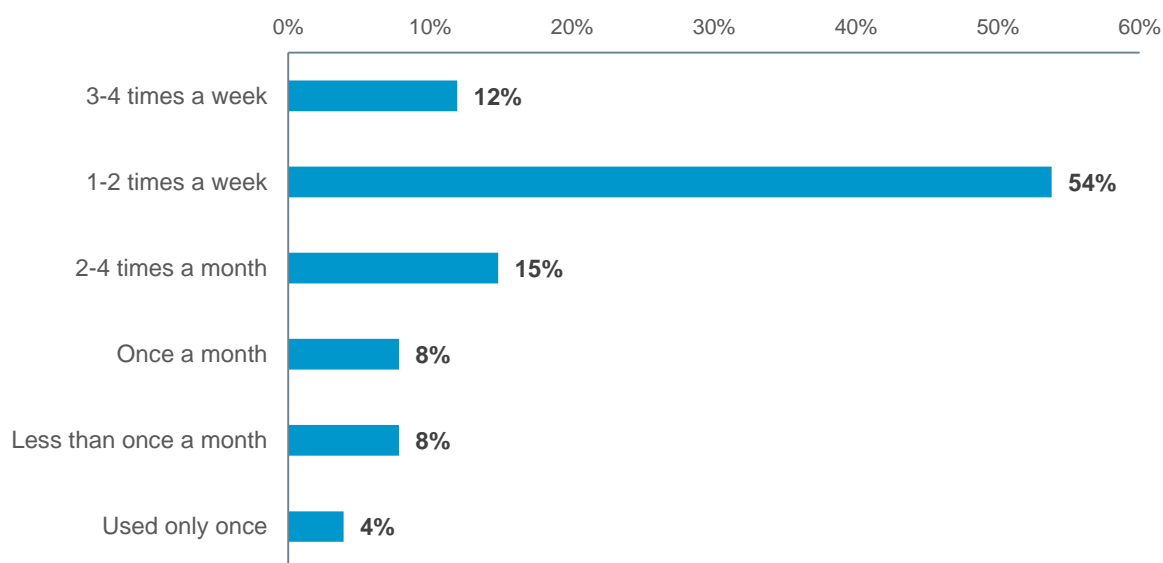
*We've used about three in the past six months. (Male, User)*

## Quantitative findings

Next, survey respondents were asked how often they and their family visit their preferred Children's Centre. As shown in the chart below, 12% said that they and their family visited their preferred Children's Centre 3-4 times a week, over half (54%) said between once and twice a week, and one in seven (15%) said two to four times a month. One fifth (20%) said they only visited it once a month, less than once or month or that they had used it only once.

**Figure 11 – Approximately how often do you and your family visit your preferred Children's Centre?**

**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (385)**



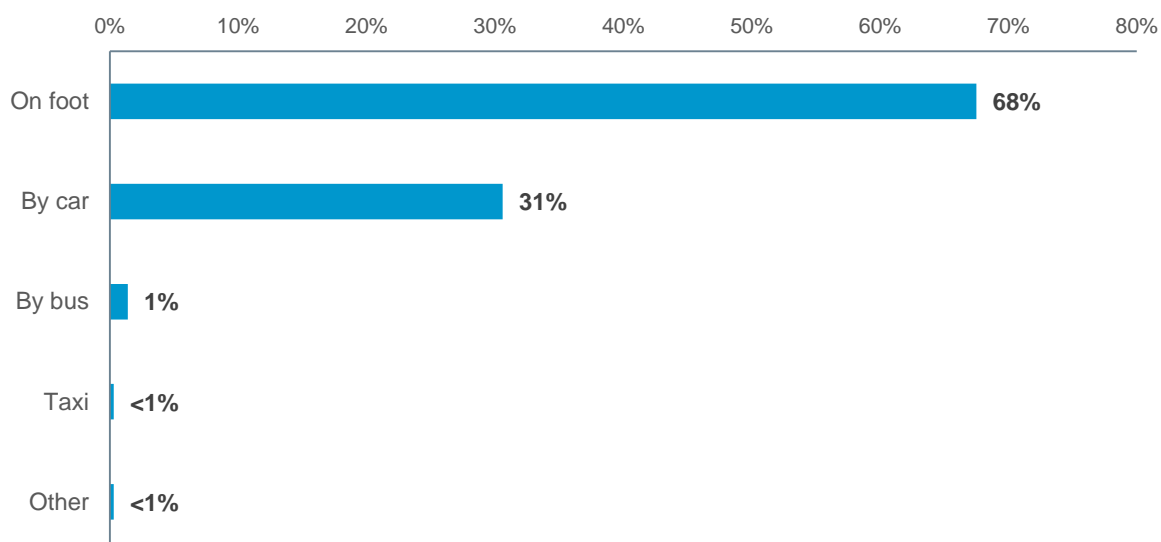
Looking at the frequency of visit according to preferred Centre, those who preferred Becket seemed to visit the most often, with all respondents saying they visited it at least once a week. This was followed by Sinfin, with 94% of those who preferred that Centre going at least once a week.

There was little difference when it came to gender, but unsurprisingly those who had children under five years old were more likely to visit their preferred Centre at least once a week (68%) compared to those who did not (53%).

When asked how they usually travelled to their preferred Children's Centre, two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents said it was on foot, with car being the second most popular mode of transport (31%). Only 1% said that they took the bus.

**Figure 12 – How do you and your family usually travel to your preferred Children's Centre?**

**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (360)**



Looking at the mode of transport in relation to preferred Centre, Rosehill and Boulton saw the largest proportion of respondents say that they usually travelled on foot (85% for both). By comparison, only 33% said that they travelled to Austin Sunnyhill on foot; for this Centre the most popular method of transport was by car (67%).

Under 24 year olds were more likely to travel to their preferred Centre on foot than the older age groups (90%) and people who had children under five were more likely to walk to their preferred centre (71%) than those who did not have children of this age (52%). For the latter group, travelling by car was far more likely (45%) than for those who had children (28%).

Those who travelled to their preferred Children's Centre by car were more likely to have visited more than one Centre in Derby (68%) than those who walked to their preferred Centre (32%).



## Perceptions of the Children's Centre Service

### Qualitative findings

Users in the qualitative research were asked to think about how they view the Children's Centre Service and who uses it. There were a few participants who suggested that their use of Centres has changed as their children have got older and that they are continually supported by the service over time. There was also a general consensus that Children's Centres are mainly used by parents with young children or someone with child-minding responsibilities such as grandparents, but occasionally other people may use the Centres such as parents to be and those attending courses.

*As children get older, the things you attend change and the Children's Centre evolves with you. It's brilliant.* (Female, User)

*Mostly parents and occasionally grandparents, or whoever the carer is for the children.* (Female, User)

*I did a course there when I was pregnant.* (Female, User)

It was suggested that the Centres are particularly valuable for first-time parents.

*First-time parents, I would say. They are more likely to use that service and actually need it. We were first-time parents, so it was really useful for us.* (Male, User)

Most users felt that it tends to be females rather than males who attend the Centres with their children. However, it was felt by most that this is likely to be because the majority of childcare is undertaken by females. Parents who work may also find it hard to attend groups and courses due to the timings of them and some felt that the opening hours of the Children's Centres could be adapted to make it more convenient for them to attend with their children.

*Generally it's women that use the Children's Centres from my experience...it's still predominantly a female role to do the childcare.* (Female, User)

*The group I was interested in at Mickleover, they would only run it twice a week, and as a working parent it was difficult to meet that schedule.* (Male, User)

User and stakeholder participants were asked about their experience of the Children's Centre service. There was a general consensus that usage of Children's Centres is high and they are often very busy, particularly when there are groups or classes being held.

*The groups I attend are always over-subscribed, so it seems daft to cut the service.* (Female, User)

*I know that the one I work in is full 9 till 5. There are activities going on all day long, different things. It's never empty. It is always full. There is a lot of usage out of it.* (Female, Stakeholder)

There was also a perception that new people are beginning to use the service all the time and that the number of users is increasing over time. However, participants felt that there are occasions when Centres are underused by the local population and this is generally due to the Centres in question being too small, under-staffed, not being open enough or people using other local services. This was particularly reflected upon by stakeholders.

*I go every week...and I've seen new people in Children's Centres daily. (Female, User)*

*We know that there is a need there because of the numbers of people that are coming through. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*I think the reason that Babington Children's Centre is under-used is because there isn't a need for it – there are other places around. (Female, Stakeholder)*

A handful of participants explored the idea of who a 'typical user' might be further to identify specific groups of people who may use a Children's Centre in Derby. A number of users suggested that perhaps people who could be seen as 'middle class' or 'affluent' used Children's Centres more than others, some of whom may be in more need of the services on offer. It was suggested that this could be because those who are 'middle-class' and 'affluent' are perhaps more aware of services, groups and classes on offer at Children's Centres.

*I suppose the people that access it most would be classed as 'middle class'...they seem to be the sort of families that are most aware of the facilities that are available and make the most of the fact that they are there. (Male, User)*

*They're not obviously the people that need them the most, but they are the people that we are aware of that access them the most. (Male, User)*

A few users voiced the opinion that Centres are perhaps not used by parents who have disabilities or parents who have children with disabilities. However, these opinions seemed based on people's perceptions from conversations they had had or people they had seen using the services, rather than any experience of access difficulties to services.

*I know a mother who can't speak...she is reluctant. (Female, User)*

*I think that people who have disabled kids don't use them...I've never come across any child with a disability or any disfigurement to come into a group. (Female, User)*

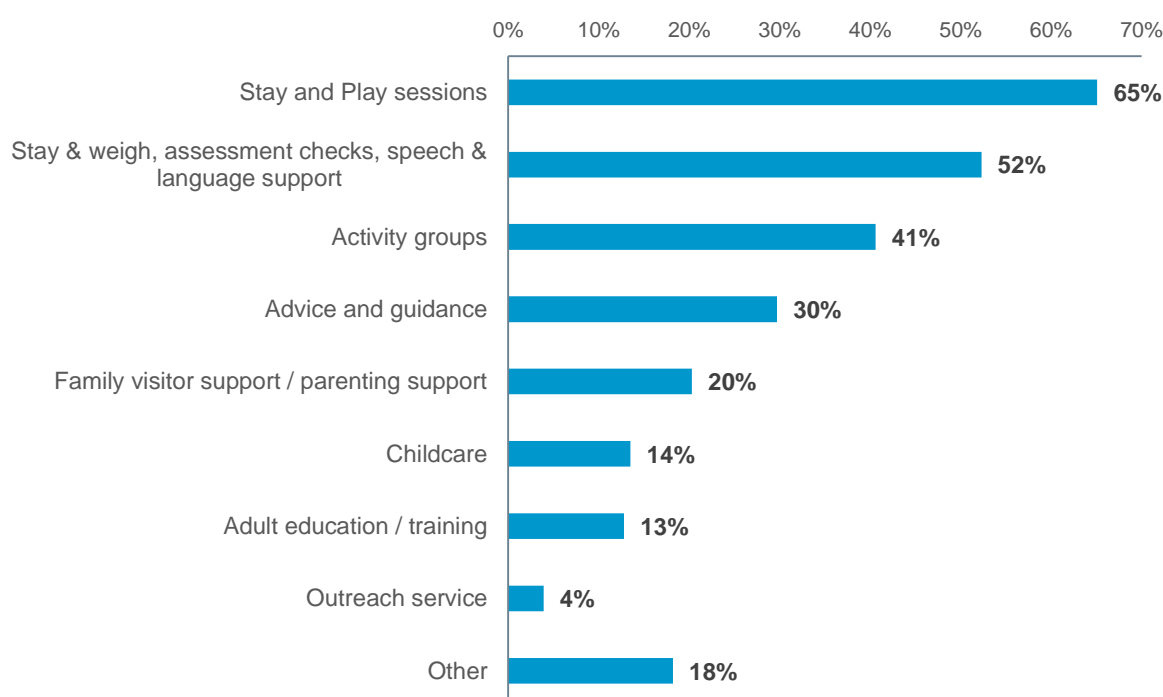
## Usage of Children's Centre services

### Quantitative findings

Survey respondents were asked about the services that they and their family had used at Children's Centres in Derby in the last 12 months. As shown in the chart below, almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) said that they had attended Stay and Play sessions, over half (52%) had used Stay and weigh, assessment checks, or speech and language support, and four in ten (41%) said that they had attended activity groups. A further three in ten (30%) said that they had received advice and guidance from the Children's Centre service and a fifth (20%) had been there for family visitor support or parenting support.

