

Hampshire County Council

Children's Services Department

February 2009

Sure Start Children's Centres: Phase 3 – Consultation Summary Paper

1 May 2008 to 31 December 2008 Responses

Introduction

- 1.1 This summary paper sets out the findings of the consultation process regarding the delivery of services during phase 3 of the Sure Start Children's Centre programme within Hampshire.
- 1.2 Hampshire County Council undertook a full eight-month consultation process on the development of children's centres (service delivery) across the county, under phase 3 of the Government's initiative.

Background

Role of children's centres

- 2.1 Children's centres play a key role in improving outcomes for all young children and reducing inequalities between the most disadvantaged children and the rest.
- 2.2 Children's centres are aimed at children under five years old and their families, but work closely with other initiatives such as Extended Schools so that families have easy access to age appropriate services throughout childhood.
- 2.3 Children's centres provide a range of services depending on local need and parental choice. They may offer information, advice and support to fathers, mothers and carers, as well as integrated childcare and early learning, health services, family support, parental outreach and employment advice.
- 2.4 Members of the local community are strongly encouraged to play an active role in the development and delivery of services in children's centres. In particular, parents' and carers' views form an important element of children's centres governance in Hampshire, represented through Parents' Forums. Each children's centre has a Partnership Board, consisting of representation from centre users (including the Parents' Forum), service providers, local schools and voluntary/community members. For more information about the governance of children's centres, please see <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/governors> or contact Claire Bailey, County Governor Administrator, on 01962 845846.

Consultation programme

Method

- 3.1 The phase 3 children's centre strategy consultation programme was conducted over an eight month period from 01 May to 31 December 2008. An 'Understanding the Issues' briefing paper and supporting questionnaires were made available in electronic format (website, e-form and email) and hard copy.
- 3.2 The questionnaire for this part of this consultation stage was aimed initially at both parents and carers in addition to practitioners. From 01 August 2008, consultation was aimed solely at parents and carers with a focus on service delivery. The following document summarises all parent and carer responses collected throughout the eight month period. Responses were received from both categories of parents and carers – those who already live within a full designation centre and those who live within a projected notional catchment area where no centre currently exists.

Responses

- 3.3 A total of 527 responses were received from parents and carers from across Hampshire and surrounding areas, 509 being specifically from within Hampshire, the remainder being from out of county.

Findings

- 3.4 Parents and carers questionnaire sought views on:
 - what services local children's centres should provide; and
 - key priorities for children's centres in the local area.
- 3.5 527 responses were received from parents and carers, representing 745 under fives. Table 1 shows responses broken down by the age of the parent/carer.

Table 1: Parents and Carers responses split by age

Age (years)	No. of responses	% of total responses
Under 16	0	0%
16-20	3	1%
21-30	90	17%
31-40	342	65%
41-50	83	16%
51-60	5	1%
61 and above	1	0.2%
Unknown	3	1%

- 3.6 Responses were received from all districts identified for additional children's centres under phase 3 of the programme. Table 2 shows response level broken down by district.

Table 2: Parents and carers responses split by districts

District	No. of responses	% of total responses
Basingstoke & Deane	118	22%
East Hampshire	25	5%
Eastleigh	81	15%
Fareham	12	2%
Gosport	1	0.2%
Hart	93	18%
Havant	8	2%
New Forest	2	0.4%
Rushmoor	21	4%
Test Valley	49	9%
Winchester	78	15%
Out of County	18	3%
Unknown	21	4%

- 3.7 Of the 527 responses from parents and carers:

- 8% were from a lone parent household;
- 93% had a member of the household in paid employment;
- 8% had a child with a disability or additional need; and
- 2% had an adult in the household with a disability or additional need.

- 3.8 The majority of response from parents and carers were received from families who classed themselves as 'White' (93% of total responses). Table 3 shows response level by ethnicity.

Table 3: Parents and carers responses split by ethnicity

Ethnicity	No. of responses	% of total responses
White	488	93%
White Irish	1	0.2%
White Traveller	0	0%
White Gypsy Roma	0	0%
Other White Background	2	0.4%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	1	0%
Mixed - White & Black African	0	0%
Mixed - White & Asian	4	1%
Other mixed background	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	7	1%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0%
Other Asian or Asian British Background	2	0.4%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1	0.2%
Black or Black British - African	1	0.2%
Other Black or Black British	0	0%
Chinese	1	0.2%
Any other ethnic background	3	1%
Do not wish to disclose	9	2%
Did not disclose	6	1%

Family Support Services

3.9 As part of the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to identify (using a pre-defined list) which family support services would be useful for families within the children's centres proposed Notional Catchment Area (NCA). Table 4 shows preference for each service, however the top three family support services identified as *'useful'* were:

- fun and recreational activities (71%);
- stay and play sessions (61%); and
- advice on parenting skills (52%).

