

Appendix 2

Interpretation of the analysis of the Children's Centre public consultation

3rd February to 30th April 2014

1. Introduction and Background

Sure Start children's centres play a significant role in providing effective early childhood services for families and young children, particularly those who are recognised as being in most need of help and support. They provide a practical way of bringing together services such as health visiting, early education and childcare, family support services, employment services and adult learning into one place, plus access to more targeted services for children and families in need of them.

The 22 children's centres in Rotherham have become an integral part of life for many children under 5, as well as their parents and carers. Centres identify, reach and help all families, especially those in greatest need of support, and have a particular emphasis on improving outcomes in:

- Child development and school readiness
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills
- Child and family health and life chances

Rotherham has 22 designated Sure Start Children Centres across the borough. On 15th January 2014 Rotherham Borough Council gave approval for a public consultation to be undertaken on future proposals for Children's Centres in order to achieve a required budget reduction of £2.2m for the period 2014-16.

The proposals were:

- Closure of 13 registered Children's Centre buildings with a reduction to 9 Children's Centres buildings across the borough.
- These 9 children's centres buildings are then clustered to form 7 registered centres across the borough with an increased size of reach areas.
- The creation of a Foundation Years' Service across health, social care and education services.

Government Policy since 2010

Government policy has continued to acknowledge that the first few years of a child's life are fundamentally important. Evidence tells us that they shape children's future development, and influence how well children do at school, their ongoing health and wellbeing and their achievements later in life.

The Government maintains that all young children, whatever their background or current circumstances, deserve the best possible start in life and must be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential. A strong focus on the first few years of children's lives leads to huge economic, social and emotional benefits later on, both for individuals and for society as a whole.

According to the Government, children's centres, based in the community, will provide access to a range of integrated universal and targeted services to meet local need. They will coordinate and be part of a range of support for families, giving them extra help when needed and bringing in professionals with specialist skills where necessary.

However, like most other areas of government spending, funding for Sure Start and Children's Centre's has been reduced, leading to re-evaluation of the services provided by many local authorities.

Statutory definition of a Children's Centre

A Sure Start Children's Centre is defined in the Childcare Act 2006 as a place or a group of places:

- which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way;
- through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and
- at which activities for young children are provided.

Therefore the statutory definition of a children's centre that children's focuses upon integrated services rather than providing premises in particular geographical areas.

The Aims of the Proposals for Rotherham Children's Centres

- To continue to offer sufficient provision via children's centres to meet the needs of children and families in the Rotherham
- To ensure we continue to give support to those children and families who are in greatest need
- To deliver savings of £2.2 million by April 2015
- To continue to work with partner agencies and organisations to access a range of services for families with children under 5
- To continue to improve co-ordination and access to a range of services for families with children under 5
- To create an Early Years Foundation Service across health, social care and education.

2. The Future Shape of Children's Centre Provision

Children's centres play an important part in addressing local strategic priorities, tackling deprivation and promoting health and wellbeing, by helping to give disadvantaged young children the best start in life. The future provision of Children's Centres needs to target children from the most deprived areas whilst seeking to maintain a level of service for all parts of the Borough. This must be achieved alongside a very significant reduction in funding which sets a very difficult challenge. Whilst comprehensive coverage is currently possible with 22 children's centres, the inevitable reduction means that a balance must be struck between serving those areas of highest need and serving all areas of the borough.

The proposals set out how resources can be more focused on direct services for children under five and their families, particularly those in greatest need to deliver the required savings whilst ensuring wide coverage across the borough and continued access to a nearby centre for those children and families in greatest need. We believe that by re-focusing our resources, working closely with health, social care, schools, private and voluntary sectors, including volunteers plus delivering services where they are most needed, we will maximise what children's centres and early years services can achieve.

Rationale used to underpin proposals

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient children's centres are readily accessible to those most in need. The GP data (as of 31st March 2013*) showing the number of children under five living in the most disadvantaged 30% super output areas, (index of multiple deprivation 2010**), which was used to determine which children's centre buildings would be proposed to stay open and which would be proposed to close or given an alternative early years usage.

It is proposed to keep open the children centre buildings where there are more than 400 vulnerable children under 5 years of age living in the most disadvantaged areas. When evaluated, this equates to having 7 children centre areas (incorporating 9 buildings) across the borough. It is proposed to extend the reach area of the Centres remaining open and to provide outreach services in those areas that do not have ready access to a main children's centre building. By outreach we are referring to activities being delivered in other buildings within the local communities.