**Figure 13 – Please tell us about the services you and your family have used in the Children's Centre during the last 12 months.**

**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (384)**



In relation to preferred Centre, Boulton saw the largest proportions of respondents saying they had been to Stay and Play sessions (92%), and activity groups (77%). However it should be kept in mind that the base size of users of this Centre is low (13).

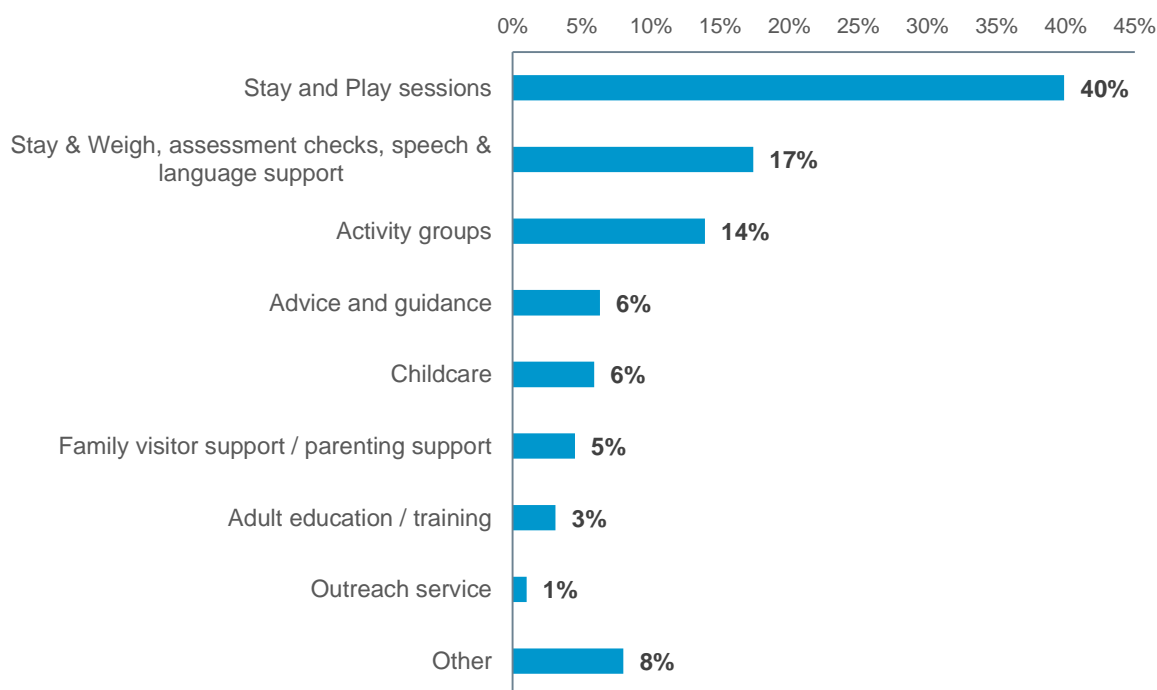
Looking at the results by ethnicity, it is interesting to note that respondents from a non-White ethnic background were more likely to use centres for childcare (21%) compared to those from a White background (11%).

Some respondents also cited other services that they had used or other activities that they had attended. The majority related to respondents attending support groups or other sessions and activities not named in the list. There were a few respondents who said that they worked or volunteered at a Centre, or had attended them for work-related reasons.

When asked what the most important service or activity offered by Children's Centres was, the majority (40%) of respondents said the Stay and Play sessions offered, as shown in the chart below. This was followed by respondents saying that the Stay and Weigh, assessment checks, and speech and language support were the most important (17%) and 14% said the activity groups on offer. This is in line with the previous question, which showed that these were the most used services on offer.

**Figure 14 – Of all the services and activities offered by the Children's Centre, which is the most important to you / members of your household?**

**Base: Those who had used a Children's Centre in the last 12 months (288)**



In line with the previous question, respondents from a non-White ethnic background were more likely to say that childcare was the most important service on offer (11%) than those from a White background (4%) and this was also the case in relation to adult education and training (7% compared to 2%).

There were also a few differences noted between the responses from males and females. Females were much more likely to say that Stay and Play sessions were the most important (42% compared to 21%) and males were more likely to say advice and guidance was the most important (21% compared to 4%).

## Importance and role of Children's Centres

### Qualitative findings

Participants of the focus groups and interviews explored the importance of Children's Centres and their role within society and the local community. All participants were in agreement that the Centres provide a great deal of valuable services to the local population. This was a particular focus amongst stakeholders. There was a general consensus that the Centres provide a range of different services and that they are an important part of the community as a result. It is particularly important that people can access the services on offer and that making services available at the same location allows people to easily access these services.

*Children's Centres are absolutely vital. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*It's a kind of a multi-approach, if you like, it is about education, it is about support and advice, it is about health...It's about having that kind of independent, neutral approach that I think Children's Centres are really good at. (Female, Stakeholder)*

Participants reflected on the fact that there are few other locations in the local area where similar services are provided and where parents with young children can access the same level of support on offer at the centres.

*There's nothing else available to go with your child to. (Female, User)*

*You don't have a lot of choice in this area. You have Sinfin Park Nature Club, you have the Children's Centre, and this is the end of the story, nothing else. (Female, User)*

Participants, particularly users, iterated the importance that Children's Centres play in facilitating children's social development and that children gain experiences that can go on to shape their future life.

*I think it's really important for the child's social development. It will stop problems happening later on in life. (Female, User)*

*I think it's especially important...to get their children to know different people and to be confident around different children. (Female, User)*

Stakeholders, on the other hand, tended to focus more on the support provided by the Children's Centres to parents, particularly those who are vulnerable, and the positive effect they have for parents and society as a whole.

*There's a huge need for those parents to have some support, gain some support about how to parent or how they can support the child's development and learning. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*It's...keeping parents motivated, making sure the parenting skills are there, making sure they eventually move off benefits, dealing with mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues... (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Closing Children's Centres means that these families will not go, will not start their journey, and will continue to cost the local authority shedloads in terms of police callouts, truant officers, health conditions. (Female, Stakeholder)*

They also focused on the need for vital services to be provided to vulnerable families in a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental environment and that Children's Centres provide this function, with an emphasis on the empathy and skills of the staff. It was felt that if people could not access these services in an environment like this, it would put people off using them. This would then mean that they would not be adequately supported as parents.

*They need to feel safe because trust is a huge thing for them. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Because it is a safe environment, it's a friendly environment. Certainly all the staff that I work with at the Children's Centres have the right approach to kind of engage the families without it being threatening. (Female, Stakeholder)*

Users, on the other hand, focused more on the value they themselves attach to the Children's Centre service, how it helps dispel feelings of isolation by allowing parents to form bonds and friendships with other parents, and how important they are for the mental health and well-being of parents.

*I am isolated because there are no other [people] that I know, and a lot of the other mums are busy at nurseries and work, so this is my only outlet. (Female, User)*

*When I first had [my daughter]...I think I was quite depressed and lonely...My Health Visitor really encouraged me to try and go to some groups, and it just made so much difference to my whole wellbeing. (Female, User)*

*You need time out of the house when you've got a younger one, because sometimes you just need a change of scenery and other people to make you feel like you're not going completely mad or doing it all wrong. (Male, User)*

The influence the Children's Centres have on the mental health and well-being of parents was also discussed amongst stakeholders. Like users, they felt that the Centres provided support to parents in allowing them to socialise with other parents, thus alleviating feelings of isolation.

*We spend a lot of time encouraging families to attend Children's Centres, to get involved in any community group in their locality to reduce isolation. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*It does not just look at the health of the baby, it looks after the mental health of the woman. (Female, Stakeholder)*

## Planning for the future – proposals for reconfiguration

Survey respondents and participants of the focus groups and in-depth interviews were presented with proposals that would allow the Council to reduce the cost of the Children's Centre service whilst still continuing to meet the needs of families with children under five, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The proposals were presented as follows:

1. To reconfigure Children's Centre services so they operate from 10 rather than 17 designated buildings
2. To consider how the remaining 10 Children's Centre buildings could be used more effectively for services for families with children under five with a focus on those Centres on school sites
3. To consider the handover of ownership, running costs and management responsibility of seven buildings to schools where they are located

The seven Children's Centres affected by the proposals were identified because of their locations in less deprived areas of the city and because they are on or near school sites. The affected Children's Centres are:

- Mickleover / Littleover
- Chellaston
- Oakwood
- Meadow Lane
- Babington
- Spondon
- West End

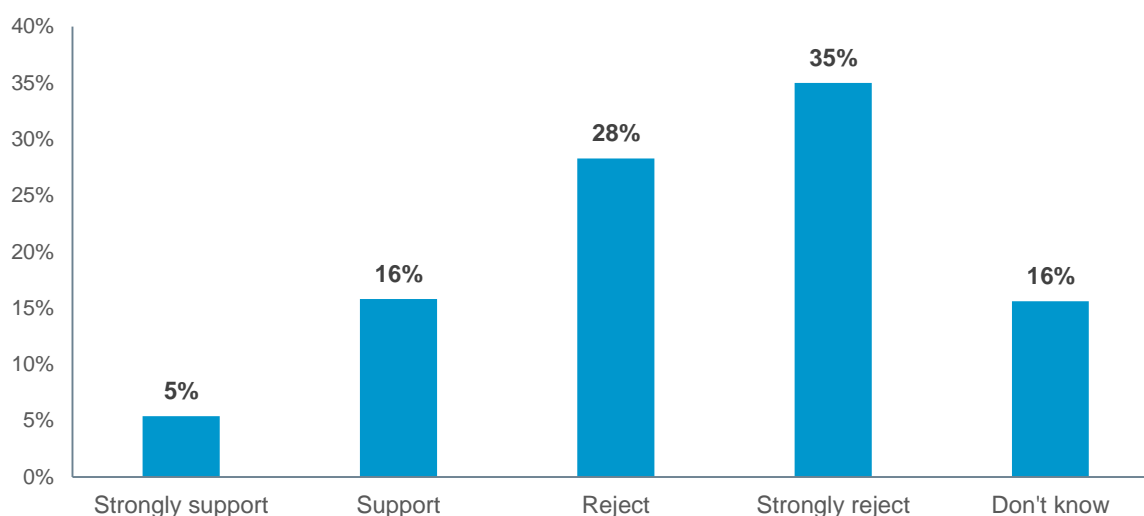


## Quantitative findings

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they supported or rejected these proposals. As shown in the chart below, six in ten (63%) said that they either rejected the proposals or strongly rejected them. Only around a fifth (21%) said that they had any support for the proposals. It should also be noted that a seemingly large proportion of respondents gave a 'Don't know' response (16%), which may indicate that some respondents had not fully understood the full implications of the proposals and the impact they would have on service provision at the Centres listed.

**Figure 15 – To what extent do you support or reject the proposals outlined above as a way of reducing our costs?**

**Base: 463**



Users of the Babington, Mickleover / Littleover and West End Centres were most likely to say that they rejected the proposals (92%, 89% and 86% respectively), but this is to be expected given that these centres were listed as being affected by the proposed reconfiguration.

Females were more likely than males to reject the proposals (66% compared to 46%), as were the younger age groups (67% of under 24 year olds and 66% of 25-44 year olds) in comparison to the older age groups (55% 45-64 and 35% 65+). Again this is unsurprising as the younger age groups were more likely to be users of the service and have or look after young children.

