

Early Help Consultation (Part two)

For Kirklees Council

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This research has been carried out in compliance with the International standard ISO 20252, (the International Standard for Market and Social research), The Market Research Society’s Code of Conduct and UK Data Protection law

1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction

Qa Research was commissioned by Kirklees Council to provide research support in connection with a statutory public consultation on proposed changes to children, young people and family support services in Kirklees.

This report includes the findings from the consultation survey and eleven focus groups facilitated by Qa Research. Also included is an analysis of consultation with young people and parents carried out by Kirklees Council staff and analysis of informal responses collected at public information events and emails received via the consultation mailbox.

3. Aims and objectives

The main objective of the consultation was to consult with members of communities in Kirklees over an eight-week period to understand their views and opinions on specific proposals to change the way in which children, young people and family support services are delivered in Kirklees.

The proposals centre upon the development of four Early Help areas in Batley and Spen, Dewsbury and Mirfield, Huddersfield and Kirklees Rural (Colne and Holme Valleys, Denby Dale and Kirkburton). Three levels of help are proposed:

Community Plus – under this model the council will no longer deliver open access youth provision or Children’s Centre provision but will support local community and voluntary sector groups to do so instead.

Targeted – under this model, families who have been identified as experiencing a number of different problems will be allocated a key worker who will work with the whole family to provide support and help them access the services they need.

Complex – this model of help is for children, young people and families who, due to their health, disability, behaviour or family environment require specialist or statutory assessment and/or intervention.

The proposals also outline how the council intends to redefine the use of Children’s Centre and youth service buildings by establishing a central hub in each Early Help area along with one designated Children’s Centre (which meets the Government’s statutory requirements) and a number of delivery sites.

4. Methodology

An engagement exercise preceded the statutory public consultation to gather views on the principles behind the proposed changes. The engagement exercise ran over a four-week period during July and August 2016. Qa Research worked with Kirklees Council to design an engagement survey and accompanying information booklet. Paper versions of the booklet and survey were distributed by Kirklees Council to Children’s Centres and other community venues across the borough. Qa Research also designed an online version of the survey accessible via www.kirkleestalk.org. An email mailbox was also set up as a further option for the public to provide comments. Alongside the quantitative engagement, Kirklees Council also engaged with young people through discussion groups.

Findings from the engagement phase revealed that the public required further detailed information on how the approach to early help could work in practice along with more detailed information on the proposed location of buildings within the Early Help Areas. These findings informed the development of the statutory consultation phase.

For the statutory public consultation, Qa Research worked with Kirklees Council to design a consultation survey and accompanying information booklet. Paper versions of the booklet and survey were distributed by Kirklees Council to Children's Centres and other community venues across the borough. Qa Research also designed an online version of the survey accessible via www.kirkleestalk.org. An email mailbox was set up as a further option for the public to provide comments and feedback on the proposals. A total of 1,323 responses were received. This is comparable with a similar consultation carried out in 2011 on proposals to reconfigure Family Support and Children's Centre services (1,166 responses).

Qa Research also facilitated a series of focus groups with users of Children's Centres and youth services. Kirklees Council ran public information events and gathered further feedback from users of Children's Centres and youth services via discussion groups. A summary of the consultation activity is included below:

Consultation survey (paper & online)	1,323 responses
Qa Research focus groups	Young Leaders Care Leaver's Forum Savile Town Children's Centre Golcar Children's Centre Birkby Children's Centre Parents of children with additional needs (PCAN) Batley East Children's Centre Meltham Children's Centre Grange Moor Children's Centre Newsome Children's Centre LGBTQ young people group (Yorkshire Mixtures)
Kirklees Council focus groups/discussions	Rawthorpe & Dalton Children's Centre Chestnut Children's Centre Dewsbury Moor Children's Centre Ravensthorpe Children's Centre Slaithwaite Children's Centre Basement Young People Centre Honley Junior Youth Club Slaithwaite Junior Group Honley High School
Submissions from users of youth services	Kirklees Young People Facebook page Crow Nest Park Adventure Playground Holme and Colne Valley Youth Forum Deputation Skelmanthorpe Youth Club
Submissions from users of Children's Centres	Crosland Moor Children's Centre
Partner responses	Mirfield Community Trust Action for Children IYSS VCS Partners Consultation Event

	Matrix Project
Ward consultation responses	69 responses from individual councillors
Email mailbox responses	Five responses from individual members of the public
Kirklees Council Public Information Sessions	40 events were held across Kirklees

5. Consultation survey

This section details the findings from the survey element of the statutory consultation on the Early Help proposals.

Notes:

Please note that when interpreting results throughout this report not all percentages will equal 100% due to rounding (with any figures of 0.5 or higher being rounded up).

Some questions were multiple response questions: respondents had the option of giving more than one response. These percentages may be higher than 100%.

Where the figure is shown as 0% at least one respondent gave this answer but the total count makes up less than 0.5% of the overall total; a blank shows no-one has given this answer. Where NET figures are referred to this is where scale responses have been netted into one response to show overall levels of agreement and disagreement.

Open ended verbatim questions (i.e. with no predefined responses) have been coded, with responses grouped together and shown as percentages.

Due to this consultation being done via self-completion surveys and with routing for certain questions; the base size (that is the number of valid responses to each question) will vary; the base size can be found at the bottom of each chart/table.

Sub-group analysis

The survey responses have been crosstabbed against the following:

- Type of respondent
- Frequency of use of services
- Demographics (gender, age etc)
- Geographical groupings by the four proposed hub areas

Where sub-group analysis has been performed, findings and commentary on any statistically significant differences follows the initial survey findings commentary.

5.1 Key points from part one engagement

The statutory consultation was preceded by an engagement exercise designed to gather views on the principles behind the proposals to establish Early Help Areas – a total of 216 responses were received. Key points to note from this exercise include the following:

- Overall, 86% of respondents agreed with the Council's vision for early help in Kirklees.
- Around two thirds (67%) of respondents were in agreement with the proposals to develop Early Help hubs, however 17% disagreed and 15% neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposals. Respondents indicated that they needed more information about the proposed location of the hubs and how the proposals would work in practice.

- The majority of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to Targeted (85%) and Complex services (88%), but fewer were in agreement with the Community Plus model (71%). Further comments indicated concerns around the role of volunteers within service delivery.

Findings from the engagement exercise have informed the development of the statutory consultation including provision of more detailed information on the proposed locations of the Early Help hubs, delivery sites and case studies describing how the Community Plus, Targeted, and Complex models could work in practice.

5.2 Sample profile

The following tables show the profile of those who took part in the survey.

Table 1 – Age and gender

	n	%
Gender		
Male	417	33%
Female	863	67%
Age group		
Under 16	470	36%
16-18	194	15%
19-24	55	4%
25-29	99	8%
30-44	287	22%
45-59	150	12%
60-64	16	1%
65 or over	26	2%
Base: 1297		

The majority of respondents were female (67%), in terms of age, just over a third (36%) were under 16, and a further 22% were aged 30-44.

Table 2 - Ethnicity

	n	%
Ethnic group		
Asian/Asian British	291	23%
Black/Black British	29	2%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	64	5%
White	866	67%
Prefer not to say	33	3%
Base: 1,283		

In total, 67% of respondents were White and around a quarter (23%) were Asian/Asian British.

Table 3 – Type of respondent

	<i>n</i>	%
Completing questionnaire as...		
Local resident in Kirklees	510	40%
User of youth services in Kirklees	411	32%
Full-time parent/carer for someone aged 0-19 years	368	29%
Student	107	8%
A Kirklees Council employee	96	7%
From a voluntary or community organisation	73	6%
School staff or Governor	36	3%
Part-time carer (including grandparent) for someone aged 0-19 years	25	2%
Children's Centre volunteer	26	2%
A health service employee	21	2%
A local councillor	8	1%
Young person	9	1%
Other	13	1%
Other job role given	9	1%
Base: 1,283		

As illustrated, 40% of respondents were local residents, 32% used youth services, 29% were a full-time parent/carer for someone 0-19 years, and 7% described themselves as a Kirklees Council employee. Further detail on the profile of respondents is included in the Appendices.

5.3 Current use of Children's Centres and youth services

The consultation survey asked respondents a series of questions about their current use of services for children, young people and families in Kirklees.

5.3.1 Children's Centres

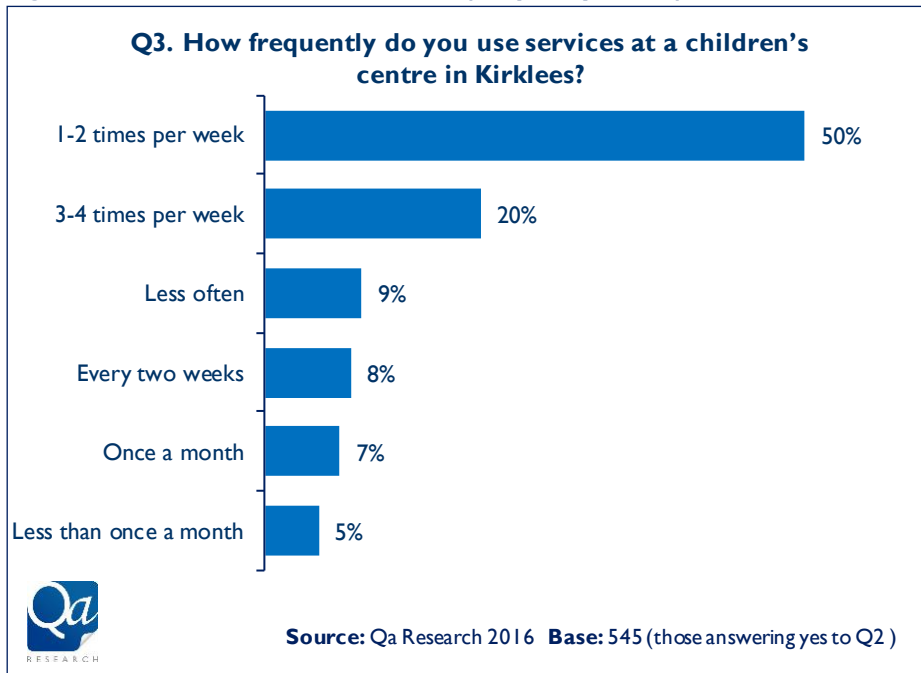
Overall, 44% of respondents had used Children's Centre services. The following table shows the centres used by respondents.

Table 4 – Children's centres used

	<i>n</i>	%
Do you currently use services at Children's Centres in Kirklees?		
Almondbury	39	3%
Batley East	38	3%
Birkby	43	3%
Birstall & Birkenshaw	48	4%
Carlinghow & Wilton	27	2%
Chestnut	44	4%
Chickenley, Earlsheaton & Shawcross	34	3%
Cleckheaton	16	1%
Colne Valley	44	4%
Crosland Moor	56	5%
Dewsbury Moor & Scout Hill	55	4%
Flatts & Eastborough	20	2%
Golcar, Cowlersley & Milnsbridge	84	7%
Gomersal & Littleton	13	1%
Heckmondwike	17	1%
Holme Valley North – Meltham Moor	23	2%
Grange Moor & Kirkburton	9	1%
Mirfield	45	4%
Newsome	17	1%
Lowerhouses	17	1%
Ravensthorpe	83	7%
Rawthorpe & Dalton	42	3%
Savile Town	35	3%
Staincliffe & Healey	17	1%
Thornhill	18	1%
Thornhill Lees	35	3%
I do not use any children's centre services	685	56%
Base: 1,230		

As shown below, half of those using Children's Centres accessed services once or twice a week. A further 20% used the centres 3-4 times per week.