Table 4: Family support services identified as ‘useful’ by parents and carers

Family support service	No. of responses selecting this service	% against all submissions
Parenting support	226	43%
Advice on parenting skills	272	52%
Information on children growing up	234	44%
Support for families with children or carers with a disability or additional needs	184	35%
Services for teenage and young parents	200	38%
Confidence building	143	27%
Information and activities for dads	193	37%
Support for domestic abuse	116	22%
Drugs and alcohol advice	126	24%
Fun and recreational activities	374	71%
Debt and loan advice	117	22%
Services for Ethnic Minority families	63	12%
Support for childminders	107	20%
Stay and play sessions	323	61%
Signposting to services and activities for under fives	250	47%
Family support through transitional periods	174	33%
Child and family nutrition	206	39%
Adult and family learning	156	30%
Housing advice	80	15%
Other family support services suggestions	44	8%

3.10 Of the 527 responses from parents and carers, only 33% stated that they had received any form of family support as listed table 5 above. The main reason for the remaining 355 parents and carers not using family support services was stated as ‘not being aware of any services in my area’ (35%). Table 5 provides a full breakdown of reasons why those parents and carers do not, or have not, used any family support services.

Table 5: Reasons why parents and carers do not, or have not, used any family support services in the past

Family support service – reasons for not accessing service	Total number of ‘No’ responses	% of ‘No’ responses
Nothing suitable for my family needs	34	6%
Do not need these services	140	27%
Not accessible for my family	8	2%
Too far to travel to the nearest service	10	2%
Not aware of any services in my area	184	35%
Opening times do not suit me	17	3%
Other reasons why not using family support services	16	3%

3.11 Only 2% of those who have not used family support services identified that it was ‘too far to travel to the nearest service’. This low figure is supported by parents and carers responses, which state that 11% would be willing to travel ‘any distance’, whilst over 40% would be willing to travel between 2 -10 miles to access family support services. In turn, 64% of all parents and carers stated that they would be willing to spend between 10 and 20 minutes travelling. See tables 6 and 7 for a full breakdown of distances and times parents and carers were willing to travel, in order to access family support services.

Table 6: Distance parents and carers are prepared to travel to access family support services

Distance prepared to travel	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
No response	32	6%
A short walk	32	6%
A short bus/car journey	92	17%
0-2 Miles	95	18%
2-5 miles	128	24%
5-7 miles	53	10%
7-10 miles	38	7%
Do not mind any distance	57	11%

Table 7: Minutes parents and carers are prepared to spend travelling to access family support services

Minutes prepared to travel	Total No. of responses	% of total responses
No response submitted	90	18%
2	1	0.2%
5	10	2%
7	1	0.2%
10	89	17%
13	1	0.2%
15	123	23%
20	128	24%
25	3	1%
30	68	13%
35	0	0%
40	5	1%
45	2	0%
50	0	0%
55	0	0%
60	6	1%

Child and Family Health Services

3.12 Parents and carers were asked to identify (from a pre-defined list) which child and family health services, they would access if available. Table 8 shows preference for each service, however the top three child and family health services identified as would be used if available were:

- healthy exercise activities for adults and children (50%).
- health advice and support for parents before and after birth of a child (50%) and
- support and advice on children's speech & language skills (48%)

Table 8: Child and family health services identified as would be used by parents and carers if available

Child and family health service	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
Health advice and support for parents before and after birth of a child	266	50%
Advice & training on preventing accidents and minor injuries	238	45%
Information on immunisations	201	38%
Support and advice on children's speech & language skills	252	48%
Healthy exercise activities for adults and children	262	50%
Support to access medical appointments	77	15%
Information & support on breastfeeding, hygiene, nutrition, health eating/cooking and safety	210	40%
Post-natal depression support	152	29%
Information on oral health	85	16%
Help to stop smoking	37	7%
Information on family planning services	56	11%
Support for children and parents with mental health problems	54	10%
Support for children and/or parents with disabilities and additional needs	67	13%
Other child and family health services	29	6%

- 3.13 Of the 527 responses from parents and carers, 481 stated that there were no suitable services for their family (91%) as listed in table 8. Table 9 provides a full breakdown of reasons why those parents and carers do not/have not used child and family health services.