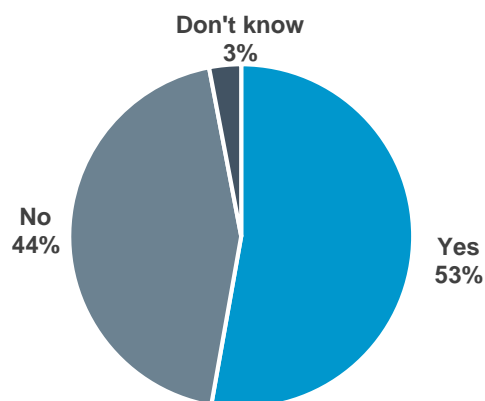
Those from a non-White ethnic background were also more likely to reject the proposals compared to those from a White ethnic background (66% compared to 61%).

Analysing the level of support for the proposals by nature of respondents' relationship with the service, those who use the service were more likely than the other groups to reject the proposals (67%). On the other hand, those who did not use the service and just paid for it through their Council Tax were more likely to support the proposals (45%), as were those who had a professional interest in the Children's Centres (28%). By comparison, only 17% of those who said they were users of the service said they supported the reconfiguration.

Respondents to the survey were then asked if they used any of the seven centres that would be affected by the reconfiguration. As shown below, over half of respondents said that they did use one of the centres (53%) and four in ten (44%) did not.

**Figure 16 – Do you visit / use the services at any of the seven Centres that we propose to make changes to above?**

**Base: 467**



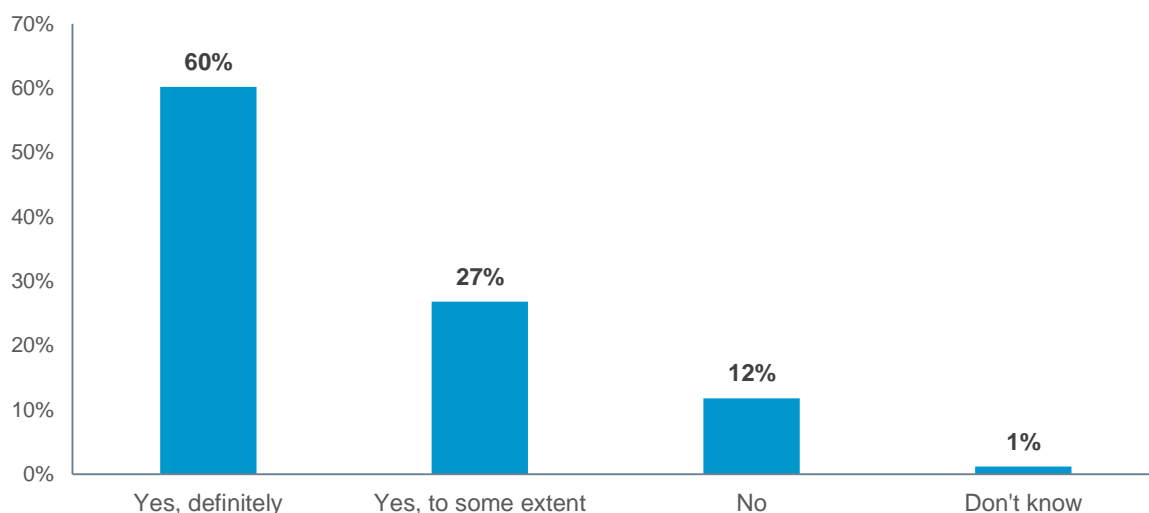
Sub-group analysis shows that respondents from a non-White background were more likely to say that they used one of the Centres affected (60%), compared to those from a White background (50%).

As could perhaps be expected, a large proportion of those who said that they used one of the affected Centres rejected the proposals for the reconfiguration (65%). By comparison, 61% of those who did not use one of the Centres supported the proposals.

Respondents who used one of the affected Centres were then asked whether services moving out of the affected Centres would make it more difficult for them to access Children's Centre services. As can be seen in the chart below, almost nine in ten respondents said that it would make it more difficult for them to some extent (87%). Six in ten felt it would definitely make it more difficult for them to access services and 27% felt that it would to some extent make it more difficult.

**Figure 17 – If services do move out of the seven Centres listed above, would it make it more difficult for you to access Children's Centre services?**

**Base: Those who used one of the affected centres (246)**



Looking at the results by ethnic group, a larger proportion of those from a non-White background felt it would definitely make it more difficult for them to access other services (71%) compared to those from a White background (53%). Unsurprisingly, those who said it would definitely make it harder for them to access services were also more likely to reject the proposals outlined in the consultation; 67% of these respondents rejected the proposals, compared to 31% saying they would support them.

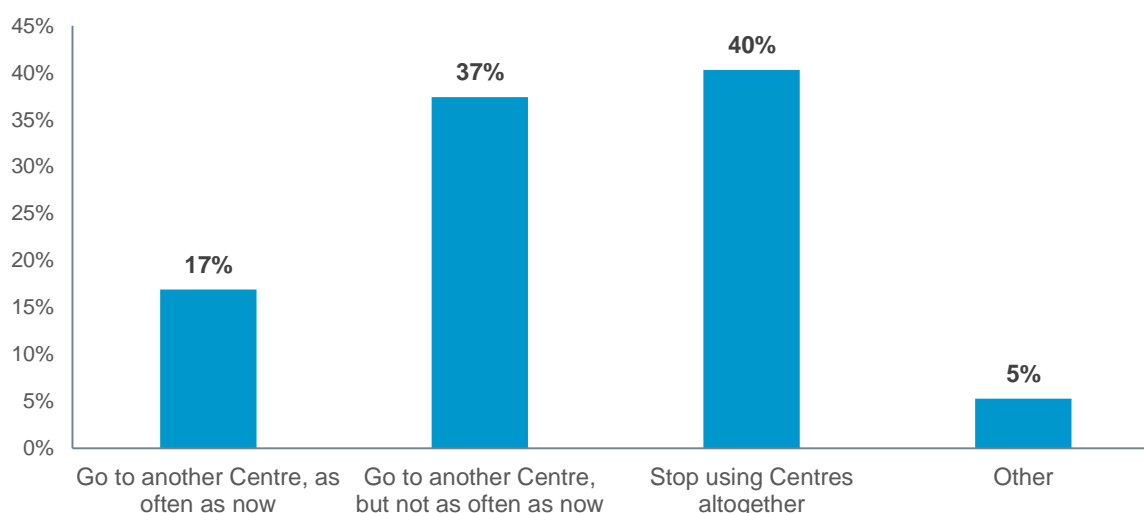
Those who usually walk to their preferred Children's Centre were more likely than those who drive to say that the reconfiguration would definitely make it more difficult for them to access Children's Centre services (69% compared to 43%).

Two-thirds of those who said that the proposed reconfiguration would definitely make it more difficult for them to access services, had rejected the proposed reconfiguration. This indicates that three in ten (31%) of those for whom the reconfiguration would make access to services really difficult still supported the proposals.

Users of the affected Centres were also asked what they would do if the proposed reconfiguration of the services went ahead. As can be seen below, four in ten (40%) respondents said they would stop going to Children's Centres altogether and a further 37% would go to another one but not as often.

**Figure 18 – With this proposed reconfiguration of services, what would you and your family do?**

**Base: Those who used one of the affected centres (243)**

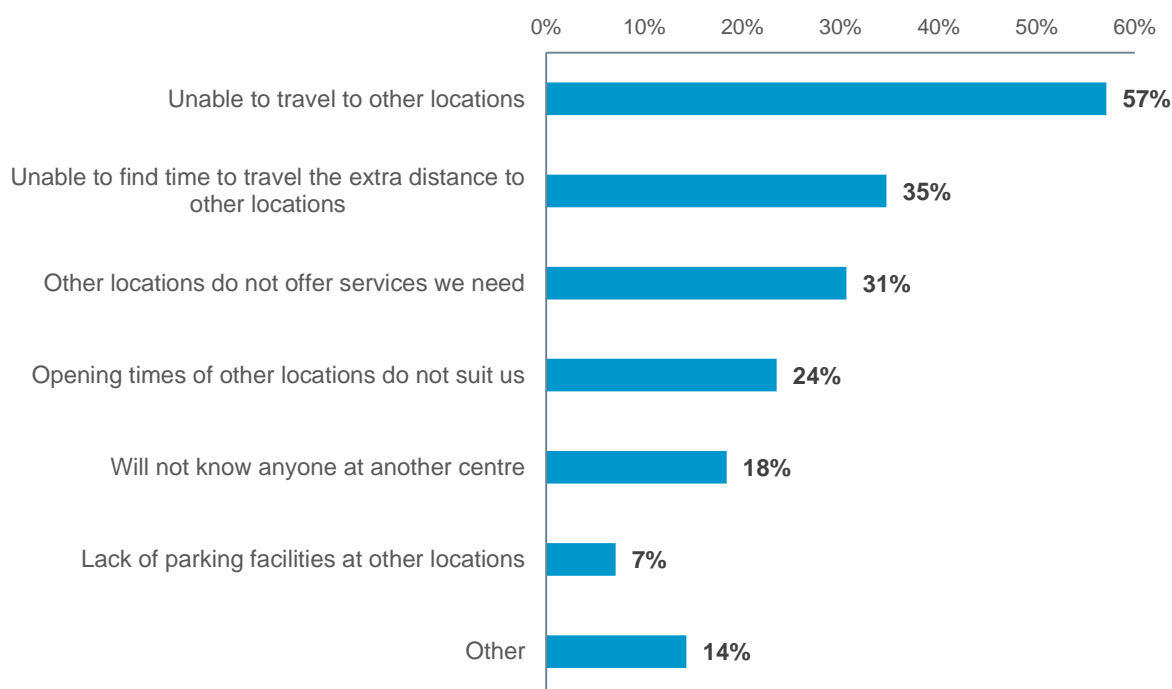


As with previous questions, those from a non-White ethnic background were more likely to say that they would stop using centres altogether (45%) compared to those from a White ethnic background (36%), as were those who usually walked to their preferred Children's Centre (48%) compared to those who drive (28%).

As can be seen above, 5% of respondents selected 'other' and responses included the lack of availability of places at sessions and groups at other Centres, the cost of travelling to other Centres and the loss of being able to socialise with other families in the local area.

Those who said they would stop using Centres altogether were asked why this was. As shown in the chart below, the most commonly suggested reason was the inability to travel to other locations within the city, with 57% of respondents providing this answer, closely followed by the inability to find the time to travel the extra distance to other locations (35%). Three in ten (31%) felt that other Centres did not offer the services they needed and a quarter (24%) held the perception that the opening hours of other Centres would not suit them. Almost a fifth (18%) also had the fear that they would not know anyone at another Centre and that this would put them off going.

**Figure 19 – If you said you would stop using centres altogether, why is this?**  
**Base: Those who would stop using centres altogether (98)**



Over half of those from a non-White ethnic background who said they would stop using Children's Centres (52%) held the view that other Centres did not offer the services they needed and this was much higher than those from a White ethnic background (19%).

'Other' reasons provided by respondents for stopping using the Service included the cost of travelling to other Centres, the distance to other Centres and the perceived lack of availability of places at groups and sessions at other Centres.

Those who said they would use another Centre were asked what the Council could do to make it easier for them to attend elsewhere. The most common suggestion was to provide more sessions and places at groups at other Centres, suggested by more than three in ten (32%). Almost a fifth (18%) said there was nothing the Council could do to make it easier for them and one in six (16%) suggested that not closing any of the Centres would make it easier for them. Increasing opening hours (10%), improving parking facilities (13%), and improving public transport or reducing the cost of it (14%) were also all mentioned.

## Qualitative findings

### Mixed reactions to the proposed reconfiguration

Focus group and in-depth interview participants were shown the list of affected Centres and invited to explore the impact of the proposals upon themselves and other families in Derby.

Initial reactions to the proposals were varied, with some stakeholders initially wondering why these Centres had been chosen for reconfiguration and if they could still continue to work with schools to provide their services at the affected buildings.