Children's Centre Buildings Proposed to Stay Open

Children's Centre	Number of children under 5* as at 31.3.13 in 30% SOA's**
Arnold Children's Centre	597
Aughton Early Years Centre	411
Coleridge Children's Centre	970
Maltby Stepping Stones	727
Rawmarsh Children's Centre	888
Rotherham Central	725
Swinton Brookfield Children's Centre	636
Thrybergh Dalton Children's Centre	610
Valley Children's Centre	524

Children's Centre Buildings proposed to Close/Alternative Usage Options

Children's Centre	Number of children under 5* as at 31.3.13 in 30% SOA's**
Cortonwood Children's Centre	211
Dinnington Children's Centre	352
Kimberworth Children's Centre	308
Marcliffe Children's Centre	0
Meadows Children's Centre	206
Park View Children's Centre	345
Rockingham Children's Centre	261
Ryton Brook Children's Centre	67
Silver Birch Children's Centre	138
Sue Walker Children's Centre	0
Thorpe Hesley Children's Centre	0
Thurcroft Children's Centre	189
Wath Victoria Children's Centre	374

*Number of children under 5 years of age based on GP data as of the 31st March 2013

** Most disadvantaged 30% SOA areas as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010(IMD)

Please note in the table above, Marcliffe, Thorpe Hesley and Sue Walker Children's Centres show zero children living in the 30% SOA. Please note that in these areas children under 5 accessing the centre are from outside of the 30% SOA areas.

Creation of a Foundation Years Service

It is proposed to create a Foundation Years' Service with Children Centres working together with health partners, social care, voluntary sector, parents, schools and early education and child care providers, to continue to deliver services in local communities which improve outcomes for all children under 5 and their families, particularly those in need of support. All partners will deliver services for children aged 0-5 and their families within local communities. Outreach workers will continue to deliver services in those communities where buildings are proposed to close by using alternative venues and working in partnership with other service providers.

3. Consultation Activities Undertaken

Following Cabinet approval to consult on the proposals for Children's Centres, we undertook a borough-wide public consultation exercise with parents, carers, the community and stakeholders. The consultation was launched on the 3rd February 2014 and concluded on the 30th April 2014.

How the consultation was promoted and publicised

- Information was published on the RMBC website.
- CCConsultation@rotherham.gov.uk
- www.rotherham.gov.uk enter “have your say on childrens centres closures” in the search engine

People could also make their views known

- In person at a Children’s Centre of their choice
- Complete and submit a hard copy of the online questionnaire.
- Or through letters and letters

- Other activities undertaken included:
 - Issuing regular press releases
 - Participating in media interviews
 - Publishing articles in stakeholder newsletters

- Regular meetings with the following stakeholder groups:
 - Unions
 - Meetings with Children Centre Leaders
 - Children Centre Executive Headteachers
 - Chairs and Vice Chairs of Governing Bodies
 - Lead Teachers meetings
 - Dinnington School Governing Body
 - Learning Communities Representatives
 - Deprived Communities Team Meeting
 - School Effectiveness Briefing
 - Health Partners
 - Parish Councillors meeting on 15th April 2014

Public Meetings Held

Date/Time	Children’s Centres	Venue
Thursday 6 th February 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Central Kimberworth Park View Rockingham Thorpe Hesley	Rockingham Professional Development Centre Roughwood Road Wingfield Estate Rotherham, S61 4HY
Monday 17 th February 2014 6.00pm - 7.00pm	Coleridge	Clifton Comprehensive Middle Lane Rotherham S65 2SN
Wednesday 12 th March 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Rawmarsh Thrybergh/Dalton Silver Birch Marcliff	Rawmarsh Community School Haugh Road Rawmarsh Rotherham S62 7GA
Thursday 20 th March 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Brookfield Wath Victoria Cortonwood	Wath Comprehensive School Sandygate Wath upon Dearne Rotherham S63 7NW

Date/Time	Children's Centres	Venue
Tuesday 25 th March 2014 4.00 – 5.00pm	Central Kimberworth Park View Rockingham Thorpe Hesley	Ferham Primary School Ferham Road Rotherham S61 1AP
Thursday 27 th March 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Valley Arnold	Clifton Comprehensive Middle Lane Rotherham S65 2SN
Monday 31 st March 2014 6.00pm – 7:00pm	Aughton Early Years Meadows Sue Walker Ryton Brook Thurcroft	Thurcroft Infant School Locksley Drive Thurcroft Rotherham S66 9NT
Wednesday 2 nd April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Rawmarsh Thrybergh/Dalton Silver Birch Marcliffe	Flanderwell Primary School Greenfield Court Flanderwell Rotherham S66 2JF
Thursday 3 rd April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Aughton Early Years Meadows Sue Walker Ryton Brook Thurcroft	Wales High School Storth Lane Kiveton Park Sheffield S26 5QQ
Monday 7 th April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Maltby Stepping Stones Dinnington Ryton Brook	Dinnington Community Primary School School Street Dinnington Sheffield, S25 2RE
Tuesday 8 th April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Aughton Early Years Meadows Sue Walker Ryton Brook Thurcroft	Aston-cum-Aughton Parish Hall Rosegarth Avenue Aston Sheffield S26 2DD
Wednesday 9 th April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Maltby Stepping Stones Dinnington	Maltby Crags Community School Strauss Crescent Maltby Rotherham, S66 7QJ
Monday 28 th April 2014 6.00pm – 7.00pm	Central Kimberworth Park View Rockingham Thorpe Hesley	Rockingham Professional Development Centre Roughwood Road Wingfield Estate Rotherham, S61 4HY
22.4.14 10.00 am -11am	Meadows Children Centre	Catcliffe Parish Hall

A Foundation Years practitioners and wider stakeholder consultation event took place on 2nd April 2014

4. Analysis of Consultation responses

Main information arising from the consultation

1746 people responded to the consultation survey. The majority of responses were from parents or carers (81.6%) and 82% are using the centres at least once a week.