Figure 1 – Children's centre services (frequency of use)



Sub-group analysis

Respondents from the Batley and Spenningsdale (81%), Huddersfield (83%), and Dewsbury and Mirfield (87%) areas were significantly more likely than those from Kirklees Rural (58%) to be accessing Children's Centre services frequently (1-2 or 3-4 times per week).

The following table shows the services used at the Children’s Centres.

Table 5 – Services used at Children’s Centres

	<i>n</i>	%
Please tell us if you have used any of these services or support in the last 12 months?		
Stay and play sessions	315	61%
One stop shop services (including finance legal and housing advice)	126	24%
Other (please give detail)	126	24%
Parenting Courses	113	22%
Adult education/training	87	17%
Health care and advice	86	17%
Child’s Journey Activities (e.g. Infant Massage, Let’s Talk, Let’s Play, Let’s Move)	85	16%
Healthy eating and healthy lifestyle advice	73	14%
One-to-one family support	67	13%
Advice on benefits (Citizens Advice Bureau drop in)	62	12%
Support to return to employment	57	11%
Breastfeeding support	53	10%
Domestic Violence Support	36	7%
Young Parents group	28	5%
Antenatal support	23	4%
Childminding Network	9	2%
Base: 519		

As illustrated above, respondents were most likely to have accessed a Stay and Play session (61%). Around a quarter (24%) had used one stop shop services and ‘other’ services – these included non-specific services, general support, health visits and baby clinic. Just less than a quarter (22%) had accessed parenting courses.

5.3.2 Youth Services

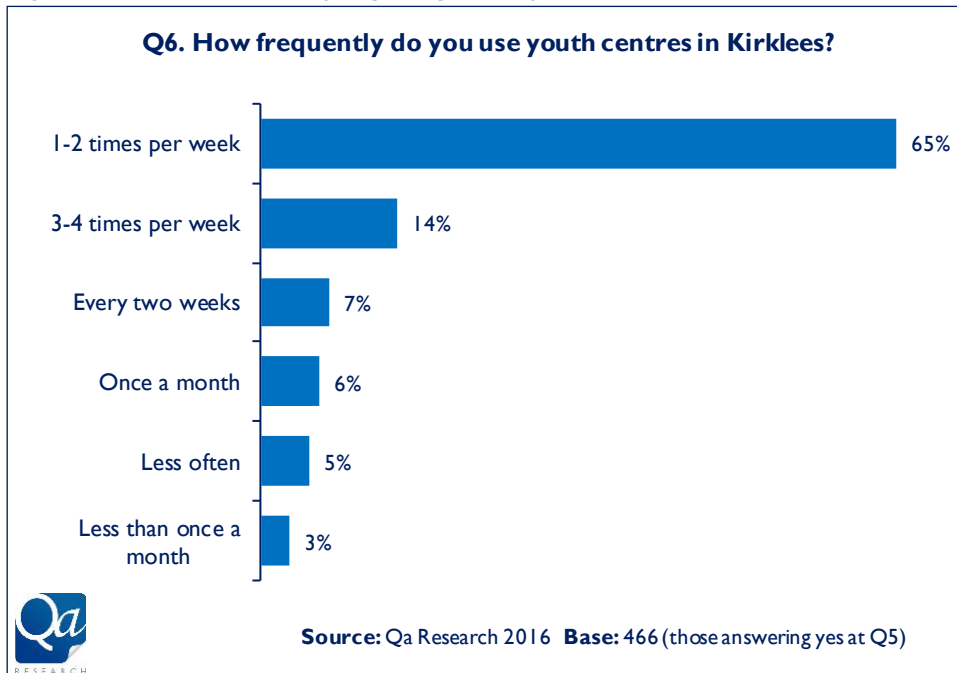
Overall, 37% of respondents stated that they currently used services at youth centres in Kirklees. As shown in the following table, respondents were most likely to be accessing mobile units (10%), Crow Nest centre (8%), the Young Batley Centre (7%), and Paddock Young People's Centre (7%).

Table 6 – Youth centres used

	<i>n</i>	%
Do you currently use services at Youth Centres in Kirklees?		
I do not use any youth centre services	766	63%
Mobile Units	123	10%
Crow Nest Park Centre and Adventurous Play site	100	8%
Young Batley Centre	81	7%
Paddock Young People's Centre	87	7%
Dewsbury Arena	60	5%
Slaithwaite Town Hall – The Basement Youth Club	60	5%
Young Dewsbury – Dewsbury Town Hall	52	4%
Outreach Centres	50	4%
Netherton Village Hall	45	4%
Brian Jackson Centre – The Basement Young People and Children's Space	42	3%
Skelmanthorpe Youth and Community Centre	35	3%
Youth work via schools	33	3%
Lowerhouses Lounge	12	1%
Phoenix Centre – Holmfirth	6	0%
Base: 1,220		

As shown below, around two thirds (65%) of those who used the centres were regular users who accessed services once or twice a week.

Figure 2 – Youth centres (frequency of use)



The consultation survey also asked about the use of various specific services for young people.

Table 7 – Use of services for children/young people

	<i>n</i>	%
Please tell us if you/your family has used any of these young people services/support in the last 12 months		
I do not use any youth services	515	42%
Youth Clubs (13-19 years)	300	24%
Duke of Edinburgh Award	297	24%
Sports and Activity Provision	154	12%
Junior Youth Clubs (8-12 years)	128	10%
Schools Engagement – Alternative education, Lunchtime and After School Groups.	117	9%
Adventurous Activities	94	8%
Off Site Activity and Residential	86	7%
Disability Youth Provision (up to 24 years)	46	4%
Mobile Provision (AKA: The Youth Bus)	46	4%
1:1 Referrals through Early Help	54	4%
LGBT Youth Provision	38	3%
Young Women’s Provision	32	3%
Youth Forum and Young Leaders Provision	32	3%
Other (please give detail)	40	3%
Looked After Children Provision	20	2%
Base: 1,239		

As shown above, respondents were most likely to be using youth clubs for those aged 13-19 years (24%) and the Duke of Edinburgh Award (24%). A further 12% were using sports and activity provision, and 10% were using junior youth clubs for those aged 8-12 years.

5.4 Impact of proposed changes to open access services

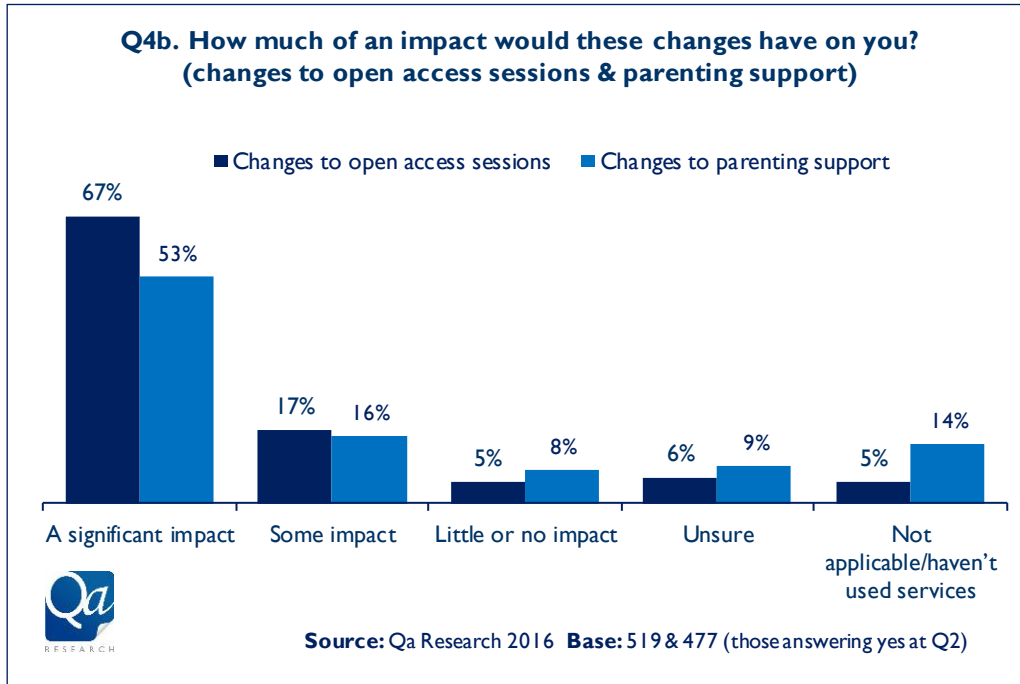
The consultation booklet described the Council’s proposal to cease the direct delivery of open access Children’s Centre and youth provision and replace this with provision under the Community Plus model (e.g. the Council supporting community/voluntary sector groups to develop and deliver services).

The consultation survey asked respondents to describe the impact that these proposals could have for them. Users of Children’s Centres were also asked to describe the likely impact of proposed changes to parenting support.

5.4.1 Children's Centres

Around two thirds of respondents (67%) using Children's Centres stated that the proposed changes to open access services would have 'significant impact' for them. A further 17% stated that the changes would have 'some impact'. Slightly fewer respondents stated that the proposed changes to parenting support would have 'significant' (53%) or 'some' impact (16%).

Figure 3 – Impact of changes to open access sessions and parenting support



Sub-group analysis

Respondents from the Batley and Spen (68%), Huddersfield (70%), and Dewsbury and Mirfield (71%) areas were significantly more likely than those from Kirklees Rural (51%) to state that the proposed changes would have 'significant' impact for them.

Respondents were asked to describe in more detail the potential impact of the proposals for them.

Table 8 – Impact of proposed changes (Children’s Centres)

	<i>n</i>	%
Please tell us more about how these proposed changes would affect you		
Will be losing a very helpful service	63	19%
Negative affect on children's social life	59	17%
It helped to meet other parents/feel supported	49	14%
Not sure where we will get support from now	40	12%
Other	41	12%
Would feel depressed/isolated without	28	8%
Extremely valuable to the child's development/learning of skills	23	7%
No safe/controlled environment for children	20	6%
Lack of centre's/high demand	18	5%
No access - would have nothing within walking distance/local	13	4%
Local children's centre is hugely important	14	4%
No support for vulnerable families	10	3%
Lack of early intervention support would be a problem	6	2%
General negative comment	8	2%
No answer	8	2%
Don't know	6	2%
Negative affect on society as a whole	5	1%
Less convenient travel	5	1%
Base: 339		

Further analysis of the comments made by respondents reveals general concerns around the loss of the open access services, the impact on the child’s social life, fewer opportunities to meet other parents and the potential for increased social isolation. The following quotes illustrate the types of comments made:

“As a parent of two young children, having open access services was extremely beneficial to me when I was feeling low and isolated. Attending stay and play helped me meet other parents. Attending baby massage gave some structure and focus to my week.”

“I am on my own, this is the only 'family support' I have for me and my children. The centre staff have empowered me to make changes.”

