

Your views on the future of our children's centre services and libraries

Respondent information

Respondent numbers

There were **335** responses received to this consultation. Of these, just over half (172 people or 51%) replied as individuals.

Responding as:			
An individual / member of the public	172	51%	
A family	105	31%	
On behalf of a voluntary or community group	7	2%	
On behalf of a statutory organisation	12	4%	
On behalf of a business	1	0%	
A Norfolk County Councillor	2	1%	
A district or borough councillor	0	0%	
A town or parish councillor	7	2%	
A Norfolk County Council employee	19	6%	
Not Answered	10	3%	
Total	335	100%	

Of the **335** responses received, the majority (316 or 94%) were online submissions to the consultation.

How we received the responses

Online submission	316	94%
Email	16	5%
Consultation paper feedback form	3	1%
Total	335	100%

Relationship of respondent to service (respondents could choose as many as applicable)

I am a parent / carer of a child (or children) aged 0-5	139	42%
I currently use children's centre services	128	38%
I currently use the library service	197	59%
I am a children's centre worker	45	13%
I work for an organisation that operates from a children's centre	10	3%
I work for the library service	4	1%
None of the above	54	16%
Not Answered	24	7%

Responses by groups, organisations and businesses

Twelve respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a statutory organisation. The organisations are:

- Acle Children's Centre staff team
- Caister Children's Centre staff team
- City Locality Norfolk Healthy Child Programme
- Cromer Town Council
- NCH&C
- NHS Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group
- Ormiston
- Shipdham Parish Council
- Snettisham Parish Council
- South Norfolk Council
- Stalham Town Council
- Trinity Children's Centre staff team

The statutory organisations expressed the following views:

- It is good practice to review any service periodically and children's centre services need to adapt to changes in the way people live their lives.
- There is a lot of value in providing some children's centre services which all families can use – universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.
- A few of the organisations were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, but they did include some caveats. For example, they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected. It was suggested co-location with libraries works well when each service has its own designated space.
- Some said they felt it would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services because there would not be enough space for both services or the buildings would not have the right facilities. They were also concerned that the two services would be too different to share buildings.
- They suggested a few ideas, including looking for more opportunities for joint working and collaboration with health services and exploring co-locating with other organisations, such as having more children's services co-located with schools.

Seven respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a voluntary or community group. The groups are:

- Action for Children
- Belton Church Foodbank
- Community Action Norfolk
- Home-start Norfolk
- Little Discoverers, West Norfolk School for Parents Charity

The voluntary and community groups expressed the following views:

- They were worried that families living in rural areas would be negatively affected by the proposed changes to children's centre and library services, in particular they were worried about people having to travel further to get to services.
- There is a lot of value in providing some children's centre services which all families can use – universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.
- A few of the groups were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, but they did include some caveats. For example they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected.
- Some said they felt it would not be appropriate for children's centres and libraries to share buildings because they offer very different services, in particular people raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families in libraries which are public buildings.

Two respondents told us they were Norfolk County Councillors. One councillor was concerned about potential reduction in funding for the mobile library service. The other councillor was concerned about the impact on families of the proposed reduction in funding for children's centres. They felt that the County Council should continue to fund children's centres rather than spend money building new roads.

Seven respondents told us they were town and parish councillors. They expressed the following views:

- Four of the councillors said they felt it is good practice to review any service periodically.
- Three of the councillors were supportive of the proposal for children's centres and libraries to share buildings, with one adding the proviso that there should be no reduction in the number of libraries. They thought this proposal would save money in the long-run and support children's literacy.

Nineteen respondents told us they were Norfolk County Council employees. This includes a few people who work at children's centres and some who use children's centres. They expressed the following views:

- Many of the employees said it is good practice to review any service periodically and children's centre services need to adapt to changes in the way people live their lives.
- Fifteen of the nineteen employees said that it is important to provide some children's centre services which all families can use. They said universal services enable staff to build a relationship with families and identify who needs targeted support – some of the respondents noted that it is not just families on low incomes who need targeted support. Many of the respondents also said universal services provide help to families early on and prevent the need for more costly services later.