- 44% of the respondents said that their nearest centre is one of the ones proposed to stay open and 48% of the respondents said that their nearest centre is one of the ones proposed to close. The remainder were centres not recognised or out of area.
- 41.5% of respondents said that they use one of the centres proposed to stay open, 50.3% said that they use one of the centres proposed to close. Note that some people selected more than one centre. The remaining 8.3% were centres not recognised or out of area.
- 43% of respondents agree with the chosen centres (57% disagree) and 58% of respondents agree with outreach proposals (42% disagree).
- The top 3 services listed when asked what a children's centre should provide were all child specific services: baby clinics/groups; stay and play sessions; early education and childcare. The remainder were adult focused groups such as parenting groups; breastfeeding groups and dads groups.
- When asked about impact, 34.3% of respondents said that they will not use a children's centre at all and 17.7% said that they will use them less often.
- The top 3 themes coming out of the consultation comments sections were: travel and location; the community and social impact; and the direct impact on children.
- 186 respondents said that they would be willing to take on a centre proposed to close, 173 of which would be interested in working with the remaining centres to continue children's centre activities. 142 respondents said that they would be willing to take on the day care provision in a centre proposed to close. However, only 101 of all respondents left contact details. No proposals were given at this stage.

Highlights from respondents living in an area of 30% or less IMD score

On the survey, we asked respondents for their post codes. This has allowed us to see whether respondents live in the areas of most deprivation, ultimately, where we have proposed to keep a children's centre open; or whether they lived outside of these areas, where ultimately, we have proposed to close the children's centres.

Of the 1746 respondents, 796 of them (45.6%) live in the most deprived areas (30% or less IMD score), 857 (49%) live in other areas of the borough and 93 (5.3%) did not supply their postcode or were out of area. This shows that 4% less people from deprived areas responded to the survey.

Of those 796 respondents in the most deprived areas, 51.7% agreed with the proposed centres and 62.3% agreed with the outreach proposals. This shows that not everyone in the most deprived areas agreed with the proposals.

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of respondents comments from the Children's Centre public survey

Questions 1 to 10 on the public survey

Questions 1- What is your status?

Question 2- How often do you use children's centre services in Rotherham?

Who responded to the consultation and how often do they use the CC services in Rotherham?

The majority of respondents to the public consultation were parents and carers (81.6%) who are current users or potential user of Rotherham Children Centres', and 82% are using the centre at least once a week. This shows that the majority of respondents to this public consultation will be affected by the proposals/ particularly were a Children Centre is proposed to close. This demonstrated that people in local communities value greatly their local CC and the services it offers for the benefit of their families and children, as well as being interested in having their view heard regarding the proposed CC closures

Questions 3 – Which is the nearest children's centre to your home?

Question 4- Which children's centre do you use?

Of the respondents to the public consultation it was not only people living near a centre proposed to closed that responded, (highest number 123 Silver Birch, number of times selected 159 – 118 Wath Victoria, number of times selected 138- 91 Kimberworth, number of times selected 115), but in fact, some of the highest numbers were from people living near a centre proposed to stay open (Number of responses received-196- Arnold Centre, number of times selected 227 150- Aughton number of times selected 147 – 116 Swinton (Brookfield), number of times selected 128. Again this shows the wealth of interest from local communities in ensuring parents/users views are taken into consideration as part of this public consultation

Question 5- Our approach is to cover the most vulnerable areas in Rotherham with a Children's Centre. The chosen centres are:

- Arnold Children's Centre
- Aughton Early Years Centre
- Coleridge Children's Centre
- Maltby Stepping Stones Children's Centre
- Rawmarsh Children's Centre
- Rotherham Central Children's Centre
- Swinton Brookfield Children's Centre
- Thrybergh/Dalton Children's Centre
- Valley Children's Centre

Do you agree with the chosen centres?

Of the 1746 responses received, 745 (43%) agreed to the proposed list of Children Centres to close, whilst 1001 (57%) disagreed. This is a difference of 14% more respondents disagreeing to the proposal list of Children Centres to close, than agreeing. Of those respondents in the most deprived areas 51.7% agreed with the proposed Centres to close. However, this also shows that nearly half of the respondents living in a deprived area where centres are proposed to remain open still do not agree with the proposed centres to close.