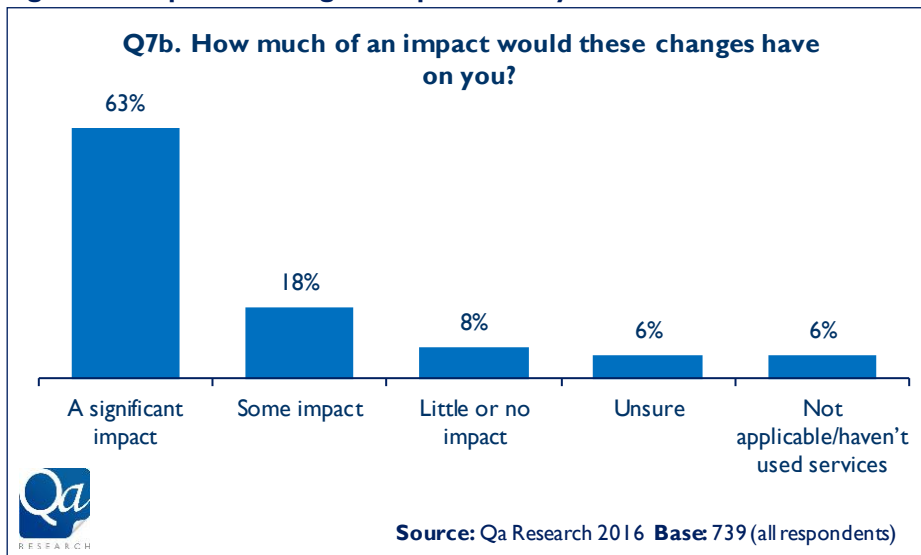
“Local access and support is valuable to all parents. These services provide a vital lifeline to new mums and families as a means of reducing social isolation. Also it’s a good idea to be able to speak to healthcare staff i.e. when health visitors are in clinics at same time as stay and plays. Sometimes it is vital to be able to see someone in a less formal setting to discuss your feelings etc. Also good to talk to other families about this. The centres are also a valuable source of local information.”

“The stay and play sessions are a great way for my son to interact with other children before attending nursery. It gets him used to new people and creates bonds between the more frequent visitors. It also gives me a chance to speak to other parents, discuss milestones and give and receive advice on parenting and illnesses.”

5.4.2 Youth Services

Overall, 63% of respondents using youth services stated that the proposed changes to open access services would have ‘significant impact’ for them. A further 18% stated that the changes would have ‘some impact’.

Figure 4 – Impact of changes to open access youth services



Sub-group analysis

Respondents from the Batley and Spenningsdale area (90%) were significantly more likely than those from Huddersfield (57%), Dewsbury and Mirfield (78%) and Kirklees Rural (55%) to state that the proposed changes would have ‘significant’ impact for them.

Respondents were asked to describe in more detail the potential impact of the proposals for them.

Table 9 – Impact of proposed changes (youth services)

	n	%
Please tell us more about how these proposed changes would affect you		
Loss of support and development offered from the Duke of Edinburgh/Wacky	120	22%
No activities in our area/nothing to do for young people	92	17%
No safe place to go/keep kids out of trouble	83	15%
General negative comment	64	12%
Emotional impact on young people	66	12%
Less opportunity to socialise	66	12%
Negative impact on skills/personal development	53	10%
Will be losing a very helpful service	50	9%
Other	42	8%
Increase antisocial behaviour in teenagers	25	5%
Impact on staffing	9	2%
Services won't be the same	13	2%
Don't know	3	1%
No answer	7	1%
Base: 539		

As illustrated, respondents were concerned about the potential lack of activities for young people, fewer safe places to go, and the emotional and social impact. A loss of support and opportunities for development from the Duke of Edinburgh award was also highlighted as a potential impact. The following quotes illustrate the types of comments made:

“As parents of 5 children and youth, an important lifeline to our children being active would be totally cut off.”

“Boredom nothing to do for young people, it could lead to an increase in street related anti-social behaviour.”

“I am a young person but I am not considered at risk so under the plans to halt open access youth work, there will no longer be provision for me. I have attended youth clubs and residential for a few years now and it has really helped me gain confidence and new skills as well as support when I have had problems.”

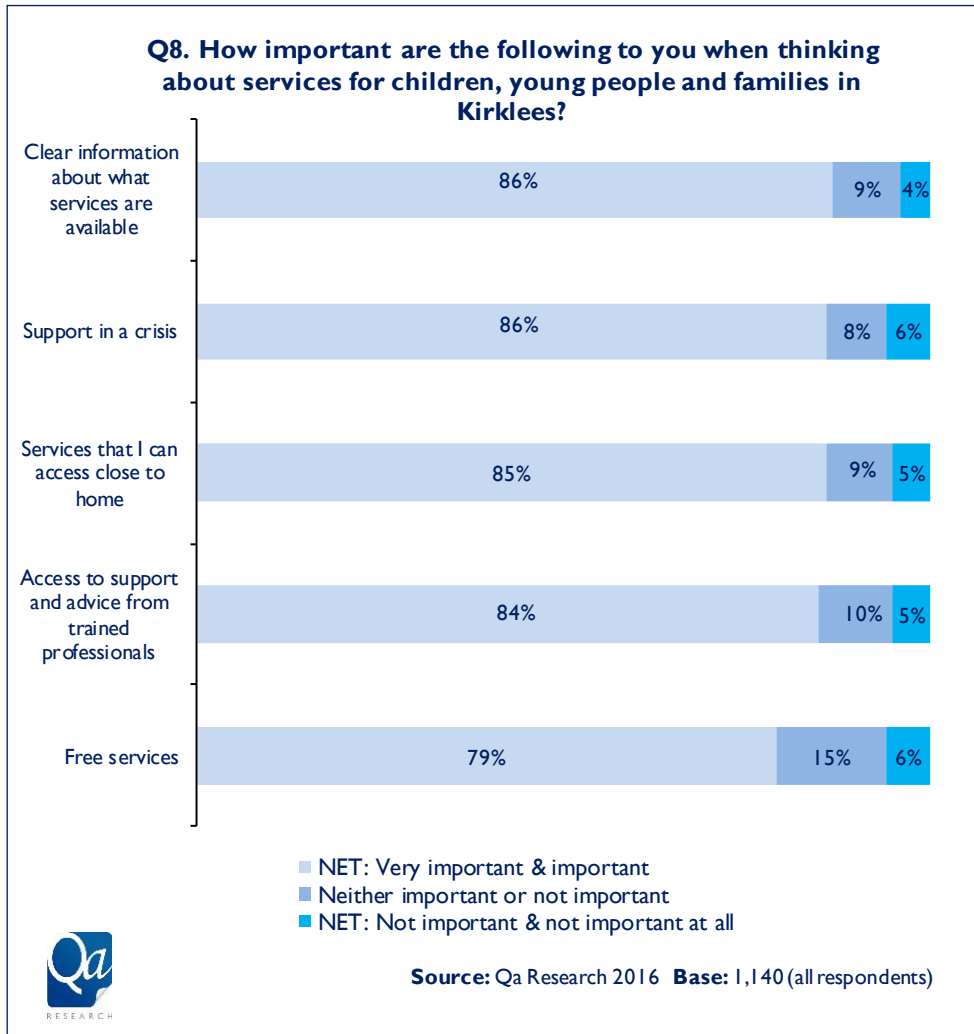
“I would have less skills and confidence for my future. They [Duke of Edinburgh award] also are really fun and great for my CV - without them I wouldn't be able to do many interesting things without spending money I don't have and finding help.”

“The youth centre is an integral part of local children's lives. They are able to access activities and support in a safe environment at a cost which is affordable to everyone.”

5.5 Aspects of services and their importance

The consultation survey asked respondents to identify which aspects of services for children and families were of importance for them.

Figure 5 – Aspects of services and their importance



As illustrated, the majority of respondents stated that all of these aspects were important to them, with ‘clear information about what services are available’ and ‘support in a crisis’ of most importance (86%), followed by ‘services that I can access close to home’ (85%), and ‘access to support and advice from trained professionals’ (84%). Respondents were less likely to say that ‘free services’ were of importance (79%).

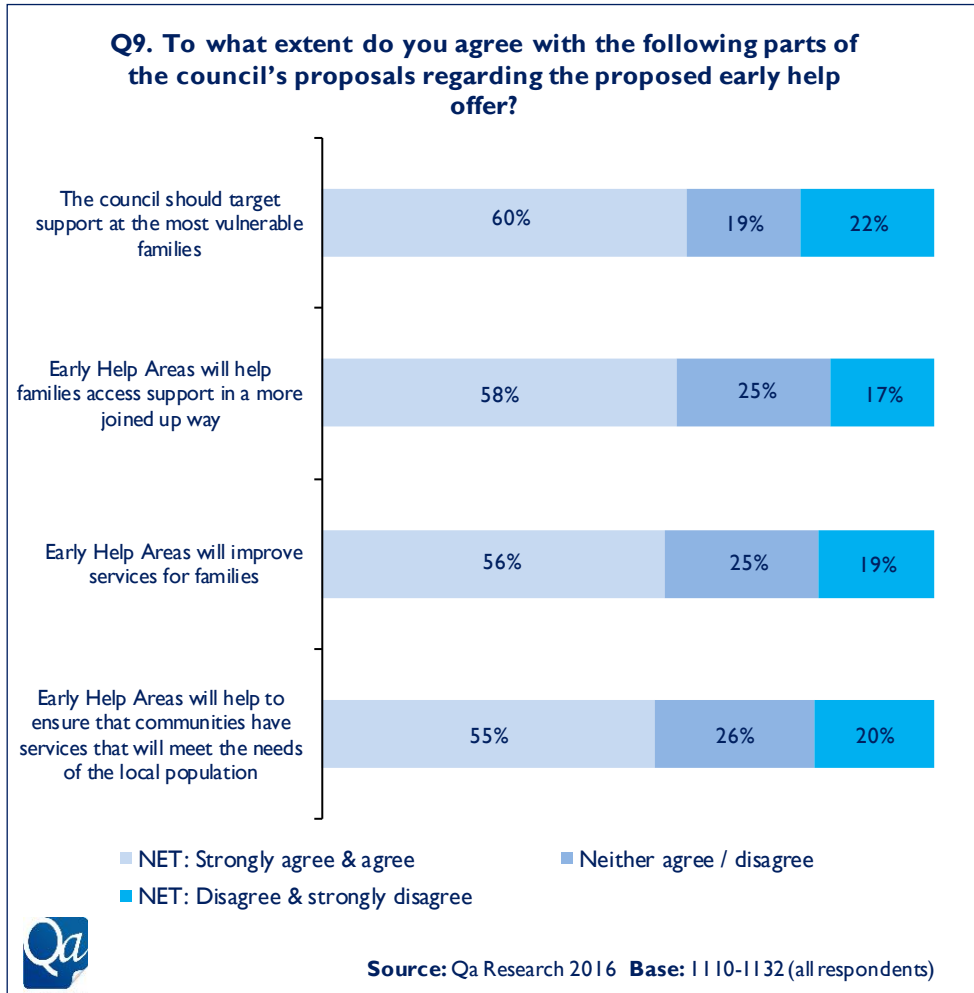
Sub-group analysis

Users of Children’s Centre services were more likely than those using youth services to state that services close to home were important (93% vs. 86%). Parents of children with additional needs or disabilities were significantly more likely than other parents to state that free services were important (86% vs. 78%), this was also the case for support in a crisis (92% vs. 85%).

5.6 Views on the principles behind Early Help Areas

Respondents were asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the principles behind the proposed Early Help Areas.