*I presume these Children's Centres are under-used. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*From a health service perspective, will we be able to still work with schools and provide our service? (Female, Stakeholder)*

### Acceptance that the affected Centres would close and this would have a negative impact on families

However, most people felt that the proposals meant that the listed Children's Centres would close and there was a general consensus that the proposed reconfiguration would have a negative impact for families and a detrimental effect upon children, particularly for those who are the most vulnerable.

*It might seem like a good solution on paper, but you are talking about vulnerable families. (Male, User)*

*I think if they go it would be a massive resource loss to a lot of families and it would be very detrimental to a lot of children. (Female, Stakeholder)*

### Perception that the Council had chosen the wrong Centres to be reconfigured

On reflection, some participants felt that although cost savings needed to be made, they felt that the Council had made the wrong decisions when choosing the Centres to be reconfigured. Participants felt that in some areas of the city, such as Mickleover, there were still pockets of deprivation and people who were vulnerable that would be left without access to Children's Centre services. Some also felt that some of the affected Centres were close to each other geographically and this would leave large areas of the city without access to services.

*I accept that the Children's Centre service needs to be cut, but I think this group of seven are wrong. (Female, User)*

*Some of these Children's Centres are so close together. The Council needs to pinpoint the Centres on a map and make sure they are spread out. (Female, User)*

*Just because Mickleover is perceived to be an affluent area, that doesn't reflect the community that is actually here. There is a huge range of very differing incomes. (Male, User)*

### Past cuts to the Service have already had a detrimental effect

Many user and stakeholder participants voiced their frustrations about the proposals, with many commenting on how the Council is constantly reducing the number and quality of services it provides and that past cuts to the service, particularly those implemented during the reconfiguration in 2011, had already had detrimental effects for families.

*I just find it frustrating that they're shutting so many things...I don't know what they are spending money on, they're taking away things left, right and centre. (Female, User)*

*The Children's Centre I used to work in was amazing – there was a real community feel and it was thriving. Now a lot of things are no longer in use and it's detrimental to the community. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Everything was reconfigured in 2011, which was when we went to a locality model and there was an awful amount of loss from Children's Centres. (Female, User)*

Stakeholder participants went on to discuss how previous cuts to the Children's Centre service had led to a loss of previously successful partnership working which has had a detrimental effect for the organisations they work for and thus a detrimental effect for the families in Derby that they support. There was a feeling that many Children's Centres used to be at the heart of the community, offering many different services locally and seeing many users come through the doors, but that this was no longer the case

*The engagement has been lost...because we would see each other as workers, we'd know what each other was doing, see each other at groups and events, but you don't get that now. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Over the years we've seen tremendous cuts within the Children's Centres and that has obviously affected the way we work with them and families. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*We ran so many public events here, it was a real hub. (Female, Stakeholder)*

### **The proposed reconfiguration will have a negative impact for families, who would struggle to use other Centres**

Users, on the other hand, explored the negative impact that the reconfiguration may have on families, particularly new families and those who have no other similar services in their area or places to visit with their children in the local area.

*I feel bad for people who are just starting their parenthood journey now in an area where their Children's Centre is being cut. (Female, User)*

*There's nothing in our village near Chellaston for kids my son's age. (Female, User)*

There was also a general consensus amongst users that people would struggle to get to other Children's Centres if they could no longer access services at their local Centre, with a particular focus on those who would have to rely on public transport and the difficulties they would face in terms of practicality, such as taking pushchairs on buses, and the financial implications this would have for them.

*A lot of the Children's Centres that are alternatives you'd need at least two buses to get to...You're starting to talk about a reasonable amount of money to go to these other places. (Male, User)*

*People with pushchairs and prams and things would rather walk than struggle on and off buses...There are cost implications too. (Female, Stakeholder)*



**Closing some of the Centres may save the Council some money in the short-term, but it could have a longer-term negative impact**

Many felt that closing Children's Centres would be short-sighted, suggesting that although it may save the Council money in the short-term, it would lead to long-term problems for children, families and society in general, which would cost the Council and local services more in terms of additional crime, social problems and benefits.

*Shutting Children's Centres is short-sighted. Look at the effects of what this could do long-term. (Female, User)*

*I think it's very short-sighted to save a few bob now and diminish the service to the extent that people out there end up in a bigger mess and end up costing the local authority more. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*It's about the long-term, not making quick savings that are actually going to cost the local authority dearly. (Female, Stakeholder)*

**Schools may not have the capacity to take over responsibility for the buildings and there is confusion as to whether schools would continue to provide the same services as the Council currently does or not**

Participants in the qualitative research were then asked to consider the implications the proposals could have for the schools who would take over the management and ownership of the buildings. There was a widespread concern amongst participants that schools would not want to or have the capacity to take over responsibility for the buildings, and participants were unclear whether schools would continue to provide Children's Centre services or whether they would use the acquired buildings to house their own facilities. This highlighted a need for the Council to clearly communicate the proposed arrangement between the Council and schools and whether schools would continue to provide the same services from the buildings to avoid confusion or ambiguity.

*If the school hasn't got any extra resources or money or budget to plough into it, then it's just going to sit empty. (Female, User)*

*What happens if the school doesn't want the Children's Centre? Are they forced into it? (Female, Stakeholder)*

*It's got to be really clear what you're handing over. Are you handing over a building, or are you handing over a Children's Centre to continue to provide that level of service? It hasn't been made clear. (Female, Stakeholder)*

If schools were to provide Children's Centre services and this was a condition of them taking over the management and ownership of the buildings, it was suggested that a service level agreement should be put in place between the Council and the schools to ensure that good quality services were still provided to the general public. However, participants were worried that schools may use the buildings for their own purposes and that this would lead to the loss of service provision within the local areas where the buildings are based. This was a particular concern amongst stakeholders.

*There should be an agreement between the school and the Children's Centre so that the school knows exactly what they are responsible for, and the level of service that needs to be upheld. (Female, Stakeholders group 2)*



*My worry is that without specific direction towards the priorities of a particular area, there is no guarantee that the school will step in effectively and use that resource positively. (Male, Stakeholder)*

*It could be that some schools will take them over, and if they belong to the school, then they'll just do with it what they want, won't they? (Female, Stakeholder)*

**It is generally accepted that the same services would not continue to be provided from those Centres that are listed for reconfiguration**

It was generally accepted that the Children's Centres listed would no longer provide the same services as they currently do and this would lead to families missing out, particularly those who need the services the most. Some stakeholders went on to suggest that people would not travel the extra distance to go to another Centre, and that this would have a negative impact for some organisations who rely on the Children's Centres to provide their service. One participant also suggested that the Children's Centre Service would only end up being used by those who were more affluent and could afford to drive there.

*They need to be able to walk [there], and if you've got someone with a six week old baby and a two year old, and it's raining, then they're not going to go out. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*The Health Visiting Service can't do as many visits as they once did, so they rely on them [families] going to the clinic. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Attending a Children's Centre would then become a luxury in terms of how you're spending. (Female, Stakeholder)*

**In order to make it easier for people to attend other Centres, public transport and timings of groups and opening hours of other Centres should be reviewed**

Participants were asked to consider how the Council could make it easier for families to travel to other Children's Centres and access the services. The most popular suggestion was facilitating travel to the other Centres through the use of public transport and the introduction of a bus pass or voucher system. However, some Children's Centre user participants felt that the current public transport system in Derby was in need of improvement in order to facilitate families travelling to other parts of the city to access services.

*Maybe they could give bus passes to new mums. (Female, User)*

*The immediate thing that comes to mind is running some sort of bus service or some kind of voucher system for using the buses. (Male, User)*

*The Council need to sort out a bus route that goes around Derby instead of into the middle and back out again. (Female, User)*

Some participants mentioned the timings of groups and activities at other Centres and how these could be improved, along with the opening hours of the Centres, to make it easier for families to attend. It was felt that some groups and activities started too early in the morning and that it was difficult to leave the house early with your child when you are a new parent and some went on to say that most Children's Centres are closed from lunch times onwards and that opening them in the afternoons would benefit parents and their children.

*I have personally got problems with the timings. I don't think that any baby groups should start at nine in the morning. (Female, User)*

*There are very few that run in the afternoons. (Female, User)*

### **A minority agreed with the proposals and felt there were potential benefits**

A minority of participants did agree with the proposals, focusing on the financial benefits it would bring to the Council. It was suggested that it could bring benefits to some of the schools, particularly somewhere like Chellaston which could use the additional space for classrooms given that the school is taking on more and more pupils from the local area.

*I think that it can work. From a financial perspective it can bring benefits and it wouldn't have any impact on the level of service, of the quality of service. I think that it is a good idea. (Female, User)*

*I think as a proposal, it's not a bad one. I think clearly the Council have got to save this money, and obviously, one of the biggest expenses is the actual buildings. I think in closing those that are next to or attached to a school, is probably a good option because then the schools can take responsibility for the building, which obviously cuts down a big cost. (Female Stakeholder)*

*I think there probably would be benefits to the school, as long as they could afford it. Somewhere like Chellaston probably could, because they are a fairly affluent area, and the school numbers are always rising, so they could use the building, they could use the space. (Female, Stakeholder)*

## Quantitative findings

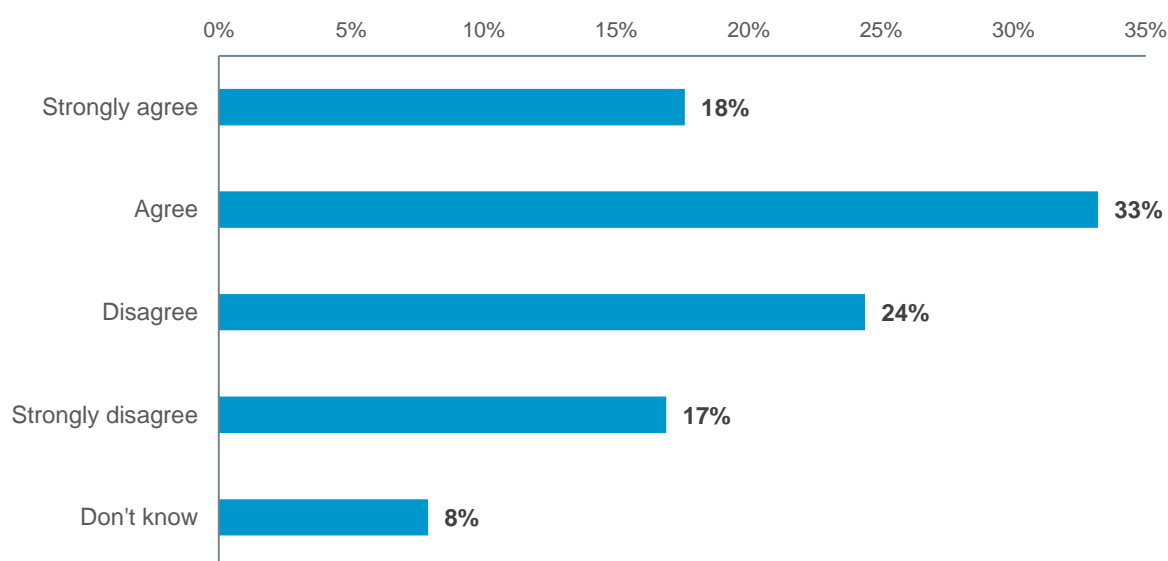
Survey respondents were shown a short statement regarding the Children's Centre service:

*'Children's Centres should be targeted at those most in need.'*

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with this statement. As the chart below shows, half (51%) agreed, with almost a fifth saying they strongly agreed (18%) and a third (33%) saying they just agreed. However, four in ten (41%) respondents disagreed with the statement to least some extent.

**Figure 20 – To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

**Base: 455**



Although the numbers of users for each Children's Centre were small, a few differences can be noted. Users of Becket Children's Centre were more likely to agree with the statement (85%) than users of other Centres and users of Boulton Children's Centre were most likely to disagree (77%).