Of those respondents who say that they use one of the centres proposed to stay open, 77.19% agree with these Centres remaining open: - highest 85.2% The Arnold Centre, 81.82% Coleridge, 80.43% Valley In comparison 90.4% of respondents who say they use one of the centres proposed to close disagree with these centres closing- highest Silver Birch 138, Wath V 124 and Kimberworth 103.

There is a strong feeling from respondents that proposed Children's Centres to close should not close, due to (highest number of occurring themes received) perceived increased travel and cost of travel to the centres remaining open; the impact of a 'loss' of a centre on the community, limiting social interaction and increased isolation; impact on the children, in relation to their development, transition to school, their education and attainment levels

Question 6 –We propose to deliver an outreach service to all areas

(by 'outreach', we mean activities being delivered in other buildings within the local communities)

Do you agree with the proposal for outreach services?

The majority of respondents (58%) agreed with the outreach proposals. Of these 62.3% of respondents living in the most deprived areas (30% or less IMD) also agreed with the outreach proposals.

42% of all respondents disagreed with the outreach proposals. The top 4 reasons given for disagreeing with the outreach proposals were related to:

- The current centre buildings are purpose built. Community buildings may not be available or suitable
- The location of and travelling to outreach services
- Familiarity and consistency of service, location and staff; routine and stability; feeling safe, secure and comfortable
- Outreach will be inadequate, insufficient and the quality of service will drop.

The full responses can be found **Appendix 1 (Report on the Data and Themes from the Children's Centre Public Consultation)** and should be taken into consideration when planning and implementing changes to children's centres delivery.

However, it appears that respondents are in favour of the proposal to deliver an outreach service to all areas, (by outreach we mean activities being delivered in other buildings within local communities).

Question 7 Which services do you think a children's centre should provide?

The high numbers selected by respondents when asked what services a children's centre should provide, demonstrated that all the services listed in the survey are valued. The top 3 services identified were all child specific services: baby clinics/groups; stay and play sessions; early education and childcare. The remainder were adult focused groups such as parenting groups; breastfeeding groups and dads groups. This suggests that the priority for future service delivery should be based on the child focused services, followed by parenting/family services.

Question 8 What impact will the reduction of children's centres have on you?

34.3% of respondents said that they will not use a children's centre at all and 17.7% said that they will use them less often. This means that the reduction of children centre buildings could have an impact if families are choosing not to access the remaining centres. Therefore there is a risk of some families experiencing issues which may not be picked up early enough and could escalate. Consideration should be given to how access and take up of services is retained. This would need to continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Expressions of interests for continued use of Children's Centre Buildings

As part of the consultation process we sought expressions of interest from members of the public, wider stakeholders, schools, staff, private and voluntary childcare providers and the community. This relates to Q9 and Q10 below:

Q9 Would you or your organisation be willing to take on a children's centre building that is proposed to close?

If yes, would you be interested in working with the remaining children's centres so some children's centre activity could continue in the building you take on?

Q10 Would you or your organisation be willing to take on the daycare provision in a children's centre building that is proposed to close?

If yes, would you be interested in working with the remaining children's centres so some children's centre activity could continue in the building you take on?

The questions were asked to find out if there would be an interest from other parties in taking on the childcare and or to deliver early years services if a Children's Centre building is identified to close.

From the online survey 186 respondents said that they would be willing to take on a centre proposed to close, 173 of which would be interested in working with the remaining centres to continue children's centre activities.

142 respondents said that they would be willing to take on the day care provision in a centre proposed to close.

It is important to note that in relation to questions 9 and 10 that only 101 of all respondents left contact details. Some responses were from parents who may not have fully appreciated the implications of the questions they were responding to.

We also received 31 contacts via emails and letters expressing an interest in the centres. The table below gives an indication of the number of specific expressions of interest received.

Children's Centre	Number of Expressions of Interest from schools and private and voluntary providers
Rockingham	1
Park View (Kimberworth Park)	1
Wath Victoria	3
Cortonwood	2
Sue Walker (Kiveton Park)	2
Thurcroft	1
Dinnington	1
Ryton Brook	1
Silver Birch (Flanderwell)	3
Marcliff (Listerdale)	1
Meadows (Catcliffe)	1
Thorpe Hesley	1 (verbal enquiry)
Kimberworth	1 (verbal enquiry)
Valley	1

A letter was received from Sarah Champion MP in response to the public consultation. It requested that the Council, as an outcome of the current consultation, commits to consider a co-operative option as a potentially viable alternative to the proposed children centre building closures that have been consulted on. The request acknowledged that if the Council agreed, further time would be required for a fully detailed proposal to be produced on a co-operative model. This additional time requirement would be likely to impact on the current timescale to implement proposed new arrangements for Children Centre delivery by 1st April 2015. Based on the timescale suggested in Sarah Champion's proposal, it is estimated that the implementation would be likely to slip to 1st July 2015.