Figure 6 – Views on the principles behind the Early Help Areas



As shown above, levels of agreement were highest for the statement ‘the Council should target support at the most vulnerable families’ (60%); however, compared to the other statements, this statement also attracted the highest levels of disagreement (22%). The main area of disagreement related to the belief that all families need early support. The following examples illustrate the type of comments made:

“All families need help sometimes, I wouldn’t be seen as a parent in need but I really needed the support of the children’s centre and other mums.”

“What about those families that do not necessarily meet the threshold but still need support in order not to become vulnerable?”

“Pride becomes an issue for accessing services if you have to identify as ‘most disadvantaged’ to access?”

Over half agreed with the statements about the proposed Early Help Areas, however around a quarter neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements. The main reasons for disagreement in relation to this series of statements were fairly similar:

- Concerns about fewer services locally and the requirement to travel to access them
- Less support will be available/some people will be left out
- Services will be harder to access
- A lack of preventative services resulting in missed need

The following examples illustrate the type of comments made:

“Families will not be able to get the same support as often and regular.”

“I will have to travel far to access support.”

“Lack of open access provision is a barrier to first contact and need identification.”

“Can't just drop in when need help. It makes it harder to get help and makes it more formal.”

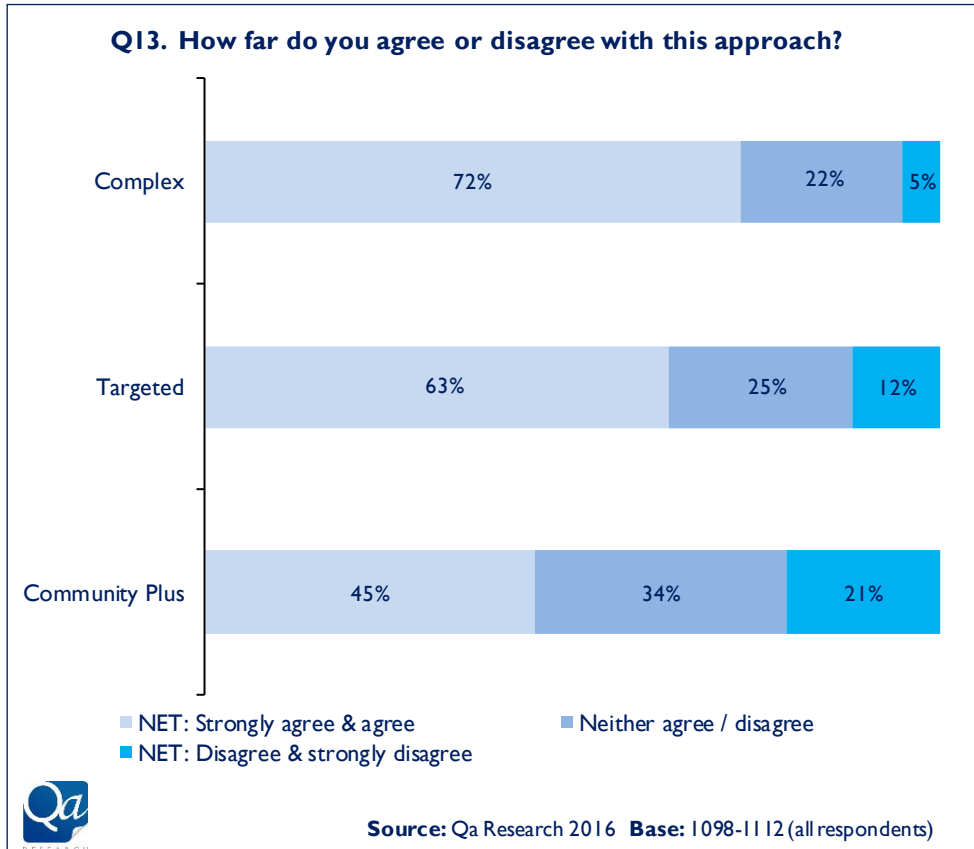
Sub-group analysis

Kirklees Council employees were more likely than other respondents to disagree with the statement ‘Early Help Areas will improve services for families’ (28% vs. 18%). This was also the case for the statement ‘Early Help Areas will help to make sure that communities have the services to meet the needs of the local population (29% vs. 19%). However, Kirklees employees were more likely than other respondents to agree with the statement ‘the council should target support at the most vulnerable/disadvantaged families (69% vs. 59%).

5.7 Views on the proposed three levels of help

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the Council's proposed models of help, e.g. Community Plus, Targeted, and Complex.

Figure 7 – Views on the three levels of help



As shown above, respondents were more likely to agree with the 'Complex' approach (72%) and the 'Targeted' approach (63%) and less likely to agree with the 'Community Plus' approach (45%). Levels of disagreement were highest for the Community Plus approach (21%) as were the proportion of respondents stating 'neither agree nor disagree' (34%) – this suggests a degree of uncertainty about the proposed model.

The following table illustrates the main areas of disagreement in relation to the Community Plus model. As illustrated the main concerns are whether the community and voluntary sector will be able to provide the services needed and whether there will be enough volunteers.

Table 10 – Reasons for disagreement with Community plus approach

	<i>n</i>	%
Reasons for disagreement with Community plus approach		
Community and voluntary sector not adequate to provide the services needed for families	61	33%
General negative comment	30	16%
Other	28	15%
Don't believe there will be enough volunteers	18	10%
Will lead to further, more serious issues	13	7%
Youth workers and youth clubs are more important	13	7%
The current system of support works	11	6%
No relevant answer	9	5%
No answer	7	4%
I don't know	5	3%
Accessing the help would be difficult	6	3%
Base: 186		

The following examples illustrate the type of comments made:

“Communities are already stretched with voluntary support of other services including our libraries! Only so many volunteers with limited time...”

“Community plus is unclear what this means. I am concerned an emphasis on community volunteering will see lots happening in affluent communities, but concerned in more deprived areas whether there will be the motivation for volunteering and if so will the right safeguarding measures be in place?”

“If all these volunteers come forward??? will they have the skills to manage tricky young people? young people who need support but find engaging difficult, will these young people be then excluded?”

“If you can provide the resources for community groups to do this then why are you saying you can't keep things open?”

As mentioned previously, fewer respondents were in disagreement with the Targeted and Complex models. For those in disagreement the main areas of concern were in relation to whether a key worker would be able to offer sufficient support and deal with the workloads. The following examples illustrate the type of comments made:

“A key worker is a very good idea. It has to be backed up by a system where someone else can help as required though - no key worker can be available 100% of the time and they may be needed at any time.”

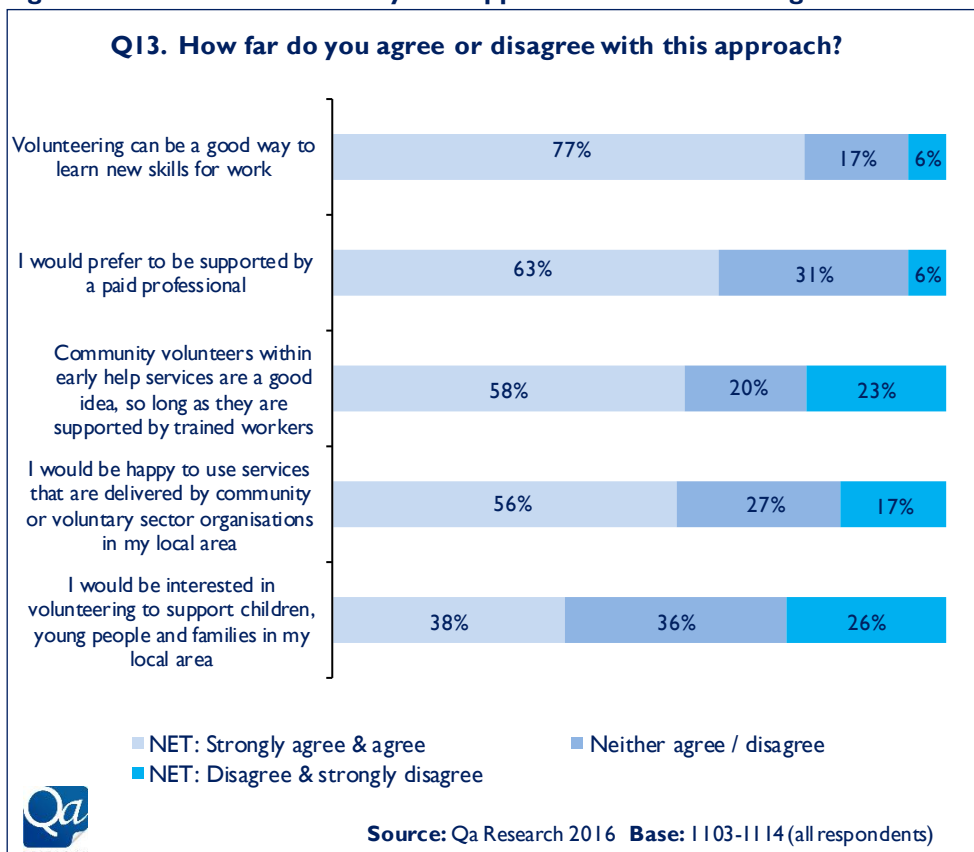
“If that key worker leaves then the relationship and information may be lost. I do not have the same rapport with all staff at Kirklees; if the relationship is poor then they will not have my trust. “

“Will there be enough keyworkers to do the work? why can't it stay as it is - where it is proven to be working?”

Views on voluntary/community sector service delivery and volunteering

The consultation booklet described the Community Plus proposals for voluntary/community sector service delivery supported by volunteers. The consultation survey asked for views on various aspects of this proposed approach.

Figure 8 – Views on Community Plus approach and volunteering



As illustrated, respondents were most likely to agree that volunteering can be a good way to learn new skills for work (77%), and over half were in agreement that ‘community volunteers (supported by trained workers) are a good idea’ (58%). Similarly, over half (56%) of respondents stated that they would be happy to use services delivered by voluntary/community sector organisations.

However, it is evident that a substantial proportion of respondents would prefer to be supported by a paid professional (63%). Responses were mixed in terms of interest in volunteering, with 38% stating that they would be interested, 36% were unsure, and 26% stating that they would not be interested.

Sub-group analysis

Parents of children with disabilities/additional needs were significantly more likely than other parents to disagree with the statement 'community volunteers within early help services are a good idea, so long as they are supported by trained professionals' (31% vs. 22%).

In terms of area, respondents in Batley and Spenningsdale (39%) were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement compared with those in Huddersfield (21%), Dewsbury and Mirfield (23%), and Kirklees Rural (23%).

Reasons for disagreement

Those in disagreement with the statements on volunteering and the use of volunteers shared similar concerns. For example, comments were made around the level of training /reliability of volunteers, a lack of continuity, a preference for paid professionals. The following examples illustrate the type of comments made:

"Volunteers are not appropriately trained, come and go as it pleases them, they may decide to volunteer elsewhere and services become patchy."

"I agree if 'when appropriate' is all the time. Delivering services is a skilled job. Dealing with those in need is a tricky business. Training is essential!"