Respondents from the older age groups (45-64 and 65+) were more likely to agree with the statement (66% of 45-64 year olds agreed), as were those who did not have children under five (60% agreed). This could perhaps be expected, as these groups are less likely to be Children's Centre Service users.

There was very little difference in agreement levels between males and females, and between different ethnic backgrounds. However, when analysing the results by respondent type, it is clear that professionals (i.e. Centre staff, school staff, school governors and representatives of partner organisations) were more likely to agree with the statement (66%) compared to users (50%).

Comparing this question to support for the reconfiguration proposals, it is evident that those who disagreed with the statement were more likely to say that they rejected the proposals (48%) compared to those who supported the proposals (32%).

## Qualitative findings

As seen in the survey, participants in the qualitative research were split in terms of agreeing whether there should be priority groups (i.e. those most in need) and whether the Children's Centres services offered should be available for and aimed at all families. Some recognised that there are perhaps some people in Derby who need the services on offer more than others in terms of parental support, but there was a strong feeling that Children's Centres also provide services that are important for other families. Some participants expressed their frustration that services were seemingly being cut in areas that the Council deems to be affluent and in fact people in those areas also needed those services.

*For everybody! If a grandmother, or a father, whoever wants to come. Why should you prioritise?* (Female, User)

*It looks like the Children's Centres are being cut in better off areas. Middle class people need support just as much as those in deprived areas.* (Female, Stakeholder)

Some participants went on to question how those most in need would be identified and felt that it would be difficult to decide who had access to certain services and who did not and that however it was decided would be unfair for some people.

*How would you even prioritise? Would you say that because you earn twenty grand you can't come here?* (Female, User)

*In practice it's quite difficult to work out who that person should be, who is vulnerable. I wouldn't want to be the person to make that decision.* (Male, User)

Although there were some stakeholders who felt that Children's Centre services should be available to all families within a local area, most stakeholders agreed that there should be priority groups, particularly those who live in deprived areas, are on low incomes, claim benefits or have physical or mental illnesses and disabilities.

*If it were up to me, I would want the Centres in the most deprived wards [to remain].* (Female, Stakeholder)

*I think some of the roles in the Children's Centres, like the adult learning and the early intervention officers, are very targeted to those client groups that we need to be working with, and I think that works really effectively.* (Female, Stakeholder)

Some went on to suggest that because families who do not need the services the most are using them, those for whom the services are vital are missing out. This is line with the finding from the survey that professional stakeholders were more likely to agree that Children's Centres should be targeted at those most in need than those who use services at the Centres.

*It worries me that there are sometimes waiting lists for some services in Children's Centres. This means that some families are accessing services they don't need to as much as other families.* (Female, Stakeholder)

A few stakeholders also felt that some of the people who currently use the services at Children's Centres could travel a further distance to access services elsewhere, particularly those who had access to a car and could take the time to travel the extra distance.

*The people that live around there are capable of accessing services elsewhere.* (Female, Stakeholder)

## Quantitative findings

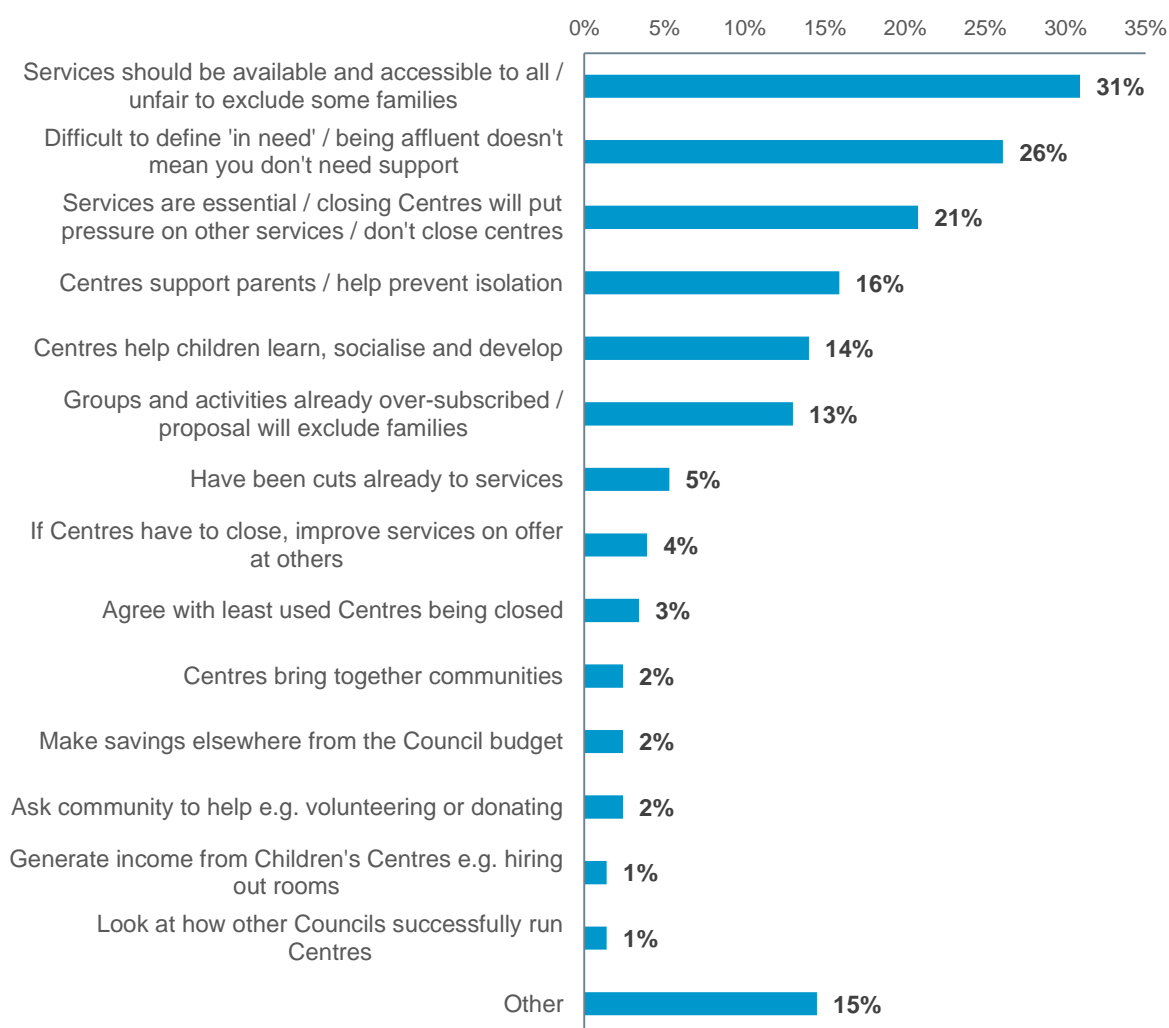
Survey respondents were asked if they had any further comments about the proposed changes. Their comments have been themed and are presented in the chart below.

Three in ten respondents (31%) said that Children's Centres should be easily accessible and available to everyone, with some saying it would be unfair to exclude some families. The large proportion of comments around this particular theme may largely be attributed to the location of this question in the questionnaire with it following the question asking respondents if they agreed that Children's Centre should be targeted at those most in need. Seventy-nine per cent of those who suggested this theme said they disagreed with the statement.

A quarter of the comments (26%) centred on the difficulty of defining those who are 'in need' and, as also seen in the focus groups and in-depth interviews, expressed the opinion that being seen as affluent did not necessarily mean that those parents did not need the support that Children's Centres provide.

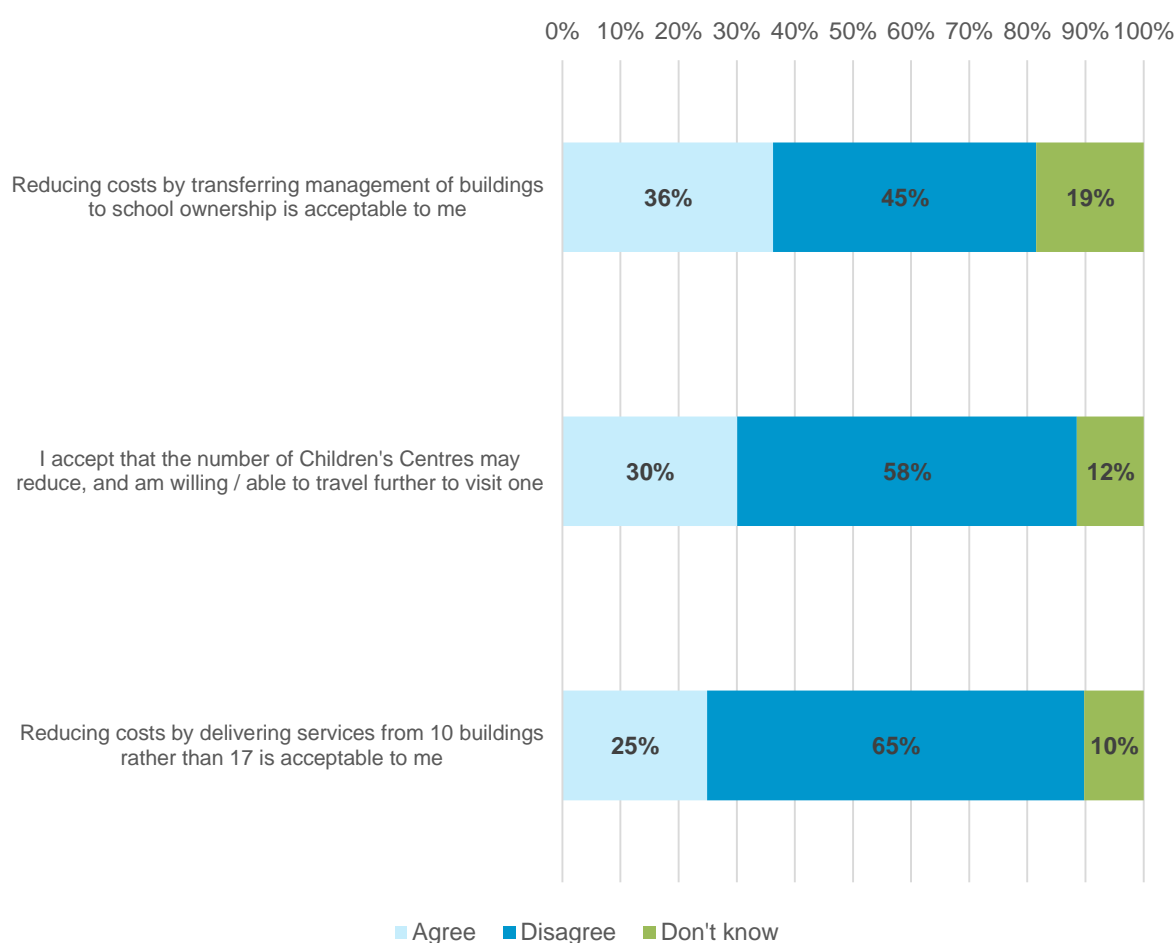
A further fifth (21%) said that the services provided at Children's Centres were essential, that they should not be closed and that closing them would put pressure on other public services.

**Figure 21 – Do you have any further comments about these proposed changes?**  
Base: 207



Survey respondents were then asked how far they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the reconfiguration of Children's Centres. As can be seen in the chart below, there was most agreement with the statement 'reducing costs by transferring management of buildings to school ownership is acceptable to me', with 36% agreeing. Three in ten (30%) agreed that they 'accept that the number of Children's Centres may reduce and are willing/able to travel further to visit one' and only a quarter (25%) agreed that 'reducing costs by delivering services from 10 buildings rather than 17' was acceptable. It should be noted that all of the statements saw a larger proportion of respondents in disagreement with them than in agreement.

**Figure 22 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**  
Base: 455, 459, 461



It should be noted that a large proportion of respondents gave the response 'Don't know' (19%) when asked if they agree that transferring management of buildings to school ownership was acceptable. As found in the qualitative research, this may be because many people are unaware of the implications of the change in ownership and the impact this would have upon service provision.