The co-operative model proposes to retain all Children Centre buildings. The cost is estimated to be £1.1 million to keep all buildings. Therefore the Council would not be in a position to make the required budget efficiencies within the required time period.

Next Steps for taking expressions of interest forward

The buildings proposals process agreed by Cabinet on the 19th May 2014 will be implemented. Formal applications will be considered from schools with a Children's Centre building on site in the first instance. If an application from a school is not successful or no schools apply, applications will then be

accepted from existing childcare staff for continuation of the childcare delivery and potential organisations / individuals for the childcare / community services areas. See the timelines below for more details:

Timeline for School Applications	
Date	Action
1.7.14	Proposed date for formal application process to be opened for schools with Children Centre buildings on site to apply for running of centre building, services and or childcare where relevant
31.7.14	Proposed end date for applications to be received by the LA
1.8.14	Proposed date for Applications to be assessed
6.8.14	Proposed date for successful applicants to be informed
7.8.14	Proposed date for communication to public regarding centres where there has been a successful application from a school , enabling continued delivery of childcare /delivery of early years services from the community building

Timeline for Staff Applications for Childcare Delivery	
Date	Action
6.8.14	Proposed date for formal application process to be opened for existing childcare staff for childcare provision
5.9.14	Proposed end date for Applications to be received by the LA
8.9.14	Proposed date for Applications to be assessed
10.9.14	Proposed date for successful applicants to be informed
11.9.14	Proposed date for communication to public regarding centres where there has been a successful application from staff

Timeline for External Organisations / Individual Applications	
Date	Action
6.8.14	Proposed date for formal application process to be opened for external organisations / individuals for the community/childcare element of the building
5.9.14	Proposed end date for applications to be received by the LA
8.9.14	Proposed date for Applications to be assessed
10.9.14	Proposed date for successful applicants to be informed
11.9.14	Proposed date for communication to the public regarding centres where there has been a successful application from an external organisation / individual for the community /childcare element of the building

Final Decisions / Transitions	
Date	Action
11.9.14	Proposed date for public communication regarding any Children Centre building that is definitely close by 31 st March 2015
October 2014- March	LA to work with successful applicants to ensure a smooth transition for both children, families and staff

2015	
1.4.15	Contracts issued to successful childcare/children centre service providers

We anticipate that this process should be successful in identifying sufficient providers to take on the buildings/childcare provision where Centres are identified to close. However if we are not successful the DfE will claw- back the capital investment which has been put into the centres which close.

Support for Potential Applicants

A three hour Ready for Business 'Introductory Workshop' will be provided by RiDO on Wednesday 16th July 6.00 – 9.00 pm for any schools / new organisations interested in applying to take over the Children's Centre buildings.

Rationale used as part of the Children Centre public consultation

Our proposal is to keep Children Centre buildings open in the most disadvantaged areas, in order to target services where there is the most need by children and families

Respondents challenged the proposed rationale, and suggested other alternatives, including other measures of deprivation; present usage of children/families individual Children Centre building; performance; cost of each individual Children Centre.

The index of Multiple Deprivation measure 2010 (which does include disabled parents and children) includes data on the following areas for the most deprived Super output areas across Rotherham

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Education and Skills and Training Deprivation
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation
- Crime

However the Index of Multiple Deprivation measure is a measure across the whole population. Other measures such as the Child Wellbeing Index (2009) and the Children and Young People's education rankings could provide an increased focus on children's outcomes. However taking these factors into account does not change the proposed identified 9 centre buildings to remain open.

Taking up views of respondents as to why the rationale is based on IMD data from 2010, rather than more up to date data, this is the most up to date national data set that provides information to identify the most disadvantaged super output areas across Rotherham

Usage of centres

Respondents asked if the usage/attendance of centres had been taken into consideration when identifying centres proposed to close or stay open. The rationale is based on the reaching children and families in highest need. When looking at all children and families seen at any Centre, the majority (8) of the 9 Centres proposed to stay open are in the 12 centres with the highest number of children/families accessing them (this includes children accessing centre services who do not live within the reach area). Silver Birch CC is the second highest on the numbers of children aged under 5 years and families accessing services usage. However, only 138 of the children in their reach area live in the 30% most disadvantaged SOA, and therefore this centre is proposed to close.

Performance

Respondents stated that the rationale should consider performance of centres when proposing which centres should close. When judging performance by percentages of target groups seen, then yes, some centres with the highest performance are proposed for closure. However, as these Centres also have a smaller reach area / number of children living in nationally identified disadvantaged areas then, with the exception of Silver Birch Children's Centre they are working with fewer families than other centres proposed to remain open. When judging performance by Ofsted inspection outcomes, out of the 9 centre building proposed to remain open, 1 has an outstanding judgement; 7 good and 1 requires improvement. This compares to 13 centre building proposed to close, of which 9 are good; 2 are with either satisfactory or Requires Improvement, and 2 are awaiting an Ofsted inspection. It is therefore difficult to compare performance as several centres have been inspected under a new revised Ofsted framework, as two are awaiting an inspection.