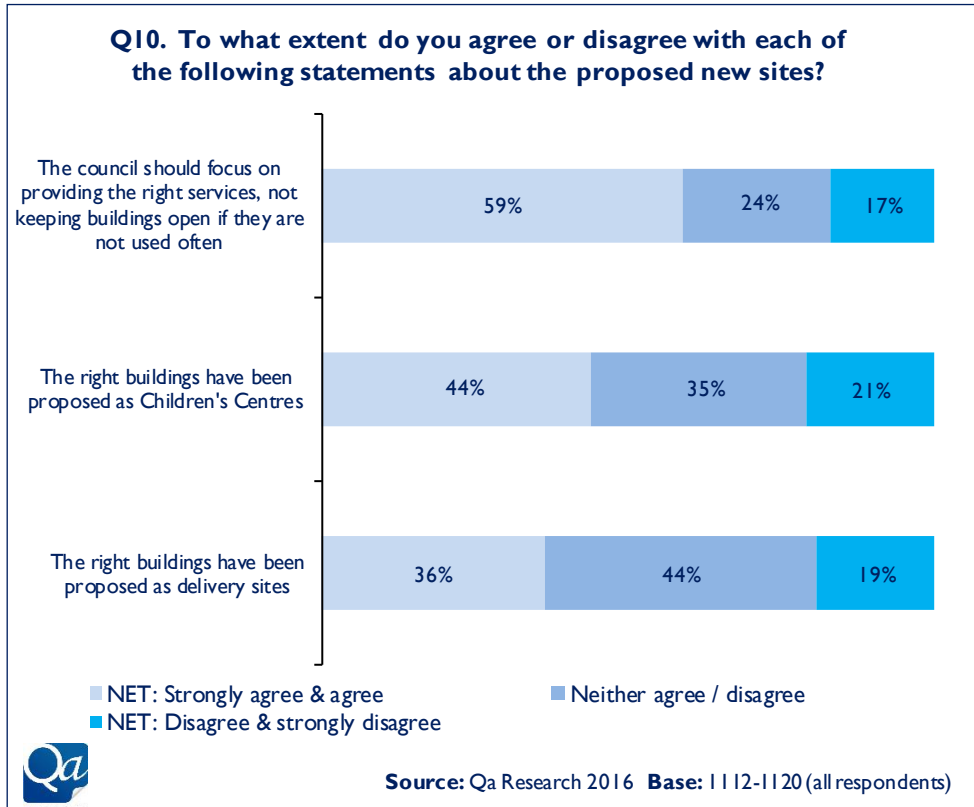
"I don't believe volunteer workers are reliable and they cannot build the same relationships with young people as a paid professional can."

"The level of confidentiality would be an issue for me and many other people."

5.8 Views on the buildings proposals

The consultation survey asked respondents for their views on the use of buildings and the proposed Children's Centre and delivery sites within the Early Help areas.

Figure 9 – Views on the use of buildings and proposed sites



Overall, 59% of respondents were in agreement with the statement 'the Council should focus on providing the right services, not keeping buildings open if they are not used often'.

Views were mixed on the choice of children's centres and delivery sites with 44% in agreement with the choice of Children's Centres and 36% in agreement with the choice of delivery sites. Around a third of respondents (35%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the choice of Children's Centres, whilst 21% disagreed. Reasons for disagreement with the choice of Children's Centres sites relate mainly to issues of transport and access and the overriding belief that the centres should remain open.

Similar concerns were expressed in relation to the delivery sites along with the view that more sites in general were needed. Four in ten respondents (44%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the choice of delivery sites.

Sub-group analysis

Kirklees Council employees were significantly more likely than other respondents to agree with the statement ‘the council should focus on providing the right services not keeping buildings open if they are not used often’ (72% vs.58%).

In terms of area, respondents in Batley and Spen (44%) were significantly more likely to disagree with the statement ‘the right buildings have been proposed as Children’s Centres’ compared with those in Huddersfield (21%), Dewsbury and Mirfield (29%), and Kirklees Rural (17%).

The following table shows the responses for each Children’s Centre presented in descending order of disagreement. However, it is important to note that the base number of responses for some centres is very small.

Table 11 – The right buildings have been proposed as Children’s Centres – agree/disagree

The right buildings have been proposed as Children's Centres			
	Agree	Disagree	Neither/nor
Gomersal & Littletown	23%	54%	23%
Carlinghow & Wilton	24%	52%	24%
Mirfield	17%	48%	36%
Savile Town	48%	48%	3%
Flatts & Eastborough	26%	47%	26%
Batley East	31%	44%	25%
Grange Moor & Kirkburton	33%	44%	22%
Crosland Moor	26%	43%	31%
Dewsbury Moor & Scout Hill	24%	43%	33%
Thornhill Lees	48%	42%	9%
Newsome	24%	41%	35%
Lowerhouses	35%	41%	24%
Staincliffe & Healey	29%	35%	35%
Rawthorpe & Dalton	39%	34%	27%
Birstall & Birkenshaw	42%	33%	24%
Cleckheaton	33%	33%	33%
Chickenley, Earlsheaton & Shawcross	35%	32%	32%
Almondbury	31%	31%	37%
Thornhill	50%	31%	19%
Chestnut	44%	30%	26%
Heckmondwike	35%	29%	35%
Ravensthorpe	57%	26%	16%
Holme Valley North – Meltham Moor	30%	22%	48%
Birkby	53%	21%	26%
Golcar, Cowlersley & Milnsbridge	46%	19%	35%
Colne Valley	36%	18%	45%

Base: varies between 9-84

Respondents were asked to provide specific comments on the proposed sites within each Early Help Area. A selection of comments that relate to specific issues or communities within each proposed Early Help Area is shown below:

Batley and Spensborough

“Batley Resource Centre in Batley Town square was a children's centre and would make a good place for a new provision for central Batley.”

“Birstall has a large building and is situated in an area of high need; however it is not the most accessible part of Batley.”

“Concerned about access for groups of individuals in Cleckheaton (Windybank in particular) and Heckmondwike areas. Will there be mobile outreach access?”

“Given the centres available in this area are already under resourced in staff and space, and using these as just delivery sites is not appropriate.”

“It's a shame to miss out Cleckheaton.”

“Mainly concentrated around Batley - not really accessible for all residents of the entire area.”

“The northwest section of this area does not appear to have any provision (e.g. Cleckheaton).”

Dewsbury and Mirfield

“Central location in Dewsbury is essential. Chickenley not accessible for families on Chidswell estate. Their direct bus route is to Dewsbury.”

“Greenwood centre is the best place for the delivery site because it is in the centre of the community and is already used by a lot of people.”

“How can one small Children's Centre at Chickenley provide services for the whole of Dewsbury & Mirfield. Difficult access, historic community issues around English Defence League - how can this centre support the diverse population of Dewsbury?”

“I feel a loss of the Dewsbury West children's centres will have a huge impact on the community and have a great risk of families being isolated and mental health issues increased.”

“In general this looks reasonable, but some provision missing for London Park.”

“Mirfield CC is a thriving centre in the heart of the community. Many parents on London Park do not drive or have a car; they are going to find it difficult to access services. The midwifery drop in and immunisation clinic are well attended there.”

“The arena centre is run down, the Dewsbury Moor centre is perfect it is central and has a community kitchen which is run by people from castle hall school giving them an opportunity to work in a real kitchen, but this building hasn't been considered to be kept. Chickenley is not a welcoming community and in a racist area yet you have chosen this as the main children's centre for a place with a large Asian community.”

“The proposed Thornhill site will meet the needs of the Thornhill community but the community in Savile Town will not utilise that centre.”

“Wrong choices as no delivery site in Mirfield which houses the London Park estate. Designated CC site is Chickenley which is not accessible to Dewsbury West residents and Dewsbury West is far more deprived than Dewsbury East so the choice does not seem to make sense.”

Huddersfield

“Almondbury CC is barely used and doesn't target vulnerable children and families so should not be a delivery site.”

“Huddersfield is a huge area, needs more centres.”

“Huddersfield is massive. The topography of it means that people who live on one side of a hill can use completely different services to people who may live close by but go elsewhere. You cannot expect people who do not have transport say from Dalton to travel to the chestnut centre in Deighton. It just won't work.”

“I have concerns about losing Lowerhouses Lounge. I agree with other proposals.”

“Keep Paddock Youth Club open.”

“Looks a reasonable spread, except for a lack of any provision around the Sycamore estate area of Milnsbridge/Golcar.”

“Looks to be a big reduction for young people compared to other areas and possibly the area with highest youth population/youth issues?”

“Paddock Centre - is an irreplaceable asset for the community.”

Kirklees Rural

The main concern expressed by respondents is whether the number of sites plus mobile delivery will be enough to meet the needs of this large area.

“As stated, if Slaithwaite is decided as the central hub, I don't think that the delivery site should also be in Slaithwaite”.

“Holmfirth and Slaithwaite are miles apart, not exactly local for either area. It should be both not one.”

“I agree that Slaithwaite Town Hall makes sense to be the delivery site. I'm not sure how 3 mobile units will be able to make much of a difference in the rest of the rural area, given how large an area it is.”

“I would really like the youth club to stay open at the Phoenix.”

“It would probably make sense to have a base in Holmfirth.”

“The area is far too large to expect young people to use services outside their immediate area e.g. living in Colne and using facilities in Holme etc.”

“This is too large an area. There needs to be a site in the Holme Valley and a separate one in the Colne Valley. Needy families in one valley will not be able to access services in the other valley!”

“The delivery sites are too far apart. This is a very rural area and it would be difficult for families and young people to travel so far, it would also cost a small fortune in public transport costs. I don't believe it is viable, a rural area like this one would need at least 3/4 more delivery sites to make it a viable option for families.”

6. Focus groups (Children's Centres)

This section includes the findings from focus groups with users of Children's Centres facilitated by Qa Research and Kirklees Council.

Current use of/value of services to users

The majority of parents who participated in the focus group discussions were users of open access services, including Stay and Play and One Stop Shop. Parents provided many examples of how they and their child/ren had benefited from being able to access these sessions. Many parents spoke about the social benefits and peer support that they had gained from accessing the sessions. Benefits for their children included, opportunities to socialise with other children, access to a high quality play environment, and general benefits for child development. The availability of staff for support and advice was also of significant value for many parents.

Most of the parents in the groups lived very locally and the Children's Centre was within walking distance of their home – this was one aspect of the service that parents particularly valued.

"My children attend every week and enjoy coming, plus it's something for them to do. And it's near for me as well to get the baby weighed." (Dewsbury Moor)

"The 0-3 [age] when you are stuck at home, is really hard, this place is really important." (Birkby)

There was also a view that Children's Centres played an important role within the community by providing a focal point where parents from different communities could meet and develop connections, and for some the centre was an important source of information.

"We celebrate each other's special days... they grow up in this mixed society." (Birkby)

"I have gained a community." [through attending play and stay] (Meltham)

"I've lived near her for over 14 years and it's only since coming here that we have spoken and become friends." (Birkby)

"There is no open access information point locally anymore library closed, this is our local information point...otherwise we have to traipse into town to ask at council offices." (Golcar)

Views on proposals (open access sessions)

Parents were generally aware that the council needed to make financial savings but were disappointed that the centre they accessed may close or cease to provide open access provision.

"My 3 year old would be extremely upset to lose the Stay and Play session. I would as well as my chance to offload and socialise with other parents would disappear." (Chestnut Centre)

Some parents, particularly those that had accessed Children's Centre services for several years were disappointed but not surprised that further reductions in services were being proposed as they had already seen a gradual reduction in universal services over the years.

“Over the years services have become less and less due to budget cuts and that is a terrible shame as Surestart is about bringing communities together. I feel that the future will be that we have to travel to Dewsbury to access anything in future but not all can/will be able to travel so this will increase their isolation.” (Thornhill)

Parents were unsure what they would do if they were unable to access open access provision at the Children’s Centre. For many of the parents, the Stay and Play sessions were the only session of its type that they accessed, e.g. access to social and play opportunities for parent and child. Some were unable to access paid for activity groups due to financial constraints or a lack of suitable alternatives within the area.