- Many of the employees could see the benefits of children's centres and libraries sharing buildings, but their support for the proposal did include some caveats, for example they said they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected. They thought that each area would need to be looked at on case-by-case basis. It was suggested co-location with libraries works well when each service has its own designated space.
- A majority of employees said they felt it would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services, because there would not be enough space for both services or the buildings would not have the right facilities. They were also concerned that the two services would be too different to share buildings, in particular employees raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families in libraries which are public buildings.
- Several employees were worried that our proposals would make it more difficult for families to get to children's centre or library services. They worried that families would be left isolated and that this would be bad for the mental health and wellbeing of parents / carers and children.

A response by Brandon Lewis MP was also received in which he said he thought we could find some savings without really affecting the services provided to families and that access to these essential services needs to be maintained, particularly for those living in more rural towns and villages, where children's centres and libraries act as community hubs.

Summary of main themes

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of times mentioned	Quotes
Children's centre services are valued and viewed as essential or a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several respondents said that they regard children's centres as a vital part of the community and families really value the support offered Some respondents said that children's centre services are key to supporting vulnerable families Some respondents said we should be investing more in children's centre services 	142	<p>"Having somewhere to go where you feel comfortable to talk to people with knowledge of children's early years is irreplaceable."</p> <p>"Having the Children's centre to go to for breast feeding cafe and their other groups was a life line for me, as unlike other parent groups I knew it was a safe zone where I would have the support of professionals and I wouldn't have been judged."</p> <p>"Children's Centres are integral to the local community and are well used by families from all areas and needs."</p> <p>"This is a devastating blow to local communities and vulnerable families who rely on children centres for help in accessing the services they need."</p> <p>"The children centres are holding many families that do not meet thresholds for further support however are border line safeguarding which make these children extremely vulnerable."</p> <p>"I feel that funding needs to be increased to enable staff to continue their excellent work and provide community links to families who may feel isolated or who are vulnerable."</p> <p>"My boyfriend signed up for the maths course which had a creche, enabling both of us to study while my daughter was happily playing. He took his reference from the maths tutor and gained a place on a vocational course which took him to a paid job in a primary school, none of which he could have done without the confidence and free help he got at the centre."</p>

Children's centre services should be reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good practice to regularly review services and to see how they could be improved • How people live their lives has changed, so children's centre services need to change too • The current set of contracts will end soon and this provides a good opportunity to review services • Some people who said they support a review taking place, added that they would like to see the outcome of the review before deciding whether they agree with our proposals or not 	111	<p>"I believe a review of Children's Centre services would be a positive step. Assessing need according to locality might help to identify where services are under/over subscribed."</p> <p>"I believe that a review is needed, as times change but our service specifications haven't changed to keep up."</p> <p>"I am happy that a review is going to happen as it is important that the budget/finances are used for the biggest impact and to benefit the most people."</p> <p>"Good idea, we need more services that focus on helping and supporting the families but in the local village halls, not in children centre building where many people do not want to go."</p> <p>"I think all services should be reviewed to ensure residents are receiving value for money. The impact would depend on the findings and subsequent action."</p>
Face-to-face support for families is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing more information online could be a useful addition, but does not replace the need for face-to-face support • Parents / carers value the social interaction of face-to-face support and the opportunity to meet new people who are in a similar situation to them 	24	<p>"Online information in no way can replace the kind of advice and support available from a children's centre, and I strongly feel should only be supplied in addition."</p> <p>"The children's centres are amazing and I have been relying on them so much with both my children. The idea that an app or WhatsApp could in any way replace what they provide is ridiculous. Getting out of the house, meeting other parents and children is so important. You can feel so lonely as a new parent!"</p> <p>"I would not have known any peers to befriend and then feel confident messaging for advice had there not been play and stay groups and similar at the local children's centre."</p>