Cost of centres

Another criteria to consider as an alternative to the rationale as commented by respondents, is to look at the running costs of each building with the possibility of keeping open the ones that cost the least to run. Taking into consideration the cheapest running costs of a Children Centre building does not correlate access to Children Centre buildings in areas of highest need. The cost of each Children Centre building has evolved in relation to the initial Children Centre building programme and therefore the cost of each building varies. The building costs also reflect whether the building is standalone, or is integrated within a school or a nursery school, or is a small single room extension to an existing building. Therefore the range and number of differing variables does not allow a fair parity and comparison between the running costs of buildings.

How will an increase in the birth rate and new housing developments impact on the future access to Children Centre services, if there is a reduction of Children Centre buildings?

Rotherham is projected to have a population of 262,100 in 2015, with 16,700 aged between 0-4 years. Early Years numbers are projected to peak at 16,900 in 2016 before reducing very slowly to 16,400 in 2021. Based on GP data 1st April 2013, the most deprived areas tend to have a higher proportion of children aged 0-4 than average which is reflected in the number living in the most deprived 30% of areas. It is Rotherham South (Arnold, Coleridge and Valley Children Centres), Wentworth South (Rawmarsh, Thrybergh and Dalton Children Centres); Rotherham North (Central, Kimberworth, Park View and Rockingham Children Centres) and Wentworth North (Brookfield, Wath and Cortonwood Children Centres), which have the highest numbers living in the areas of high deprivation. These 4 areas are home to 60% of children under 5, and 74% of those from the most deprived areas. In each case, the majority of children under 5 live in areas within the 30% most deprived.

There are a few locations where the scale of proposed housing development could have a significant impact on the future need for Children Centres, namely:

- Waverley and Treeton (Rother Valley West) – Aughton and Meadows CC
- Manvers, Wath and Brampton (Wentworth North) – Brookfield, Wath and Cortonwood CC
- Rotherham Urban Area (inc Bassingthorpe Farm) Kimberworth, Park View, Rockingham CC

The increase in the potential numbers of 0-4 year old children would generate additional demand for childcare and both universal and targeted Foundation Years services. The location of planned development would thus increase the need for children's Centres in Rother Valley West (Aughton/Meadows CC), Rotherham North (Kimberworth/Park View /Rockingham) and Wentworth North (Wath, Brookfield and Cortonwood). Where a new school is proposed to be built in the future within any new housing development then the potential for including accommodation for an integrated Foundation Years outreach service on the school site will be explored.

Narrative comments from respondents for questions 5/6 and any other further comments made relating to the proposals (see appendix 1 pages 21 onwards). These comments were received through the on line survey; hard copies; through public consultation meetings and letters.

The analysis of these comments have been summarised under recurring themes (**in order of frequency of comments made**).

Travel/Location

- The most recurring theme is the potential direct impact on parents of closing Centre buildings on the additional travel, and cost to access services at the remaining Children Centre buildings. This could result in people not accessing Children Centre services in the future. Respondents felt that having a centre in walking distance allows access to all children and families. Not everybody has transport, nor can afford transport costs, or be able to travel with young and/or disabled SEND children. Poor transport links mean that some areas don't have realistic access to a

centre at all. This was a recurring theme from the public consultation, and needs to be considered. The LA is not required to provide a Centre building in walking distance. However, they are required to provide access to services locally.

Community/Social

- People want to keep a local Children's Centre in order to maintain a central place to meet others in the local area and bring the community together, and support each other. Without a centre people will become isolated which could lead to increased levels of depression, isolation and loneliness for parents, families and children. Therefore this could lead longer term, to increased pressures on Health and Social Care services.

Child impact

- Respondents commented that Children's Centres offer children a good start in life. They provide a place for children to socialise with other children, learn life skills and begin their education. Respondents stated that the future of their children will be affected if they do not have a local centre, including their child's long term attainment, attendance and education. There is a potential of an increase in 'missed' safeguarding issues for children, if there wasn't a local Children's Centre.
- **Child care and employment** -people were concerned about what might happen to the childcare service if the children's centre building closed. They considered it an essential service for many particularly those who depend on it to be able to work. If the childcare was not available there would be a direct impact on the child and the employment of parents who depend on childcare.
- Out of the 13 Children Centre buildings proposed to close, only 7 have childcare service provision on site. 142 respondents to the on line survey questionnaire said they would be willing to take on the day care provision in a Children Centre building proposed to close. Please note that the majority of respondents have not gone into the details as to how they would continue to operate the day care services. The LA has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient childcare places across Rotherham. This suggests that other parties would be interested in exploring the potential of continuing to run day care provision in centre building proposed to close.

Buildings

- Respondents value the Children Centre building as a very important part of the service. They commented that Children Centre buildings are built for purpose, safe and secure, provide everything under one roof; and provide stability and familiarity for both children and families. The use of community buildings in local areas were Children Centre buildings are too close, will not be 'fit for purpose', could be unsafe; not secure and result in people not attending services at these buildings. Respondents stated that some areas of the borough may not have suitable community buildings available.