Unsurprisingly, for each of the statements those aged under 24 and 25-44 were more likely to disagree than those from the older age groups. However, there were also some differences between responses from respondents from a non-White ethnic background and those from a White background:

- Those from a White background were more likely to agree with the statement 'reducing costs by delivering services from 10 buildings rather than 17 is acceptable to me' (29% compared to 18%)
- Those from a non-White background were more likely to disagree with the statement 'reducing costs by transferring management of buildings to school ownership is acceptable to me' (52% compared to 42%)

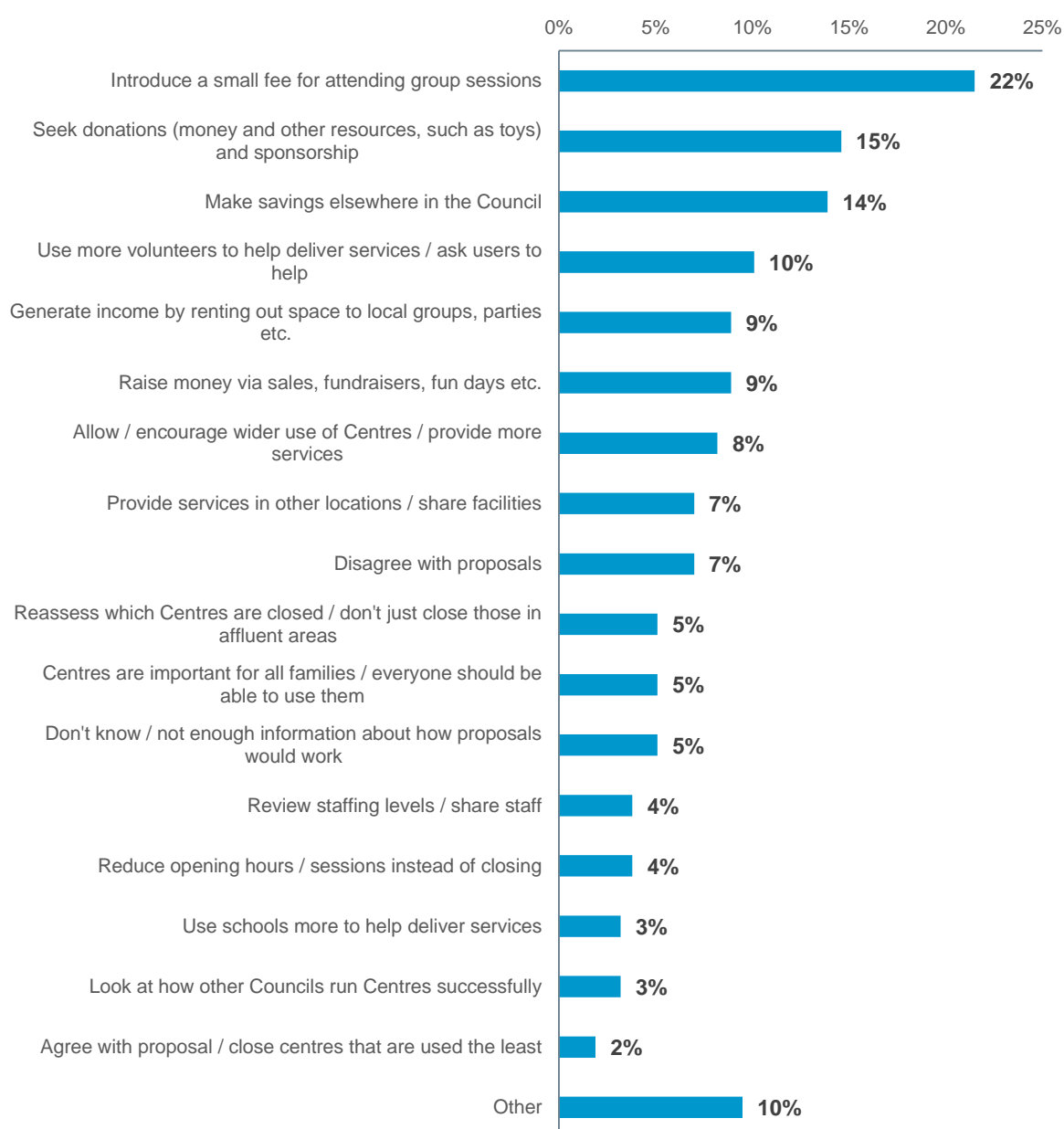
In line with the finding earlier in the survey that professionals were more likely to agree with the proposed reconfiguration, they were also more likely to agree with the statement 'reducing costs by delivering services from 10 buildings rather than 17 is acceptable to me' (35% compared to 21% of Children's Centre users).

## Other ideas to reduce costs

### Quantitative findings

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they had any other ideas or suggestions for things the Council could stop doing or do differently to help reduce the cost of the Children's Centre Service. As can be seen below, over a fifth of suggestions (22%) mentioned introducing a small fee for attending group sessions, followed by 15% who suggested that the service should seek donations (e.g. money, toys, books etc.) and sponsorship from businesses and other organisations. Fourteen per cent suggested that the Council should look to save money from other services. The full range of themes can be seen in the chart below.

**Figure 23 – Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for things we could stop doing or do differently to help us reduce the cost of the Children's Centre Service?**  
Base: 158





## Qualitative findings

Focus group and in-depth interview participants were keen to make further suggestions for the Council to make necessary savings or in some cases generate additional income in order to sustain Derby's Children's Centre Service. The majority of the same suggestions as survey respondents were made by participants who were users of the service.

### Donations and fees for attending groups and sessions

A number of participants suggested introducing donations or fees for some group sessions in order to bring more revenue into the service and felt that many people would be happy to pay. However, users were split between those who thought the donations or fees should be voluntary and those who thought it should be compulsory, with the former worried that making them compulsory may exclude some families.

*They could get donations...We are ready to donate, £2, £4, £5, whatever we can afford.*  
(Female, User)

*I'd probably make it compulsory.* (Female, User)

*I think fees for services would again cut out immediately some of the most vulnerable people that you want in the building.* (Male, User)

### Save money from other Council services or outgoings

A number of participants felt that the Council should look at other services and other outgoings to make savings rather than make cuts to a service as valuable and important as the Children's Centre service. For example, a few participants discussed recent Council expenditure in relation to new sculptures and other constructions within the city that they deemed unnecessary and voiced their frustration that this money was not spent in relation to a service as valuable as Children's Centres.

*Save the money being used for the new sculpture to spend on the Children's Centres!*  
(Female, User)

*Derby City Council needs a new financial advisor – they keep cutting services that are important and spending money on things like painting bollards.* (Female, User)

### Fundraising and sales

A number of different ideas were proposed for generating revenue for the Children's Centre services. There was a particular focus on revenue sources such as fundraisers and sales.

*The Children's Centres should be opened up to generate revenue. Put on a family day where you pay for sessions.* (Female, Stakeholder)

*They could organise donations of old toys or clothes or whatever, and organise sales.*  
(Female, User)

### Volunteers

Using volunteers within Centres was also discussed by users and some raised the idea of asking parents who use the Centres to help run services, such as providing courses or running group sessions. It was suggested that in order to incentivise people to volunteer at the Children's Centres, they could be offered free places on courses. However, there was some

concern amongst both users and stakeholders that this would lead to job losses for paid staff and that there was already an over-reliance on volunteers by the Service.

*You could get volunteers to do courses there, or volunteers to even work there.* (Female, User)

*In my opinion, volunteers should be offered a course for free. NVQ2, NVQ3 or social care...I would find that really valuable.* (Female, User)

*Now volunteers are getting asked to do more and more to support families.* (Female, Stakeholder)

### **Renting out rooms when not in use**

Many participants suggested that rooms within the Children's Centre buildings could be rented out when the Centre is closed. Examples included using the rooms for fitness classes, birthday parties, educational classes and that membership groups and businesses may be interested.

*Bringing in other people to use the Centres and pay money for it...any businesses that want to use that space.* (Female, User)

*Why couldn't the Children's Centres spaces be rented out or hired out to fee-paying classes at times when they aren't being used for local services?* (Male, User)

*They could rent classes to organise birthday parties...They have toys. They have everything that is needed to entertain kids in a quite safe environment because everything is adapted. You have places to change nappies, you have small toilets for kids.* (Female, User)

### **Sharing buildings with other Council services**

Both users and stakeholders suggested that the Children's Centre services could share space with other Council services or organisations, such as libraries, other Council departments or education and health services.

*Thinking along the lines of a library, that would make such good sense really because we're trying in the early years to be encouraging mums and babies to be taught to read, to get ready for school...So why haven't we thought about moving the library into here before?* (Female, Stakeholder)

*Education, health...it's about thinking cross-collaboratively across the Council departments.* (Female, Stakeholder)

*Combining libraries and Children's Centres is a brilliant idea to save them both.* (Female, User)

### **Advertising the Service more**

Some users felt that Children's Centres were under-used particularly by some sections of society and felt that if they were used more, they would be less likely to see their budgets cut. Users felt that the services on offer could be advertised better by providing information during health check-ups, distributing leaflets or advertising in local publications, using local schools for advertising and the use of social media. It was also suggested that if Children's Centres that remained opened advertised their services more, the impact upon families would be lessened.

*More people would access them if they were more aware of what was there and is available, and whether there is a cost or not. (Male, User)*

*I think if the other Children's Centres that are going to remain open publicised their services, it may not have too much of a detrimental effect. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*Every mum takes their child to be weighed every few months - give them information about Children's Centres then. (Female, User)*

*I think schools are a very good link for the Children's Centre to advertise its services. (Female, Stakeholder)*

## **Community hubs**

Some discussed the idea that Children's Centres should become hubs for local populations with a multitude of services on offer, not just those targeted at families with young children, but all families and other local people.

*I think as a Centre it should be more used as a community centre. (Female, User)*

*You need to get away from the idea that Children's Centres are only for young children. I think they're 'Family Centres', and by limiting them to children only pre-school aged you are limiting people's access. (Female, Stakeholder)*

## **Partnership working**

Stakeholders focused on working with third party organisations, including their own, to access other funding streams such as grants and working in close partnership with them, ensuring that information is shared appropriately. Some stressed the need for the Council to think creatively in terms of how these partnerships could work and benefit the local population.

*Why aren't we doing it together? Why aren't we applying for the money that we can apply for because we're a third sector organisation, and then the local authority match funds it, as such? (Female, Stakeholder)*

*There is a new system called Connect, but it will only work if all services are willing to share their information. (Male, Stakeholder)*

*What we are looking towards is actually trying to have that dialogue with health, with the local authority, with third sector parties, just actually trying to get this together...before any final decisions are made. (Female, Stakeholder)*

## **Looking at how other local authorities run Children's Centre services**

As also seen in the survey, participants suggested the Council should look closely at the way in which other local authorities run Children's Centre services. One stakeholder provided a specific example of a One-Stop Shop at which Children's Centre services are provided, alongside a host of other Council run services.

*There are other models in other areas of the country where Children's Centres are still open and thriving. So instead of just cutting it, look at what is working. (Female, Stakeholder)*

*At The Meadows in Nottingham, they've got a One Stop Shop. In that, they've got a policeman, somebody from the Job Centre, they have a housing officer, they have a*

*debt advisor...There was a queue of people waiting outside it at nine in the morning.*  
(Female, Stakeholder)

### **New activities and services**

Finally, some users also made a few suggestions as to other services and activities that could be provided at Children's Centres to help support parents and families, such as classes aimed at money management / debt relief, fathers' groups and other activities for parents outside of the Centres such as organised walks.

*Suggested new services: money management and groups for dads.* (Female, User)

*I think that as a part of the Children's Centre service the Council could organise some activities in the parks...like walking with buggies. Or some activities in the playground area.* (Female, User)

# Acknowledgments

Enventure Research would like to express its gratitude to everyone who took part in the consultation. We would also like to thank Kelly Smith and Fiona Colton from Derby City Council for their help throughout the consultation process.