“There is a session on a Thursday at the Jubilee Centre but you have to pay for it, it also has older children and they are not as careful with the younger ones, but here you know they are all similar ages.” (Golcar)

“We would probably find something else but it would reduce our opportunities. At the moment we are on a tight budget and living off credit cards.”(Newsome)

“Life would be lonelier and pricier.” (Meltham)

Views on proposals (three levels of help)

There was general agreement that the principle of ‘early help’ was an important one and in the context of diminishing resources the council needed to direct resources to those who needed them the most. However, there were also strong feelings that all new parents needed support and services like Stay and Play were in themselves ‘early help’ and had a preventative function. Some parents were frustrated that they may not be able to access support if they did not meet the criteria required.

Many parents talked about ‘just coping’ and being able to access the sessions to get peer support from other parents and advice from staff had in their view prevented difficulties from becoming worse and they themselves becoming ‘vulnerable’.

“If I didn’t have the support from the staff then I would need one to one support now and I would be very vulnerable.” (Ravensthorpe)

“If I hadn’t been able to use the services here then maybe I would be targeted... it is prevention.” (Batley East)

Some parents gave examples of problems that they or their child had that were only spotted via a member of staff at an open access session. In some cases, this advice ‘given on the spot’ may have prevented problems further down the line.

“I met a Family Worker at the One Stop Shop when I came to see the Health Visitor about my baby; she spotted how low in mood I was and told me about the STEPS course.” (Rawthorpe & Dalton)

“They can deal with a lot of issues here as well, sometimes you don’t want signposting, you want to be able to deal with it there and then... otherwise you just might end up leaving it.” (Batley East)

This immediate support and advice that has been available via the open access sessions led many parents to question whether issues may be missed under the proposed new model. For some parents, regular attendance at open access sessions provided a safe environment in which they felt able to share their problems with staff in a 'low key' manner. However, it took time to develop this level of trust.

"If a health visitor asks how I am I say fine... I don't want them in my house criticising all I do, my house is my safe haven." (Birkby)

"If you have it normal and people just coming in discreet, but when you are signposting it less people come...people think oh she's going there because she has got these problems." (Batley East)

Parents were also concerned about the role of volunteers within the Community Plus model. Some parents were volunteers themselves and many parents were happy with the idea of volunteers providing support within services. The main areas of concern were around whether there would be enough volunteers available to support the services, whether they would be reliable, and sufficiently trained in order to be able to provide a high quality service.

Some parents also expressed a preference for 'council run' services as they perceived that they were more inclusive than services run by local community groups for example. Within this context, several parents discussed church run parent/toddler groups and some were happy to access these but others found the church element off-putting.

"Not everyone wants to use church groups, it puts some people off. What is good about Stay and Plays is that they are they are open door and impartial, you get diversity here."(Newsome)

As previously mentioned, there was some acceptance that within the context of reduced budgets services would need to be increasingly targeted, and as discussed, parents perceive that the main issues with this are around the belief that all parents need support, and that a reduction in open access services may lead to issues being missed and/or parents being reluctant to share their problems. Some parents also questioned whether a targeted service would necessarily result in the required financial savings.

"Providing support in people's homes seems like an expensive way of providing a service." (Golcar)

Parents of children with disabilities and additional needs had some specific concerns around the targeted and complex models of service delivery. They were positive about the idea of early help areas, particularly if organisations would work together more effectively. However, to date, the actual experience of these parents has been very different. Several parents spoke about the long difficult journey that they had been on in order to get help for their families and this often required a medical diagnosis or assessment to identify which services and support they/their child could access.

"We don't get early help, it doesn't come early...comes too late, diagnosis is so necessary we knew there was something from age 2 or before, he didn't get a diagnosis until 6. Services always ask has he got a diagnosis?" (PCAN)

Parents were keen to know more about what the thresholds would be for accessing targeted/complex services, and for some this had been a difficult issue in the past when trying to access services.

“I’ve always found that we never met criteria; my children were never disabled enough.” (PCAN)

Some parents also had concerns about the potential for a reduction in open access services to impact negatively on the number of opportunities available to their child and, more specifically, opportunities to take part in mainstream activities. Parents expressed the view that it was important for disabled children and young people to get the opportunity to mix others within a mainstream service and that specialist groups were not always appropriate.

“Some will always need support but there are some that can access mainstream...sometimes ‘targeted’ suggests all you will get is targeted. What we are saying is maybe we want universal with support - we don’t want to see that going.” (PCAN)

Views on buildings proposals

Views were mixed on the issue of buildings and the extent to which the ‘right’ buildings had been identified as Children’s Centres or delivery sites. Some parents expressed concern about the potential loss of some high quality ‘purpose built’ Children’s Centres which provided a modern, safe, and clean environment for children to play and also served as a focal point for parents within the community. However, for others, access to services was paramount, and the building itself was of less concern but a convenient location within the heart of the community was still very important.

“The centres had the right provisions for the kids; if you are going back to church groups then it’s not the same, they had a sensory room at Golcar - fantastic for additional needs kids.” (PCAN)

Some specific issues were raised in relation to Grange Moor Children’s Centre which shares the building with the pre-school. Parents who use the pre-school expressed concerns about the future of the pre-school which is a valued service within the community and in their view the current building is the only suitable one in the area.

Parents using Newsome Children’s Centre were also concerned about how they would access services under the proposals as they believe transport connections are very poor around the Newsome, Almondbury, and Lowerhouses areas.

6.1 Children’s Centres (other responses)

This section summarises the main themes relating to Children’s Centre provision under the proposals from email mailbox responses, submissions from Children’s Centre users, ward councillor comments and feedback from partners.

Analysis of comments from **ward councillor consultation sessions** reveals overall support for the principles behind the proposals. However, comments made suggest that clarification is required on routine management arrangements for some sites, need to make sure continuity is maintained during transition is also emphasised, along with a need to maximise assets already in

the communities and links with schools. Some questions were raised regarding specific areas/buildings as follows:

- Batley East – incorrect buildings identified
- Dewsbury South – reconsideration of chosen CC site may be required
- Lowerhouses Lounge – further discussion required as this is an important asset for the community

Comments on the proposals received **via the mailbox** reflect the themes discussed within the focus groups. For example, the importance of stay and play as a way of accessing support and as a preventative function, the importance of providing support for all new parents, and the inclusive approach adopted by the Children's Centres.

A detailed response has been submitted by Action for Children in relation to the proposals for Dewsbury Moor. The response includes detailed statistics on usage and outcomes achieved. The submission emphasises the contribution and role of the Children's Centre within the wider community and the importance of providing easy access to preventative services. The response also notes the need for transition planning particularly in relation to the Schools as Community Hubs initiative which is still in the early stages of development in the area.

7. Focus groups (Youth Services)

This section includes the findings from focus groups with users of youth services facilitated by Qa Research and Kirklees Council. In addition, 90 users of youth services also completed worksheets which asked them to summarise the potential impact closing their youth services would have on them; and some young people also created a Facebook page "Save Kirklees Youth Service". The following section combines all the data collected from young people and is reported on by the main themes and key findings.

Current use of/value of services to users

Although there were some differences in terms of youth services used, depending on the different groups engaged with; it was clear that many of the current youth services provided by Kirklees Council are used and valued by young people across the borough, including:

- Open access youth clubs (Basement Young People Centre, Honley Junior Youth Club, Mirfield Community Trust's Junior Youth Club, Slaithwaite Junior Group)
- Sports provision
- Disability Youth Provision
- Mobile Provision (The Youth Bus)
- Look After Children Provision (Care Leavers Forum)
- Adventurous Activities
- LGBTQ Youth Provision (Yorkshire Mixtures)
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Off Site Activity and Residential
- Youth Forum / Young Leaders provision
- Young Women's provision

Even though each participant had their own personal reasons as to why they value Kirklees Youth Services, there were some key themes running through the responses from the young people who engaged with the consultation. The aspects of youth service provision valued most by young people were:

- the unique opportunities the youth services gave them
- the 'safe space' they felt youth services provided them with
- the opportunities to make friends
- the support of the youth workers.

Safe spaces

Almost all young people indicated they valued their youth services because of the consistent and reliable safe spaces they provide – away from school, college and family; meaning they can discuss things that they might not be able to in their traditional spaces, or discuss nothing at all and just take some time out from their usual situations.

Although important for all young people, those with chaotic family environments, vulnerable to involvement in crime/anti-social behaviour or specific needs particularly valued this aspect of youth services. Similarly, all of the young people engaged with mentioned the impact the youth workers have on their lives, some feeling they are inspirational figures when young people need them the most; others simply appreciating their enthusiasm and friendly nature; meaning they have someone different to talk to who understands them.

"You know that you are going to go to this place at this time on this day." (Care Leavers Forum)

"It's obviously been a part of my adolescent life...dealing with family issues and coming here to get away from it has been a big help." (Crow Nest Park)

"I like coming here cos the staff are really nice and friendly." (Crow Nest Park)

"I respect the staff here, they are great role models and do a fantastic job with us." (Crow Nest Park)

Opportunities

Some young people explained how they had been able to experience and take part in things they wouldn't have otherwise had the opportunity to; such as trips to Parliament, meeting Jeremy Corbyn, achieving the Duke of Edinburgh award, volunteering at youth groups themselves, being a young leader and also – for LGBTQ young people – the group provided a unique opportunity to get help and support to aid the coming out process. There were also more general comments about how the youth groups give young people an opportunity to get out of the house which they may not do otherwise.

"Duke of Edinburgh one of the best things I ever did it is a really good thing the opportunities you can get learnt a lot of life skills." (Care Leavers Forum)

"Being part of the youth forum has changed my life in so many ways and given me so many opportunities. On trips that I have been on with the youth forum, I have had so much fun and

learnt so much. Going to Parliament was an amazing opportunity. We had a tour of Parliament, saw a debate and even met with Jeremy Corbyn!” (Basement)

“It has helped with the coming out process, explaining to Dad what being Transgender means.” (Yorkshire Mixtures)

“It gets me out of the house...it picks me up and gets me out doing something rather than sitting at home doing nothing and being boring.” (Young Leaders)

All young people expressed how important youth service provision is to them in terms of meeting old and new friends, as the clubs and groups aren't always at their school or college; going there is something completely different to their everyday experiences.

Youth club facilities mean that the young people aren't just hanging around outside trying to occupy themselves/each other, instead they have games and other activities to take part in with their friends. Some young people were very aware about the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of socialising and being active, and so were able to cite this as being something about the group which they value.

Confidence

There was also awareness that the social aspect of the youth groups can help young people build up their self-confidence and self-esteem. Whether that is another young person or a worker, all interactions help the young people to feel less alone with whatever they are facing in their lives.