Some families could afford or would be happy to pay a small amount towards the cost of children's centre services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people suggested introducing small charges or allowing families to make a donation in order to keep services running The sorts of services that respondents said families could pay for or that they would be happy to contribute towards were stay and play sessions, baby massage classes and baby yoga 	31	<p>"All new moms feel alone and benefit from a good supportive postnatal group which should be free. But it's ok to charge from other activity sessions- I'm currently attending a baby yoga class which I'm happy to pay for as it's run really well."</p> <p>"For us money is a big constraint on the activities we undertake, a donation of £1-2 is a manageable amount for us per group, but many groups offered by other enterprises are much more than this and so we therefore to not attend them."</p> <p>"Perhaps some groups or activities could have nominal charges per family (say 50p) in order to help towards costs. However I think charging for most services would mean people would not access the support they need."</p> <p>"You could ask for a donation or membership or some other subtle way of keeping services free for those who need them."</p> <p>"I feel that more financially better off families should be able to contribute toward some courses such as Baby massage."</p>
Some families are worried about the financial implications of our proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some families are worried they wouldn't be able to afford to pay to attend groups or to pay more to get to children's centre services if they were delivered in a library or another location that was further away 	32	<p>"Some parents couldn't afford bus fares / cope with taking a couple of buses each way to get to other venues around town to get help."</p> <p>"Whilst on maternity leave I can't afford to pay for toddler groups so without the centre my children would not have any social interaction with other children. I suffer post natal depression and anxiety, and find the centre one of the only places I feel comfortable in taking the children when I'm low."</p> <p>"The targeted families we work with are so isolated, this would have such a negative impact on their lives as some of the families can't afford to pay for internet and have no vehicle to drive to other parts of the county....they would be left with nothing!"</p>

Some families are worried that our proposals would make it more difficult to get to children's centre or library services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some families are worried that our proposals would make it more difficult for them to get to children's centre or library services, for example if the services were co-located in a building that is further away from them Respondents were particularly concerned about families living in rural communities 	48	<p>"The Village Green Childrens Centre offers many services to families living in Belton and the surrounding villages who would have difficulty travelling into town for support in Gorleston / Great Yarmouth as public transport provided is neither reliable or cheap."</p> <p>"I can't get to the library easy it's 2 buses away. I've got 4 children 1 in nursery."</p> <p>"We do not have a library in the village, so for our parents this would mean a bus journey in to town. Buses do not serve the village very often particularly evenings for classes. There is no public car park near to the library and a local supermarket car park to there offers 2 hrs maximum stay."</p>
Our proposals would have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people said that our proposals would have a negative impact on families Several respondents said that they feared families would be left isolated and that this would be bad for the mental health and wellbeing of parents / carers and children 	133	<p>"Truly frightening. Simply put, reducing the budget for children's services by 50% will have a damaging effect on all Norfolk families."</p> <p>"I think it's madness. In total, changing Childrens Centre provision might save £5m - this is a drop in the ocean of the £125m needed and yet the negative impact on families will be huge."</p> <p>"The current services provided by Diss children's centre have been a fundamental part of raising my young family. Without this service I would have been isolated and struggled a great deal with some of the early stages of parenting and socialising."</p> <p>"The centre is a place where they feel welcome and they know that they won't be judged. Parents and their children get to meet other families and are able to play and socialize, all of this making them feel empowered and less isolated."</p>