# Appendices – questionnaire and discussion guides

# The Big Conversation: Consultation about the Reconfiguration of Children's Centres in Derby

## What is this survey about?

Derby City Council is required to make cuts of £45 million by 2019 and is undertaking a review of the services it provides. This includes looking at Children's Centre services in Derby and exploring changes to how the buildings are run so further savings can be made and resources used more efficiently.

Please take part in the consultation about the future of the Children's Centre services in Derby by telling us what you think about our proposals for the reconfiguration of the service, suggesting ways to deliver services more efficiently, and giving your views on the service's proposed offer. For information about the proposals, please read the **next two pages within this questionnaire before you answer the questions.**

By taking part you will be helping to shape the future of the Children's Centre services in Derby and ensuring that we make the best possible use of the money we have available whilst still providing a valuable service.

## Who should take part in the survey?

We want to hear the views of everyone, whether you are a user of Children's Centre services or not, or if you work with or for the services. This consultation is open to everyone who lives, works or studies in Derby and wants to take part.



## What will be done with the information I provide?

All information provided will be analysed by an independent research company called Enventure Research and treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. We will only use this information to inform the consultation on the future of the Children's Centre services in Derby. If you provide your contact details, they will not be passed on to any third parties and they will also be kept separate from your questionnaire answers, meaning that you will not be identified in any way.

## How can I take part?

There are two different ways that you can take part in this survey:

- Fill in the questionnaire and post it in the envelope provided
- Use the link below to take part online. Online you can complete the survey in English, Urdu, Polish, Slovak, or Punjabi.

## Questions or help?

If you have any queries about the questionnaire, please call our helpline number on **0800 0092 117**. If you are using minicom please use Next Generation Text by putting 18001 in front of the number. You can also email your questions to [info@enventure.co.uk](mailto:info@enventure.co.uk)

## To complete online

Go to [www.enventure.co.uk/derby-childrenscentres](http://www.enventure.co.uk/derby-childrenscentres)



Derby City Council

## Introduction: Derby's big challenge

Since the government cuts began in 2010, Derby City Council has had to cut millions of pounds year after year. In the last four years we have already cut £116 million and now we are required to make further cuts of £45 million by 2019.



Council Tax only covers a small part of the money needed to pay for all public services the Council provides. The majority of the money the Council gets comes from the government as a grant which we depend on. As the government continues to make cuts, we are being given less and less money to provide these services. Yet the cost of living is rising and poverty is increasing, meaning demand on our services is going up and up.

Derby has more older people in need of help, more children coming into care and more pressure on school places. These are just some of the services the Council has to provide by law, but the money from government to provide them is reducing. The money available to provide services that are not required by law, known as discretionary services, will run out.

The Council is therefore asking you to take part in the Big Conversation, to help us make decisions about how to reduce costs while still protecting services that are valued by residents from across the city. Over the next few months there will be consultations about a range of services delivered by the Council. This one focuses just on the future of the Children's Centres – please take part and tell us what you think.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sara'.

### **Councillor Sara Bolton**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Safeguarding

## What are Children's Centres?

Children's Centres development began in Derby in 2004 and grew from Sure Start Local Programmes, early excellence centres, neighbourhood nurseries or from partnerships with local schools. There are currently 17 Children's Centres in Derby, all managed and run by Derby City Council.

The core purpose of Children's Centres is to:

- Support child development and school readiness.
- Promote parenting aspirations and parenting skills.
- Host child and family health services.

## Why do we need to make changes to Children's Centres in Derby?

As a result of continued government cuts to Council funding, the Council has to make substantial changes to its budget.

The Children's Centre budget has already been reduced by 67% over the past three years. To make these savings Derby City Council has made significant changes to the way that the Centres are run, including reducing opening hours, restructuring teams and reducing some of the programmes provided.

The severe financial pressure the Council is under means that we now need to explore more options to make further savings by delivering services differently.



## What are we proposing?

As a result of this reduction in funding we need to change how we manage Children's Centres across the city. We are not proposing to stop any frontline services; staff will continue in the Council's employment and will continue to meet the needs of families with children under five. We are, however, suggesting that we make changes to the buildings where these services are offered.

We propose:

1. To reconfigure Children's Centre services so that they operate from 10 rather than 17 designated buildings.
2. To consider how the current Children's Centre buildings could be used more effectively for services for families with children under five with a focus on those Centres on school sites.
3. To consider the handover of ownership, running costs and management responsibility of seven Children's Centre buildings to the schools they are located within.

These proposals would reduce the cost of maintaining and running buildings but maintain the delivery of centre based and outreach services to those children and families identified as most vulnerable.

The seven Centres that would be directly affected are:

- Mickleover/Littleover
- Chellaston
- Oakwood
- Meadow Lane
- Babington
- Spondon
- West End

These seven Centres have been identified because of their location in the less deprived areas of the city and because they are on or near school sites and would create space for schools to extend their offer for children under five.

## Who does this affect?

The proposals described above would affect families who use or are planning to use the services in the seven Centres that are directly affected. These families would have to travel further to access Children's Centre services and also some NHS services would need to move their clinics to different locations.

## What are we consulting with you about?

We are consulting with you about our proposals. By taking part in the Big Conversation and giving us your opinion on our proposals for the future of Children's Centres, you will be helping to shape the future of these services in Derby. This will help to ensure that we make the best possible use of the money we have available, so please take part and tell us what you think by completing our questionnaire online or by picking a questionnaire up from your local Children's Centre.

## What happens next?

This consultation will be open until **27th May 2016**. We will use the responses to help us develop proposals for the future of Children's Centres in the City.

In the meantime, please tell us what you think by taking part in the current consultation and completing the questions within this survey.

## You and the Children's Centre Service

**Q1 Have you and your family visited a Derby City Council Children's Centre in the last 12 months?** *Tick one only*

☐ Yes **GO TO Q2**

☐ No **GO TO Q9**

The following questions are about using Children's Centres. If you have not used a Centre in the last 12 months please go to Q9.

**Q2 Which of the following Children's Centres have you and your family used in the last 12 months?** *Tick all that apply*

**Q3 Which is your preferred Children's Centre?** *Tick one only*

	Q2. Used in the last 12 months <i>Tick all that apply</i>	Q3. Preferred Centre <i>Tick one only</i>
Alvaston	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audrey Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Austin Sunnyhill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Babington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becket	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boulton	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chellaston	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Derwent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mackworth Morley	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meadow Lane	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mickleover / Littleover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oakwood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Osmaston Allenton (First Steps)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rosehill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sinfin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spondon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
West End	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q4 Why is this your preferred Children's Centre?** *Tick all that apply*

☐ Close to home

☐ On a convenient bus route

☐ Close to school / college

☐ Services provided at this Centre

☐ Close to shops

☐ I work / volunteer at this Centre

☐ Parking facilities

☐ Other *Please specify below*

**Q5 Approximately how often do you and your family visit your preferred Children's Centre?** *Tick one only*

☐ 3-4 times a week

☐ Once a month

☐ 1-2 times a week

☐ Less than once a month

☐ 2-4 times a month

☐ I've only used it once / it was my first visit

**Q6 How do you / members of your household usually travel to your preferred Children's Centre?** *Tick one only*

☐ On foot

☐ Taxi

☐ Bus

☐ Other *Please specify below*

☐ Car

**Q7** Please tell us about the services you and your family have used in the Children’s Centre during the last 12 months.  
*Tick all that apply*

Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay and Play sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay and weigh, assessment checks, speech and language support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family visitor support, parenting support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adult education / training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice and guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>Please specify below</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q8** Of all the services and activities offered by the Children’s Centre, which is the most important to you / members of your household? *Tick one only*

Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay and Play sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay and weigh, assessment checks, speech and language support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family visitor support, parenting support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adult education / training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice and guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>Please specify below</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Planning for the future

Derby City Council continues to face a challenging financial situation due to government cuts. Because of this we need to find ways of reducing the cost of the Children's Centre services. We are therefore proposing that we make changes to the buildings where Children's Centre services are offered. It is important to note, however, that we are not proposing to stop any frontline services and we would continue to meet the needs of families with children under five, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.

We propose:

1. To reconfigure Children's Centre services so they operate from 10 rather than 17 designated buildings
2. To consider how the remaining 10 Children's Centre buildings could be used more effectively for services for families with children under five with a focus on those Centres on school sites
3. To consider the handover of ownership, running costs and management responsibility of seven buildings to schools where they are located

The Children's Centres that we propose to make changes to are:

- Mickleover / Littleover
- Chellaston
- Oakwood
- Meadow Lane
- Babington
- Spondon
- West End

The information at the beginning of this questionnaire gives more information about the financial background and the proposals we are considering.

**Q9 To what extent do you support or reject the proposals outlined above as a way of reducing our costs?**

*Tick one only*

- |   |  |                                     |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly support | <input type="checkbox"/> Reject          | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support          | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly reject |                                     |

**Q10 Do you visit / use the services at any of the seven Children's Centres that we propose to make changes to listed above? *Tick one only***

- |                              |                                       |   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No GO TO Q15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know GO TO Q15 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|

**Q11 If services do move out of the seven Centres listed above, would it make more difficult for you to access Children's Centre services? *Tick one only***

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely     | <input type="checkbox"/> No         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to some extent | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

**Q12 With this proposed reconfiguration of services, what would you and your family do? *Tick one only***

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to another Centre, as often as now <b>GO TO Q14</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Stop using Centres altogether <b>GO TO Q13</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to another Centre, but not as often as now <b>GO TO Q14</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>Please specify below</i>              |

Q13 If you said you would stop using Centres altogether, why is this? Tick all that apply

<input type="checkbox"/> The other locations do not offer the services we need	<input type="checkbox"/> I / we will not know anyone at another Centre
<input type="checkbox"/> I am / we are unable to travel to the other locations	<input type="checkbox"/> There is a lack of parking facilities at the other locations
<input type="checkbox"/> The other locations' opening times do not suit us	<input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to find time to travel the extra distance to the other locations
<input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>Please specify below</i>	
<div></div>	

Q14 If you said you would use another Centre in Derby, how can the Council assist you to make it easier for you? Please write in the box below

Q15 'Children's Centres should be targeted at those most in need.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Tick one only

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	

Q16 Do you have any further comments about these proposed changes? Please write in the box below

Your preferred options

Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Tick one option for each statement

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Reducing costs by delivering services from 10 buildings rather than 17 is acceptable to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I accept that the number of Children's Centres may reduce, and am willing/able to travel further to visit one	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reducing costs by transferring management of buildings to school ownership is acceptable to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Other ideas

**Q18 Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for things we could stop doing or do differently to help us reduce the cost of the Children's Centre services?** *Please write in the box below*

## About you

The next few questions will help us to make sure that we hear everyone's views, whatever your background or circumstances. The information will not be held alongside your name if you have given this. Your identity and the personal information you have shared with us will remain confidential.

**Q19 Please enter your postcode**

**Q20 In what capacity are you mostly involved with Derby's Children's Centre service?** *Tick one only*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use one of the Children's Centres | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff member / school governor at a Derby school                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Centre staff member    | <input type="checkbox"/> Representative of a partner organisation <i>Please specify below</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend or relative of a user      | <input type="checkbox"/> I help pay for the service through my Council Tax                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local ward councillor             | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>Please specify below</i>                                    |

**Q22 Are you...?** *Tick one only*

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q23 Which of the following age categories do you fall into?** *Tick one only*

- |                                   |                                |  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-24    | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34    | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

**Q24 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?** *Tick one only*

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q25 Do you have or look after / care for children aged five or under?** *Tick one only*

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q26 Which of the following best describes your working status? Tick one only**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed and not available for work due to long term illness or impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholly retired from work   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed: full or part time  | <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after the home   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On government supported training programme (e.g. Modern apprentice / Training for Work) | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time education at school, college or university                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>Please specify below</i>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed and available for work   | <div></div>   |

**Q27 What is your ethnic group? Tick one only**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Asian or Asian British                              | Dual heritage  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian                     | <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani                  | <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi                | <input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Dual heritage background                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background | White  |
| Black or Black British                              | <input type="checkbox"/> English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy or Irish Traveller                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background                            |
| Other ethnic group                                  | Other ethnic group   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic group <i>Please specify</i>          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say          | <div></div>  |

## Taking part in discussion groups

As part of this research, we will be running a small number of discussion groups to explore what residents think about the future of the Children's Centre service. Discussion groups will be held in the next few weeks with a small number of invited people. If you are invited to attend, the groups will last for 90 minutes and take place at a select number of Children's Centres in Derby. If you indicate that you are interested in attending a discussion group, you may be contacted by Enventure Research to provide you with more details. Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled people to take part in the groups. Please note that if there is a lot of interest in taking part in discussion groups, we cannot guarantee that everyone will be invited to take part.