“Coming here I've made so many new friends.” (Basement)

“I liked the social interaction [of the DofE Award].” (Yorkshire Mixtures)

“Having youth clubs and specialised youth groups where you can go to where you know there will be people there who you genuinely get on with and have shared interests with I think that really helps having that second social group so you don't feel the pressure to fit in just with the people at school. You have another outlet to be yourself.” (Young Leaders)

“I think for me it's confidence because a couple of years before I used this service I was quite shy and I've been given opportunities and I've took them and it's helped me become who I am today because of the support. Basically if the service weren't here I wouldn't be the person I am today.” (Young Leaders)

Inclusion and acceptance

Young people also mentioned the importance of the youth service values of inclusion and acceptance for all people, and the way in which this has helped to build their confidence. Whether it be being a young LGBTQ person meeting other people in similar situations to them, meeting and understanding what it is like to be a young person with a disability, or getting a chance to make friendships with people from other cultures; some young people felt that these were all things they might not be able to experience without attending their youth service provision.

“I've learnt so much about the LGBT environment.” (Yorkshire Mixtures)

"If you do shut this place down, a lot of kids are going to get into trouble and they are just gonna be mixing with the wrong crowd and people, if kids come up here they know about people with disabilities or different races, cultures and they don't become racist, but out on the street you don't know what they'd do." (Crow Nest Park)

"Kirklees youth services have given me access to a wide range of places and experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to me. It has given me a better understanding of society, how it works, how it needs to improve and most importantly how 'I' can improve it." (Basement)

Views on the proposals

The main views on the proposals from the young people engaged with during the consultation fell into three main themes:

- changes to open access provision
- changes to staff
- the three levels of help/support outlined in the consultation document

The majority of young people indicated dissatisfaction with the proposal to end open access youth services, the minority who felt the proposals were going to incite positive change still disagreed with the proposed changes to open access provision.

Many young people seemed to understand the theory behind the Council's proposals to provide targeted support, but felt that this should happen on top of the open youth groups because all young people can be vulnerable at points in their lives and could miss out on the help and support they need to address problems all young people face when going through adolescence. Furthermore, questions were raised as to how 'in need' a young person would have to be before they would be targeted for support.

"I don't agree with this because I think that sometimes other people who aren't very vulnerable might need it too." (Valleys Youth Services)

"I disagree with it because everyone needs some help, e.g. some people might not know they have any problems." (Valleys Youth Services)

"New idea is looking good but we need the service which is already here." (Young Person)

"I hate the idea. Even though they're helping the most vulnerable people, I would be more vulnerable if this group didn't exist. This group helps loads of people, maybe not with the most important problems but we all still have problems of our own." (Valleys Youth Services)

"People might have small problems which become big problems because you are only wanting to deal with big problems." (Valleys Youth Services)

Young people were particularly passionate about the youth workers they come in to contact with through attending the provision. On reading the proposals to reduce staff and increase volunteers to assist with the running of youth groups, most young people were very much against the idea. The young people expressed a sense of injustice for not only themselves in the fact they could lose the care and support of the worker, but also for the workers; with young people becoming concerned about the effect of job losses on the workers they know. Additionally, young people

were also concerned about a potential influx of what they perceive to be untrained, unqualified and unknown volunteers.

"You might not be comfortable with a volunteer and will not be able to talk to them." (Valleys Youth Services)

"The youth workers do fun things with us." (Honley Youth Club)

Impact of proposed changes

There were five key areas which the young people felt could/would be impacted by the changes the Council is proposing:

- reduction in preventative/early help for all young people
- effect on physical and mental health
- perceived loss/replacement of trusted youth workers
- lack of suitable/desirable alternatives
- loss of young people's friendship group/support circle.

Each of these areas of impact held equal weighting for the young people; many gave emotive responses during the discussions about prospective impact.

Young people talked about the potential danger they and others may be placed in if their youth service provision was reduced from open to targeted access; referring to increased chances of young people coming into contact with crime or anti-social behaviour, less respite from their chaotic family lives and a reduction in the spaces they can congregate with their friends (especially a concern during the winter months). Young people could see no benefit in youth service provision no longer being open access, to them this meant they wouldn't have a place to go week in, week out to keep them away from other, less positive distractions.

The young people urged the Council to rethink their plans to end all open access youth services, on the basis that they in their current form are providing an early intervention in a lot of attendees' lives.

"I think if youth club shuts I will probably end up in a gang." (Basement)

"If the youth club closes it means I will get into more trouble." (Basement)

"It will be cold in the winter, there are no other shelters [in Skelmanthorpe]." (Skelmanthorpe Youth and Community Centre)

"Surely the families that aren't on the system but could be getting there [young people who could end up in trouble] these clubs are the prevention. They can prevent that [crime]. I think it's bizarre that the focus is on people who are already on the list. To me prevention is massively important." (Young Leaders)

Linked to the young people's concerns around early intervention/prevention and being occupied is the next key area – the effect on young people's physical and mental health. Across the different consultations with young people, it was clear that a positive impact on all aspects of their health had been achieved or worked towards. Some felt attending the provision had helped with their

self-esteem and confidence at a time when they needed it – for example, some young people had been bullied, been through a traumatic experience or a family breakdown.

Others, who indicated they experience difficulties with their mental health, stated the importance attending the group had on managing their depression, anxiety or other conditions because of the trusted and consistent relationships they had formed with their youth workers through the group each week. Some young people rely on the provision to help with their physical health, as it gives them somewhere to go each week and take part in sports or other physical activities; but also just travelling to the group can have a positive impact on wellbeing. For many, the group being away from school-led provision is a big draw to attending and has helped them to build their character outside of the school environment.

"I would feel less confident and I would feel more insecure." (Valleys Youth Services)

"If these youth clubs go then I won't feel like I fit in anymore. I like to come and talk to people that I know won't judge me because I am smaller than other people and some people tease me about it." (Valleys Youth Services)

"I can trust the youth workers so I would lose someone/people that I can trust. I have also gained confidence in my body and myself through this group." (Valleys Youth Services)

As discussed previously, the young people consulted with highly valued their youth workers and they continued this discussion when thinking about potential impact of the proposals. Young people cited losing a trusted person in their lives as how the proposed changes might impact on them, it was clear that opening up and placing trust in adults can be a very difficult thing to do for some of the young people spoken to.

"Might not know the staff 'cause the staff might change every day." (Slaithwaite Juniors)

"People might not want to volunteer." (Valleys Youth Services)

"The problem is people would not trust them and I don't think they would be as friendly and accepting as the Youth Workers are now. I'd feel like I couldn't be myself." (Valleys Youth Services)

"Parents could feel unsure on the safety of their children. Therefore more people may stop coming, and the club could have to shut down completely." (Slaithwaite Junior Club)

Although specific buildings were not considered ultimately important to the running of the youth groups, young people did indicate that in some areas of Kirklees if the youth club space is taken away; there is very little by way of an alternative provision for young people. The buildings currently utilised for the youth provision have facilities the young people feel they would struggle to access elsewhere, such as pool tables, dance hall, quiet rooms to chat, arts and crafts, sports facilities such as gymnastics where youth workers had organised such activities with local providers at low cost. Young people therefore worried about how they would be able to use such facilities if the clubs were no longer open to everyone and wanted to know where they may have to go in future, and whether it would be as affordable and convenient as the current arrangement.

"Some communities might oppose youth groups in the area some people believe negative media....young people in hoodies etc..." (Care Leavers Forum)

"Childminders more expensive compared to youth clubs." (Slaitwaite Junior Club)

"There's one thing us saying yeah but charities are going to say the same things... what about funding?" (Care Leavers Forum)

As with the discussion on initial views on the proposals, young people felt the proposals would impact them in terms of their friendship group / support circle; in that they would lose or reduce their friendships through not attending groups. Many young people only see their youth club friends at the youth club, community segregation due to culture or race does not exist for the young people attending clubs and they rely on the social aspect to retain these unique friendships and also make new ones. Young people were unwavering about the immediate and wide ranging impact closing their group would have on their friendship and support circle they had formed though attending, and indicated it would have a negative effect on their emotions and their future (in particular those who volunteer at the Young Leaders group).

"Taking away opportunities to volunteer [at Young Leaders] will affect our CVs and our opportunities of getting into college." (Young Leaders)

"I wouldn't look forward to anything on Mondays because there wouldn't be a fun, sociable club for me to go to after school. I wouldn't feel I could be myself as often or have an hour of fun." (Valleys Youth Services)

"Upset because without this group I wouldn't have met new people. I also wouldn't have anyone to talk to." (Valleys Youth Services)

"We will be affected because we won't be able to see friends who are older and we won't be able to take part in all the activities and meet new people." (Valleys Youth Services)

Overall, the five areas of impact outlined in this report are all very much intertwined; they relate to one another and are based on what the young people value about the youth services in Kirklees. Those young people consulted with also had questions and suggestions for the Council and these are discussed in the final part of this section.

Feedback on specific areas, buildings, groups

For the majority of young people, the buildings / venues where their groups were held were not considered as valuable as the actual group and youth workers; for most groups they would be able to relocate their groups and activities to another building – some only rent out space for a few hours a week. In fact, the Yorkshire Mixtures group had met up outside of the youth group setting; socialised together and planned to do this again in the future.

Yorkshire Mixtures (LGBTQ) group

For this group, the youth workers and the actual existence of the group were the most important thing, rather than where the group is held. However, it should be noted that the Yorkshire Mixtures group members recognised the importance of a safe, central location for them, as they have people attending from all over Kirklees they need to be accessible; they also need to feel they are safe to leave the venue without worry of being targeted because of their sexuality/gender identity.

Members of Yorkshire Mixtures who discussed the proposals were keen to state the importance of having at least one open access LGBTQ group for young people in Kirklees. Already, young people can travel between one and two hours to attend the group mid-week due to the benefits which young people receive. Almost all of the Yorkshire Mixture representatives felt that without the group, they would not have access to the appropriate and timely support they receive through Yorkshire Mixtures. The support they receive currently was stated to have the following benefits for young LGBTQ people:

- Provides a safe environment to be themselves that isn't school, college or related extra-curricular activities but with other people in similar situations (hold hands with partners, dress to suit how they feel inside)
- Enables young people to understand more about what it means to be LGBTQ
- Assists in the 'coming out' process, not just in telling friends/family members, but coming to terms with being LGBTQ themselves
- Build confidence in being themselves again after traumatic events
- Learn more about the LGBTQ community, information you aren't taught at school

"We [Yorkshire Mixtures] are a unique service." (Yorkshire Mixtures)

"I have matured so much [due to Yorkshire Mixtures]." (Yorkshire Mixtures)

"It [Yorkshire Mixtures] really helps [with coming out]." (Yorkshire Mixtures)

Crow Nest Park and Adventure Playground

Where purpose built buildings/venues have been highlighted as being crucial in terms of the particular youth service's existence, is the Crow Nest Park Adventure Playground site. Although this site has not been identified for closure, the concerns are around a reduction in paid staff and increased use of volunteers; as without the paid staff, it wouldn't be feasible to open unstaffed or with volunteers. Consultation responses from young people who use these facilities came in the form of a short film, made up of videos of the young people explaining how they value the site and the impact any changes would have on them.

For both the Crow Nest users and the Yorkshire Mixtures users, the impact on their lives through using the services was quite specific to each respective group. For those attending Crow Nest, the main concern was that because the site as it is currently provides an excellent environment for children and young people who, because are the area of Kirklees they live in, are vulnerable to crime and anti-social behaviour; so any change in this provision could impact negatively on their lives.

Young people contributing to the short film explained why the site is integral to their diverse community and images of the activities undertaken there show a unique offering to the young people in the area.