Support

- Parents really value the support that they and their children receive from the centres and the access to experienced and skilled staff which positively impacts on the whole family. To some the support they receive is a 'lifeline'. Without a centre people will not have somewhere to go for advice and information.

Staff

- Respondents value highly the Children Centre staff, and have established relationships, bonds and trust with them. Staff are experienced, knowledgeable and very skilled and 'go that extra mile' to support children and families. Many people commented that staff should not change as part of this review, as both children and families have already established secure attachments with the staff in individual centres. If the staff were to be changed or be 'lost' through restructuring, this would negatively impact on the quality of service. Children's level of emotional attachment with key workers would also be affected in detrimental way. Parents may not continue to use Children Centre services as a result.

Activities/groups/sessions: people said they really value the groups, activities, classes, courses etc. run at centres for both children and adults and there is a need for these services to continue. If services ceased it would impact on child development and the future of families.

Capacity: Respondents expressed concern over the capacity of the centres that remain open and how they would cope with the larger reach areas. People said centres and groups will be oversubscribed with the quality of the service dropping as a result and services becoming more stretched.

Outreach: some respondents said it could work in principal if it is planned right. It would need to have a very good communication strategy in place to ensure that all parents are aware of what is happening, where and when. Services need to be regular, reliable and in suitable settings, of a good quality and run by professionals. Outreach needs to be community focused and based locally to encourage people to use it. They should be run from children's centres to provide a familiar, stable and suitable environment.

Some respondents said outreach services cannot provide the same level of service as children's centres. They will be inadequate and insufficient and don't cater for child care

Partnership working with other services

Respondents said centres provide a central place for many services including health services. Not having services working together under one roof will not only impact on children and families, but will impact on services such as the Health service and Social services further down the line.

Who is vulnerable?

Risks to vulnerable children and families

- Respondents commented that Children Centre services reach out to vulnerable people in all areas, and help to identify risks early on. Supporting parents through difficult times; helping to identify problems, including through post natal depression and providing the right advice and information and contacts has been a 'lifeline' for some. Without this support, if some centres closed, this would place vulnerable people and children at further risk, as issues would not be identified earlier and go undetected.

Respondents' comments questioned *what makes one person disadvantaged as opposed to another?* They stated that *not only deprived people of Rotherham are vulnerable and need access to a Centre...Everyone needs the service and support no matter what area they live in, what their status is or what is defined as their level of deprivations.....Parents and children are vulnerable no matter where they live.*

Respondents really value Children Centre Services, group activities and the support, advice and information they receive. A reduction of Children Centres will impact on a reduced number of children and families accessing these services, including the most vulnerable. For some families this service provision is a 'lifeline'. Respondents are concerned that a reduction of Children's Centres will result in an increase of vulnerable families and children being at 'greater risk', with a reduction of 'drop in' sessions. Therefore early identification of vulnerable children and families issues and difficulties may be missed, raising increased incidences of safeguarding, which longer term would impact on increased services/caseloads being required for vulnerable families and children longer term.

Respondents are also concerned that a reduction of Children Centre buildings may result in increased pressure on the capacity of the remaining centres, leading to larger reach areas; oversubscription, and a drop in the quality of services delivered.

Consideration needs to be given in ensuring there is sufficient access to Children Centre services across the borough, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. This is proposed to be met by the Children Centre outreach team delivering services.

Increased and improved partnership with Health and the wider Early Years workforce, through the development of a Foundation Years' service should also address the above concerns. It will be imperative that communities have information as to what services are available in their locality and how to access these, and that the wider Early Years workforce is able to support and signpost access to appropriate local services.

Geographical distribution/clustering of centres

Respondents expressed their perception that some parts of the borough are '*getting more than others....Based on the current rationale the buildings proposed to remain open are concentrated in the centre of Rotherham, rather*

than outlying areas. However, the highest concentration of deprivation is in the central area of Rotherham. Respondents feel that the spread of centres proposed to remain open regarding their geographical distribution is not equal....Too many are closing, leaving insufficient coverage... there are large parts of the borough which are left without anything in their area, whilst some have the option of more than one centre to access... why can't you make sure the 7 remaining Children Centres are spread evenly across the borough?

Consideration needs to be given to addressing respondents concerns and views regarding perceived inequality of geographical distribution of the number of Children Centres proposed to remain open across Rotherham. In addition, this links to respondents concerns regarding the impact of 'losing centres' and the potential for reduced numbers of children and families accessing Children Centre services, in the future, including the most vulnerable.

Ideas and suggestions for the future of the service

We also received comments and views about the future of the Children Centre services. These included suggestions of the Council to use other funding, private providers/schools take on the Children Centre buildings, review of staffing, and opportunities to create further revenue and income sources. Some of these avenues have already been considered and implemented, eg staffing in childcare provision.