**Q28 Are you interested in attending a discussion group? Tick one only**

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have indicated you are interested in taking part in a discussion group, please provide us with your details below.

Name

Contact number

Email address


Your details will be kept strictly confidential, will be kept separate from your questionnaire answers, and not passed on to any third parties. Your details will only be used for the purposes of conducting further research.

**Thank you for your time in taking part in the consultation. Now please hand your completed questionnaire to a member of staff at the Children's Centre or post it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided.**

# **Derby Children's Centre Reconfiguration Consultation**

## **Focus Group Discussion Guide - users**

*Please note this discussion guide is intended as a guide to the moderator only. Sections may be subject to change during the course of the focus groups if, for example, certain questions do not elicit useful responses. Wording and explanations may change to suit the audience.*

### **Introduction (5 mins)**

My name is.....and I work for a company called Enventure Research.

We have been commissioned by Derby City Council to undertake a consultation exercise to find out people's views about the proposed reconfiguration of the Children's Centre service in Derby. The Council is required to make cuts of £45m by 2019 and is therefore undertaking a review of all of the services it provides, which includes the Children's Centre service.

We have been commissioned by the Council to undertake this independent consultation to find out what people think about proposals for reconfiguration of the service, ways to deliver services more efficiently, and the service's proposed offer. The Council will use the findings from this consultation to further develop proposals for the future of Children's Centres.

This consultation is split into two parts. The first part is a survey which (some of you may already/all of you) have completed. The second part is speaking directly to people in small focus groups, such as this one.

The results to the survey are still being collected as it is open until the middle of May. Once the survey finishes and we have completed these focus groups, we will analyse all of the results and feedback, and write a full report for Derby City Council detailing the findings. Details of the decisions made as a result of this consultation will be available to share with the public by August.



**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

Please be assured that everything you say during this session is totally confidential, so please be as open and honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Enventure Research is an independent research agency, meaning that we are not part of Derby City Council.

Enventure Research works in accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct, which means that anything you say today will be treated in the strictest confidence, and nothing will be tied back to your name.

We will be recording the session so we do not need to take notes as you are talking. However, the recording is only used to help us write the report and is deleted once it has been used. Please speak clearly and do not talk over each other.

As mentioned when you were asked to attend, there is a thank you voucher for your time of £25. This will be provided at the end of the session, but it does mean we want to hear your views, so don't forget to contribute to the discussion.

Please feel free to help yourself to drinks during the session.

The session will last for no more than 90 minutes.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## **Warm-up exercise (5 mins)**

*Moderator to go around the group and ask respondents to introduce themselves.*

- Just so we can get to know each other a bit, please can you introduce yourselves?  
*Ask a selection of questions*
  - First name
  - Where do you live and who do you live with / names of children?
  - What you like to do in your spare time

## **Children's Centre usage and perceptions (10 mins)**

- When was the last time you and your family visited a Children's Centre in Derby?

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## Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

- Which Children's Centre did you use?
- Why did you visit / what services did you use?
  - *Probe: Stay and Play sessions, activities, groups, advice etc.*
- Why do you use that Children's Centre?
  - *Probe: Because of location, services on offer etc.*
- Who, in general, uses Children's Centres and why?
  - *Probe for different audiences eg backgrounds, ages, genders etc.*
- Who, apart from those who don't have young children, doesn't use Children's Centres and why?
  - *Probe as to why*
- What are the challenges today that Children's Centres face?

## Importance, role and purpose of Children's Centres (15 mins)

- How important do you think Children's Centres are in society?
  - Why do you think that?
- What do you think the main roles of Children's Centres are?
- What should the priorities of Children's Centres be in the future?
  - *Probe....*
- What services do you know of that are available at/provided by Children's Centres?
  - **Moderator to list all suggestions on flipchart paper**
- Of these services, which do you think are the most and least important?
  - *Ask participants to rank importance*
- Which do you think are used the most?
- Which do you think are used the least?
- Here is a list of services on offer at all Children's Centres.
  - **Moderator to show a list of all services on offer**
- What are your reactions to the list?
- Were you aware of all of these services?
- Who needs to use these services?
- What do you think you / or other people would do if they could not access their preferred Children's Centre?

## Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

- Should the Council target Children's Centre services for particular groups of people, i.e. those most in need or should services be for everyone?
- If you think there should be priority groups, who are they?

## **Planning for the future (35 mins)**

Due to the current financial situation the Council is proposing to make changes to the buildings where Children's Centres services are offered which will reduce the running cost of the service. It is important to note, however, that the Council is not proposing to stop any frontline services and would continue to meet the needs of families with children under five.

The Council proposes to operate services from 10 buildings rather than 17 as it currently does and hand over ownership and running costs of seven Centres to schools where they are located.

The Council proposes to make the changes to the following Centres: Mickleover / Littleover, Chellaston, Oakwood, Meadow Lane, Babington, Spondon and West End.

### **Moderator to write Centres affected on the flipchart**

- What is your initial reaction to this proposal for reconfiguration?
  - *Why do you say that?*
- Please put up your hand if you use one of the Centres listed
  - *Moderator to count the show of hands*
- If you use one of the Centres, what impact do you think this option would have on you?
  - Why do you say that?
- If you don't use one of the Centres, what impact do you think this option would have on others?
  - Why do you say that?
- Would it impact just those who use these Centres or users of other Centres too?
  - Why do you say that?
- How could the Council make it easier for people to use other Centres in Derby?
- What are the main positives/advantages and negatives/disadvantages/concerns about this proposal?

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**Moderator to write list on the flipchart**

### **Other ideas (10 mins)**

- Is there anything else that you think the Council could stop doing or do differently to help reduce the cost of the Children's Centre Service?
- Is there anything else you think the Council could do to bring in more revenue for the service?

### **Close (5 mins)**

- What would you say are the three most important points we have discussed to pass back to Derby City Council?
- Thank everyone for their time and input
- Any other questions/points to raise?
- Thank & close. Hand out incentive payments.

# **Derby Children's Centre Reconfiguration Consultation**

## **Focus Group Discussion Guide – professionals**

*Please note this discussion guide is intended as a guide to the moderator only. Sections may be subject to change during the course of the focus groups if, for example, certain questions do not elicit useful responses. Wording and explanations may change to suit the audience.*

### **Introduction (5 mins)**

My name is.....and I work for a company called Enventure Research.

We have been commissioned by Derby City Council to undertake a consultation exercise to find out people's views about the proposed reconfiguration of the Children's Centre service in Derby. As many of you will already know, the Council is required to make cuts of £45m by 2019 and is therefore undertaking a review of all of the services it provides, which includes the Children's Centre service.

We have been commissioned by the Council to undertake this independent consultation to find out what people think about proposals for reconfiguration of the service, ways to deliver services more efficiently, and the service's proposed offer. The Council will use the findings from this consultation to further develop proposals for the future of Children's Centres.

This consultation is split into two parts. The first part is a survey which some of you may already have completed. The second part is speaking directly to people, both the general public and people from partnership organisations in small focus groups, such as this one.

The results to the survey are still being collected as it is open until the middle of May. Once the survey finishes and we have completed these focus groups, we will analyse all of the results and feedback, and write a full report for Derby City Council detailing the feedback. You will be kept up to date on how these results have informed decision making. The results of the consultation will be available by August.

**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

Please be assured that everything you say during this session is totally confidential, so please be as open and honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Enventure Research is an independent research agency, meaning that we are not part of Derby City Council.

Enventure Research works in accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct, which means that anything you say today will be treated in the strictest confidence, and nothing will be tied back to your name. We will not supply your name or contact details to the Council and tell them what you say. Likewise please treat what is said during the meeting with confidentiality and don't disclose what is said to anyone else.

We will be recording the session so we do not need to take notes as you are talking. However, the recording is only used to help us write the report and is deleted once it has been used. Please speak clearly and do not talk over each other.

The session will last for no more than 90 minutes. Please feel free to help yourself to drinks.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## **Warm-up exercise (5 mins)**

*Moderator to go around the group and ask respondents to introduce themselves.*

- Just so we can get to know each other a bit, please can you introduce yourselves?
  - What is your name?
  - Which organisation do you come from and what is your role?

## **Children's Centre perceptions (15 mins)**

- Which Children's Centres in Derby have you visited?
- Why did you visit (those Centres?)
  - *Probe*
- What is your involvement in Children's Centres?
  - *Probe*
- What are the challenges today that Children's Centres face?
- What is your organisation's interest in Children's Centres in Derby?

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- *Probe as to the history and nature of the relationship*

## **Importance, role and purpose of Children's Centres (15 mins)**

- How important do you think Children's Centres are in society?
  - *Why do you think that?*
- What do you think the main roles of Children's Centres are?
- What are the benefits that Children's Centres bring to families?
- Given that budgets are getting tighter and tighter, what or who should be the priorities of Children's Centres in the future?
  - *Probe....*
- What services do you know of that are available at/provided by Children's Centres?
  - **Moderator to list all suggestions on flipchart paper**
- Of these services, which do you think are the most and least important?
  - *Ask participants to rank importance*
- Which do you think are used the most?
- Which do you think are used the least?
- Here is a list of services on offer at all Children's Centres.
  - **Moderator to show a list of all services on offer**
- What are your reactions to the list?
- Were you aware of all of these services?
- Who needs to use these services?
- What do you think people would do if they could not access their preferred Children's Centre?
- Do you think children's centre services should be more targeted than they already are?
- Who do you think should be priority groups?

## **Planning for the future (20 mins)**

Due to the current financial situation the Council is proposing to make changes to the buildings where Children's Centres services are offered which will reduce the running cost

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of the service. It is important to note, however, that the Council is not proposing to stop any frontline services and would continue to meet the needs of families with children under five.

The Council proposes to operate services from 10 buildings rather than 17 as it currently does and hand over ownership and running costs of seven Centres to schools where they are located.

The Council proposes to make the changes to the following Centres: Mickleover / Littleover, Chellaston, Oakwood, Meadow Lane, Babington, Spondon and West End.

**Moderator to write Centres affected on the flipchart**

- What is your initial reaction to this proposal for reconfiguration?
  - *Why do you say that?*
- Given the need to save the Council money, do you support or reject this proposal?
  - *Why do you say that?*
- What impact do you think this option would have on others?
  - *Why do you say that?*
- Would it impact just those who use these Centres or users of other Centres too?
  - *Why do you say that?*
- How could the Council make it easier for people to use other Centres in Derby?
- What operational difficulties might arise if the Council hands over ownership of seven buildings to schools?
  - *How might these difficulties be overcome?*
- What are the main positives/advantages and negatives/disadvantages/concerns about this proposal?

**Moderator to write list on the flipchart**

**Other ideas (25 mins)**

- How can the Council work with your organisation in order to provide services more effectively / better services?
- Is there anything else that you think the Council could stop doing or do differently to help reduce the cost of the Children's Centre Service?

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- Is there anything else you think the Council could do to bring in more revenue for the service?

## **Close (5 mins)**

- What would you say are the three most important points we have discussed to pass back to Derby City Council?
- Thank everyone for their time and input
- Any other questions/points to raise?
- Thank & close.