"This place [Crow Nest Park] helps many young people through difficult times. I should know. I was one of them." (Crow Nest Park)

"This place [Crow Nest Park] is great for us kids." (Crow Nest Park)

"Firstly...think about how many people come here [Crow Nest Park] that if you close it down you have to think about on the streets and need to be kept safe. My second point is the support you

get here is completely different to school or home, it's a completely different atmosphere with trained professionals that actually can do something to help you....and how many people have developed skills coming here. There is a disabled session on a Saturday, how many of them children will be affected by this?" (Crow Nest Park)

Care Leavers Forum

These young people understandably really value the care leaver's forum, mainly because it provides them with access to the support and advocacy they need via the workers. Also important for some young people has been the Duke of Edinburgh award, as it has been helpful for developing confidence and life skills.

Young people indicated that to some extent their needs are different to those of other young people using open access provision because they arguably require stability and continuity more so than children who haven't been in care. Some could see no issue in accessing services at different buildings, for others it was important to know that the service or activity would be at the same place each week and that they would see the same people.

"Young people who are vulnerable, like care leavers won't open up to anyone leads to more people not socialising staying at home will end up getting into trouble." (Care Leavers Forum)

"Issue of trusting adults for looked after children." (Care Leavers Forum)

"This provision very important and the advocacy, it is very vital for us looked after children we wouldn't get the opportunity to express our opinions." (Care Leavers Forum)

Questions / suggestions

Many of the questions from the young people were centred on asking "why?" their provision was being affected in these ways. During the discussions, although the young people appeared angry and upset about the proposed changes; many were thinking of and suggesting ideas for fundraising which they felt might help keep their youth services open. The ideas included:

- General fundraising in the community
- Mini Gay Pride event
- Music concert
- Increasing the entry costs to the clubs
- Utilising other, possibly cheaper & rarely used venues to hold the clubs
- Better communication of activities that are / could be held outside of the youth groups (which some feel isn't fulfilled at the moment)

"Could we help by doing funds to raise money?" (Yorkshire Mixtures)

"Library in Golcar – never open – only open 4 hours – could use this for something." (Care Leavers Forum)

"Why don't you bump up the price by 50p?" (Slaitwaite Juniors)

Other young people wanted to speak directly with representatives from the Council, they felt if Council members were able to see the provision for themselves this may influence the proposals as they would be able to see turnout and what each club offers young people; therefore seeing

the true value of the provision. Others felt that young people currently using services could, because of the provision potentially closing, end up requiring targeted provision. Questions from the young people engaged with included:

- "Can the Council come and see us themselves?" (Yorkshire Mixtures)
- "Why do you only think the most vulnerable need Youth Club? Why don't you think others need it too?" (Valleys Youth Services)
- "Are there any ways they can guarantee the people who are currently using open access services aren't then going to regress into other things and then be put in the new system?" (Young Leaders)

7.1 Youth services (other responses)

Youth worker consultation responses

Along with the consultation responses from children and young people, there were also a number of comments sent in and collected from youth workers. These have been analysed and reported on separately to the young people comments; a summary can be see below. Many of the comments were regarding Crow Nest Park Adventure Playground, but others came from youth workers centred at other youth groups.

There was a feeling from the youth workers at Crow Nest Park that the current site is completely different to other youth service provision and should therefore be treated differently. The comments are mainly in reference to the amount of time the park is open each week, the numbers of young people who attend, the activities carried out from there (fire making, cooking, survival techniques) and the community cohesion the park nurtures.

Many youth workers felt that they already undertake targeted work with the young people they come into contact with; therefore the idea of bringing in a targeted service that wasn't open access didn't fit with what they currently provide in some more deprived areas of Kirklees. Some youth workers also questioned the legalities of cuts to youth service provision, under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; emphasising the need for a safe play space and the 'right to play'.

"Unlike other youth and junior provisions within Kirklees, CNPAP is not just open for a couple of hours a week after school. During the term time we are open from between 3 to 4 nights after school and all day on a Saturday. During school holidays we are open from 5 to 7 days a week. As such, the impact that closure or significant changes will have on the young people's lives that attend the playground will be huge. The decision you make will change these young people's whole lives (rather than just one evening a week) and this needs to be considered when you make your decision." (Crow Nest Park Youth Worker)

"It is possible to justify keeping Kirklees staff to run this playground while still committing yourselves to the remit of 'prioritising resources to people with the highest need'. This area is a target area, working with the local young people is targeted work." (Crow Nest Park Youth Worker)

"The local community is very segregated and community cohesion is a big issue. In the playground...my team manages to bypass these segregation issues and as a consequence we have a very mixed and diverse playground." (Crow Nest Park Youth Worker)

“It’s important in so many ways. It’s the most important thing for all young people as they sometimes need help & pointing in the right directions!” (Basement Youth Worker)

Consultation event for IYSS VCS partners

The main themes arising from the consultation event with voluntary/community sector partners included a need for more detailed transition planning and clarity around funding arrangements. Some other issues were also noted including the potential for difficulties in retaining/recruiting volunteers and establishing self-supporting groups particularly in areas with high BME populations, and the impact of losing the support of specialist staff from IYSS.

8. Conclusions

General principles

As the part one engagement exercise revealed, there is an awareness that Kirklees Council, like many others, need to make financial savings. The engagement exercise presented the high level principles behind the proposed changes including:

- the rationale for providing early help
- the need to focus resources on the most vulnerable families
- the idea of area-based Early Help Hubs with an emphasis on services rather than buildings
- ‘three levels’ of help – Community Plus, Targeted, and Complex.

The majority agreed with the principles behind providing early help and adopting a ‘whole family approach’ but concerns were expressed around the accessibility and quality of services under an area-based hub model and people required more information on how the three levels of help (particularly Community Plus) would work in practice. These findings informed the development of the part two statutory consultation.

Findings from the statutory consultation reveal a similar picture in that there is an understanding of the requirement to make financial savings and support for the principle of early help and some support for focussing on the most vulnerable and prioritising services over buildings (where they are not used to their full potential). However, those responding to the consultation have expressed significant concerns in relation to some elements of the Early Help proposals – these are considered under the headings below.

Changes to open access provision

The consultation proposals presented the Council’s plan to no longer directly deliver open access provision at Children’s Centres and via the youth service but instead to support the development of this under the proposed Community Plus model.

Substantial proportions of those who access this provision (both parents and children/young people) felt that this would have a significant impact for them. Those who use the services spoke about the various benefits including positive social and developmental outcomes for parents and children who use the Stay and Play provision, and the emotional support, and access to a wide range of social and development opportunities provided by the youth service, e.g. youth club provision and specific programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Whilst there is some agreement that limited resources should be directed to the most vulnerable in society, there is also strong feeling amongst the parents and young people accessing these services that every parent or young person can need help managing the adjustment to parenthood or progression to adulthood. Linked to this is the view that open access services such as these are in themselves an ‘early help’ or ‘preventative’ service. Many people spoke about the fact that although they may not be currently vulnerable by their own or the Council’s definition there is the potential they could have been had they not been able to use the open access services.

Another key theme arising from the consultation feedback was the identification of need through the use of open access services and a concern that under the proposals there could be missed opportunities for this. Parents spoke about problems that they or their child were experiencing

that were recognised by a worker during a visit to Stay and Play and in some cases were resolved very quickly through advice or information on the spot. Young people also spoke about the value of the support provided by youth workers to help them to address issues that they did not feel able to share with their school or families.

The issue of the potential for stigma in terms of accessing 'targeted' services was raised. Parents valued the 'drop in' nature of the Stay and Play and One Stop Shop services whereby they could, in a very subtle way, ask for help and receive it without the need for what they perceived as 'formal' identification. Young people also value the inclusive and accepting philosophy of the youth clubs where they can be themselves and engage positively with a diverse range of peers.

Three levels of help

The consultation findings show that there is general support for the Complex and Targeted models of support – with some reservations about how manageable the workload would be for a key worker. However, the response is more uncertain in relation to the Community Plus model. There is some support for the idea of trained volunteers supporting workers within services and for services to be delivered by community/voluntary sector organisations. However, there is concern that there will not be enough volunteers to support the services, that new community based services will take a long time to set up or may not happen at all. People struggled to visualise how this would work and to some extent this did not seem to be a tangible alternative. This was also a concern expressed by voluntary and community sector partners in terms of how this transition would be made and exactly what support would be available.

Issues of trust and continuity were also noted by parents and young people. Some young people had taken a while to develop a relationship of trust with a youth worker and were not sure that they would be able to relate in the same way to a number of volunteers. Another theme arising from the consultation feedback was that some people simply preferred to be supported by a trained, paid, worker because they felt that working with families and young people was a skilled role that could not be easily filled.

Area specific issues

The consultation feedback shows that there is some support for the idea of services rather than buildings. This seemed more likely perhaps from the perspective of young people who valued the opportunities and support that youth clubs provided rather than the host building itself. There were however some exceptions to this in areas where there is little community provision/alternative suitable buildings, e.g. Skelmanthorpe, Lowerhouses Lounge, or where the potential for the loss of open access services brings the operation of the building into question, e.g. Crow Nest.

Generally, parents who used open access services in Children's Centres earmarked for possible closure were disappointed and frustrated that the building may no longer be available. As the consultation findings have highlighted, services close to home are a priority for many parents who find it difficult to travel, particularly those in areas where public transport is limited. Many parents commented that the Children's Centres were purpose built and provided a safe play environment that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere. Consultation feedback highlighted some cases in which the Children's Centre fulfilled several functions and as such a potential closure could have a wider impact, e.g. Dewsbury Moor and Grange Moor.

9. Appendices

9.1 Sample profile tables

Table 12 – Responses by Early Help Area

	<i>n</i>	%
Early Help Area		
Batley and Spen	112	12%
Dewsbury and Mirfield	201	21%
Huddersfield	280	29%
Kirklees Rural	380	39%
Base: 973		

Table 13 – Parents of children with disabilities and caring status

	<i>n</i>	%
Parent / guardian of a child / young person u19 with long term physical/mental ill-health disability		
Yes	117	9%
No	1162	91%
Responsible for caring for an adult relative/partner, disabled child, or friend/neighbour		
Yes	162	13%
No	1122	87%
Base: 1,279 & 1,284		

Table 14 – Respondents health

	<i>n</i>	%
Day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem		
Yes, limited a lot	70	5%
Yes, limited a little	165	13%
No	1053	82%
Base: 1,288		

Table 15 – Sexual orientation

	<i>n</i>	%
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	868	68%
Bisexual	29	2%
Lesbian/gay woman	12	1%
Gay man	9	1%
None of these	164	13%
Prefer not to say	189	15%
Base: 1,271		

Table 16 - Religion

	<i>n</i>	%
Religion		
No religion	530	42%
Muslim	299	23%
Christian (Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	359	28%
Sikh	6	0%
Jewish	9	1%
Hindu	2	0%
Buddhist	2	0%
Any other religion	15	1%
Prefer not to say	54	4%
Base: 1,276		

Table 17 – Economic activity

	<i>n</i>	%
Description of what doing at present...		
Employee in full time job (30 hours plus)	227	18%
Unemployed and available for work	60	5%
Employee in part time job (16-30 hours)	125	10%
Self-employed full or part time	24	2%
Permanently sick/disabled (include retired due to ill health)	19	2%
On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship, National Traineeship, Training for	7	1%
Wholly retired from work (exclude retired due to ill health)	21	2%
Looking after the home	152	12%
In full time education at school, college or university	581	46%
Doing something else - please write in the box	45	4%
Base: 1,261		

9.2 Copies of survey and focus group guides (to add)