Partnership working

There are lot of positive comments and views from respondents with regard to effective partnership working that is already in place within Children Centre service delivery. Many respondents described the significant impact and difference accessing a Children Centre had made to improving their lives.

The recurring themes raised by respondents throughout this public consultation need to be considered as part of the decision making process regarding the proposals for Children Centre delivery from the 1st April 2015

5. Summary of findings from the public consultation

- Respondents really value the quality of services, the support they and their children receive from experienced staff across Rotherham's Children Centres, especially the baby clinic service; stay and play and childcare
- Respondents value that the Children Centre buildings are 'fit for purpose' and provide a welcoming community hub
- Respondents consider that organisations/services work well in partnership to deliver services.
- The majority of respondents do not agree to the proposal to close children Centre buildings.
- Respondents are concerned about the impact of the proposed reduction in the number of Children Centre buildings will have on their own and their children's ability to access the remaining centres proposed to stay open, including the most vulnerable children and families and; fairness of geographical distribution; and communities feeling isolated

- Respondents questioned the rationale used and felt that other criteria should also be considered to decide which centres are proposed to remain open and those proposed to close.
- The majority of respondents agree to the proposed outreach service, but have concerns about the effectiveness and quality of the service if delivered from other buildings in a local community.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

Consideration from information and views received from respondents as an outcome of the Children's Centre public consultation appears to suggest further consideration should be given to the initial proposal. This is in terms of the number of centre buildings proposed to close, in order that a more even geographical distribution is achieved, enabling more children and families, including this most vulnerable children and families, are able to more readily access a children's centre building.

On the basis of the rationale used throughout this public consultation; where Centre buildings are proposed to remain open (if they have more than 400 children living in the 30% most deprived SOA), the proposal should be reconsidered to include a further 3 Children Centre buildings to remain open. This would support respondents concerns regarding the following issues: travel and equity of geographical spread of proposed centre buildings in some areas across the Borough.

The additional proposed Centres to remain open are Wath Victoria Children's Centre building (374 children living in the most 30% SOA); Dinnington Children's Centre building (352 children living in the most 30% SOA) and Park View Children's Centre building (345 children living in the most 30% SOA. These 3 Children's Centres are the next Centres which have the highest number of children living in the 30% most deprived SOA.

If it was considered to increase the number of Centre buildings from 9 to 12, it would increase the number of families and children able to access a Children's Centre building in their locality, including the most vulnerable. These are as follows:

In the period 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014:

- 10,571 Rotherham children aged under 5 years accessed Children's Centre services at least 1 Rotherham Children's Centre
 - 59% of those children seen accessed a Centre whose building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 75% if the 3 additional centres were to remain open
- 6,278 Rotherham children aged under 5 years living in a 30% most disadvantaged SOA accessed at least 1 Rotherham Children's Centre
 - 74% of those children seen living in a 30% most disadvantaged SOA accessed a Centre whose building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 88%

- 3,002 Rotherham children aged under 5 years and living in a household dependent on workless benefits accessed at least 1 Rotherham Children's Centre.
 - 71% of those children seen living in a household dependent on workless benefits accessed a Centre whose building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 88%

The rationale is to keep Children Centre buildings open in the most disadvantaged areas

As of 1st April 2013

- 80% of all BME children in Rotherham live in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 84%, if the 3 additional centres were to remain open
- 61% of all children living in households dependent on workless benefits live in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 73%
- 71% of all children living in a SOA within a 30% most disadvantaged nationally live in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 84%
- 61% of disabled parents with at least 1 child under 5 years lives in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 74%
- 61% of teenage mothers with at least 1 child under 5 years lives in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 72%
- 58% of lone parents with at least 1 child under 5 years lives in an area where a Children's Centre building is proposed to remain open. This would increase to 71%

This would result in one or more Children's Centre buildings located in each of the 7 Health locality team areas, and 7 Area Assembly boundaries. This addresses some respondent's views regarding the need to align Children's Centre buildings to both Health and Area Assemblies. If Dinnington Children's Centre building remained open, this would mean that each of the 11 deprived neighbourhood communities would have a Children Centre building. If Wath Children's Centre building remained open this would take into consideration the particularly high prevalence of disabled parents in the Wath area.

The cost of retaining 3 additional centre buildings and services will be £350,000

7. Recommendations of options based on the findings from the public consultation

Option 1

1. Accept the original proposals, of retaining the 9 identified Children's Centre buildings, and closing the remaining 13 identified Children Centre buildings.

OR

Option 2

2. To retain 3 additional Children Centre buildings in addition to the original proposal. These are Wath Victoria Children's Centre (Wentworth North); Dinnington Children's Centre (Rother Valley South) and Park View Children's Centre (Rotherham North)

Frances Hunt – Assistant Head of School Effectiveness Service (Birth to 11)

Mary Smith – Early Years and Child Care Strategy Manager