Table 9: Reasons why parents and carers do not/have not used any child and family health services

Child and family health service – reasons for not accessing service	Total number of ‘No’ responses	% of total number of ‘No’ responses
Nothing suitable for my family needs	481	91%
Do not need these services	4	1%
Not accessible for my family	22	4%
Too far to travel to the nearest service	2	0.4%
Not aware of any services in my area	1	0.2%
Opening times do not suit me	18	3%
Other reasons for not using child and family health services	2	0.4%

3.14 Of those who had not used child and family health services, only 2 (0.4%) identified that it was ‘too far to travel to the nearest service’. 11% of parents and carers would be willing to travel ‘any distance’, whilst 40% would be willing to travel between 2 -10 miles to access child and family health services. In turn, 60% of all parents and carers put forward that they would be willing to spend between 10 and 20 minutes travelling. See tables 10 and 11 for a full breakdown of distances and times parents and carers are prepared to spend travelling in order to access family support services.

Table 10: Distance parents and carers are prepared to travel to access child and family health services

Distance prepared to travel	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
No response	58	11%
A short walk	31	6%
A short bus/car journey	89	17%
0-2 Miles	75	14%
2-5 miles	113	21%
5-7 miles	55	10%
7-10 miles	46	9%
Do not mind any distance	60	11%

Table 11: Minutes parents and carers are prepared to spend travelling to access child and family health services

Minutes prepared to travel	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
No response submitted	117	22%
3	1	0.2%
5	10	2%
6	1	0.2%
10	82	16%
13	0	0%
15	115	22%
20	114	22%
25	2	0.4%
30	74	14%
35	0	0%
40	5	1%
45	2	0.4%
50	0	0%
55	0	0%
60	3	1%
120	1	0.4%

Career Advice and Training Services

3.15 Parents and carers were asked to identify (from a pre-defined list) which career advice and training services they would access if available. Table 13 shows how many responses were received against each option, with the top three career advice and training services identified as:

- job opportunities (39%);
- information on training (27%); and
- information about volunteering and help to get a job (21%).

Table 12: Career advice and training services identified as would be used by parents and carers if available

Career advice and training services	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
Job opportunities	175	39%
Advice about childcare as a career	92	17%
Advice about employment law	103	20%
Information about volunteering	110	21%
Help to get a job	109	21%
Information on training	142	27%
Support for single parents	46	9%
Information about family learning	91	17%
Other career advice and training services	14	3%

- 3.16 Of the 527 responses from parents and carers, 54% gave reasons for not using available services with only 5% stating that they currently use careers advice and training services as listed in table 12. The main reason for parents and carers not using career advice and training services was 'do not need these services' (39%). Table 13 provides a full breakdown of reasons why those parents and carers do not/have not used career advice and training services.

Table 13: Reasons why parents and carers do not/have not used career advice and training services

Reasons for not using career advice and training services	Total number of 'No' responses	% of total number of 'No' responses
Nothing suitable for my family needs	45	9%
Do not need these services	204	39%
Not accessible for my family	6	1%
Too far to travel to the nearest service	7	1%
Not aware of any services in my area	127	24%
Opening times do not suit me	8	2%
Other reasons why not using career advice and training services	18	3%

- 3.17 Those parents and carers not using career advice and training services, only 1% identified that it was 'too far to travel to the nearest service'. Only 7% of parents and carers not using these services would be willing to travel 'any distance', whilst 30% would be willing to travel between 2 -10 miles to access career advice and training services. In turn, 41% of all parents and carers put forward that they would be willing to spend between 10 and 20 minutes travelling. See tables 14 and 15 for a full breakdown of distances and times parents and carers are prepared to spend travelling in order to access career advice and training services.

Table 14: Distance parents and carers are prepared to travel to access career advice and training services

Distance prepared to travel	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
No response	207	39%
A short walk	20	4%
A short bus/car journey	67	13%
0-2 Miles	39	7%
2-5 miles	72	14%
5-7 miles	42	8%
7-10 miles	41	8%
Do not mind any distance	39	7%

Table 15: Minutes parents and carers are prepared to spend travelling to access career advice and training services

Minutes prepared to travel	Total no. of responses	% of total responses
No response submitted	239	45%
1	1	0.2%
3	1	0.2%
5	7	1%
7	0	0%
10	66	13%
13	0	0%
15	61	12%
20	86	16%
25	1	0.2%
30	56	11%
35	1	0.2%
40	4	1%
45	1	0.2%
50	0	0%
55	0	0%
60	3	1%

Key Factors for a Good Service

3.18 For the longer term planning of children’s centres and development of services, it is important to understand the key factors (from a pre-defined list) which parents and carers consider as contributing to a good service for families and children aged under five years. Table 16 shows how many responses were received against each key factor, with the top three identified as:

- child friendly environment (94%);
- helpful and welcoming staff (90%); and
- clean facilities (81%).

Table 16: Key factors contributing to a good service for families and children under five, as identified by parents and carers

Key factor	Total no. of parents and carers who selected	% of all parents and carers who selected
Child friendly environment	493	94%
Helpful and welcoming staff	474	90%
Informal and relaxed environment	361	69%
Convenient location	405	77%
Confidence in information given by staff	351	67%
Know and trust the staff	297	56%
Clean facilities	426	81%
Confidential area to speak to staff	251	48%
Clear information provided	301	57%
Visited by service at home	112	21%
Seen promptly and on time	311	59%
Easy to get an appointment	349	66%
No appointment time necessary	164	31%
Easy access for pushchairs	327	62%
Telephone or web based services	219	42%
Convenient opening hours	395	75%
Good transport links	167	32%
Other identified service needs key factors	34	6%

Key Support Needs

3.19 As parents and carers of children under five years old, consultees were asked to identify (from a pre-defined list) what they considered to be their key support needs. Table 17 shows how many responses were received against each option, however, the top three key support needs were identified as:

- places where my child can socialise with other children (80%);
- opportunity for my child to develop confidence and independence (57%) and
- helping your child develop through play and how to best support your child's learning (both 56%).

Table 17: Key support needs as identified by parents and carers

Key support needs	Total no. of parents and carers who selected	% of all parents and carers who selected
Places where my child can socialise with other children	424	80%
Dealing with demanding or difficult behaviour	197	37%
Helping your child develop through play	297	56%
Advice around toilet training	126	24%
Dealing with fussy eater	161	31%
Helping your child develop through play	8	2%
Preparing your child for change	225	43%
Advice around discipline and setting ground rules	223	42%
Understanding how to deal with common childhood conditions	167	32%
How to best support your child's learning	296	56%
Understanding how your child develops	181	34%
Opportunity for my child to play with different toys and equipment	243	46%
Information about talking and listening with your child	150	28%
Opportunity for my child to develop confidence and independence	299	57%
Opportunity for my child to experience different places & people	272	52%

Key support needs	Total no. of parents and carers who selected	% of all parents and carers who selected
Someone to offer a listening ear	152	29%
Practical help and support	169	32%
Preparing for the changes a new child will bring	76	14%
Understanding what toys/books/activities are most appropriate for your child	117	22%
Establishing bedtime routines	90	17%
Support and information during pregnancy	98	19%
Weaning	80	15%
Information about physical changes taking place during pregnancy	51	10%
Chance to build confidence in my abilities as a parent	139	26%
Advice and information about childcare options	130	25%
Advice on benefits and entitlements	127	24%
Finding out about returning to work	121	23%
Coping with a child with additional support needs	59	11%
Chance to build my own confidence and self-esteem	108	20%
Support and advice in your home	59	11%
Coping with own long standing illness or disability	35	7%
Coping with partner's long standing illness or disability	27	5%
Advice about relationships	70	13%

Consultation on Service Delivery

- 3.20 The consultation stage with parents and carers is now closed. Details can be found at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/phase3consultation.htm>.

Lessons Learnt

- 4.1 Responses have shown that the provision of paper based and electronic versions of the briefing papers and questionnaires were useful in providing information relating to the future provision of services.
- 4.2 Only two responses were received from expectant new parents due to consultation being directed mainly at parents who are currently accessing services eg parents of children currently attending childcare settings.
- 4.3 91% of parents with a child under the age of one year identified that there were no health services that were suited to their families needs but had proportionately accessed available services, particularly regarding health advice prior to and after birth and healthy activity opportunities for children. 92% of parents overall also identified that there were no health services suitable for their needs. This may be an indication that parents may be accessing services but may be unaware of the full range of services available to them.
- 4.4 Only 0.6% of parents of children aged three and under felt that there were no family services suitable for their needs.

4.5 Contact Details and Further Information

- 4.5.1 For further details on phase 3 of the programme, or children's centres in general, please contact:

Children's Centre Services

Children's Services Department
The Castle
Winchester SO23 8UG

Tel: 01962 847291

Email: childrenscentres@hants.gov.uk

Website: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-centres>