<p>All families should be offered children's centre services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of people said that there need to be some universal services • Some respondents said there should be no reduction in the universal offer • Some respondents said there needs to be a universal offer, but that it could be reduced slightly • Several respondents said that having fewer universal services would make it harder for families to get help early on and before problems escalate, so families would end-up needing more intensive and costly support because they would end-up in crisis (this was mentioned 96 times) • A few respondents said that having fewer universal services would result in costs being passed on to other departments or organisations (this was mentioned nine times) 	<p>212</p>	<p>"It seems like this policy is expecting the most vulnerable to simply turn up at the children's centres and ask for help. I can honestly say from our experience that this is not how things work. The most vulnerable are also the most depressed/socially excluded. It is only through the universal groups that these vulnerable parents are encouraged to interact with the centre staff where they can be identified and given the tailored care they desperately need."</p> <p>"The balance between targeted and universal services is crucial. If there is no early intervention then the number of children receiving statutory intervention will continue to increase, this will increase the cost to the local authority. Removing budget from this service is short sighted."</p> <p>"Targeted family support work is over subscribed at our Children's Centre and having universal groups enables us to provide an offer to families whilst they wait for support. Furthermore, universal groups act as a 'step down' for families and enables us to keep in touch with one another and monitor progress. If we didn't have these groups nobody would be able to identify when difficulties begin to arise again for a family."</p> <p>"I think services should be available to everyone. Every child and family deserves equal opportunities and access to support if they feel they need it."</p> <p>"As a parent that felt anxious about attending groups after a difficult birth it would have been easy to stay at home and hide but the universal baby group helped get us out the house and talking to the practitioners for advice."</p> <p>"It is important to remember that you do not always need to be on a low income or live in an area of deprivation to be struggling and needing support. Many of our parents find parenting difficult and they feel isolated for many reasons."</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to identify which families need support – it is not just families on low incomes – the needs of families change over time and it is easier to provide support if families have built up a trusting relationship with staff from having attended universal groups (this was mentioned 96 times) 		<p>“How would they know who these families are? Do they wear signs? I know I didn’t and I needed the children’s centre more than most!”</p> <p>“Narrowing the reach of services runs considerable risk of missing some of those in need. Selecting only those perceived to be in need could also stigmatise those families. Furthermore, ensuring a broad mix of users offers more opportunity for the 'nudge' effect of seeing how other people manage family life.”</p> <p>“Parents learn from how they see other parents acting towards and around their children just as much as from the trained staff. To invite only one group could be seen as labelling or condescending. It could be seen as a place where only poor or bad parents were invited and so become a negative rather than positive experience.”</p> <p>“‘Needs them most’ is not helping those that just need them. What happens to them - do they wait until they the get worse and then 'need them most'?”</p> <p>“Also services available to all in the community helps integration and building a community.”</p> <p>“There is a wealth of evidence that providing early preventative services for families in the crucial first two years of a child's life is key to influencing better outcomes and life chances. This is where the expertise of children’s centres excels as a universal service.”</p>
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			<p>“If you target services too much, and completely strip back services to just targeted work, children will start to slip through the net and be missed as all professionals know, that children of concern are identified in universal services. It is also known that families of concern will purposely avoid official targeted services as they do not trust children's services.”</p> <p>“The breastfeeding support group is an example of a service which cannot be targeted at certain families as breastfeeding mothers all need support without exception.”</p> <p>“I was identified by my Children's Centre as a vulnerable parent who needed help. This intervention turned my life around, saved my life and my family from mental breakdown. ... However, this would all have gone by unknown if I had not attended 2 universal groups at the Centre for 4-5 months before things started to unravel. ... From first hand experience I can tell you that whilst the interventions have helped me in the short term, it is attending the universal groups that have helped me in the long term.”</p>
Children's centre services should be focused on the families that need them most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County Council has less money and so it is right or sensible that we should focus our resources on the families that need support the most • More affluent families could afford to pay for the services that they currently get from their children's centre for free 	48	<p>“Given limited resources it is best to focus children's centre services on families that need them most.”</p> <p>“I think it is obvious that with limited funds available, they should be directed at those who need them the most.”</p> <p>“I agree these services should be more targeted. The centre I attended was mainly accessed by middle class parents from adjoining areas.”</p> <p>“I think in principle this is a good idea as there are more private groups available for those with resources to attend.”</p> <p>“Good idea. Why are we spending money on people who don't need it 7yrs into the cuts?”</p>

			<p>"most vulnerable children are eligible for free early years childcare, so have ongoing access to services. Beyond the age of two it therefore makes sense for children's centre services to be much more targeted."</p>
<p>Our proposals would negatively affect rural communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents were worried that families living in rural areas would be negatively affected by changes to children's centre services 	62	<p>"I worry that the rural communities and those who find it hard to leave the house will be worse off as a result of the review."</p> <p>"Having regular contact and daily access to a local support centre is invaluable to a rural community. Without this services families including my own are isolated and vulnerable."</p> <p>"A review is important of course but once more the villages miss out. Loddon is our nearest centre from Ditchingham which is about six miles with no bus route direct."</p> <p>"I think making cuts to services that offer support to children and families would be a real shame. North Norfolk is a rural area and it can be very easy for families to become isolated."</p> <p>"In rural Norfolk we have little facilities as it is, don't take even more away by combining two good but distinct resources and making each one the poorer for it."</p>
<p>It is a good ideas for children's centres and libraries to share buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several people expressed support for the two services sharing buildings, for example because it would help to get children reading or because it would help to make both services viable A few people said that it works well in Acle where the children's centre and library already share a building 	168	<p>"A brilliant idea! Hopefully it would encourage more parents to read with their children and mean the excellent services offered by the children's centres could continue. I'd hate to see centres fully close."</p> <p>"I think it would be a great idea to assist with imagination and reading skills."</p> <p>"There could be good synergies by combining services within the same buildings. Perhaps this may allow more weekend opening hours for libraries."</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several people said they support the proposal but with caveats, for example they support the idea as long as there is enough space for both services or as long as people using the services are not negatively affected • Some people said that each area would need to be looked at on a case by case basis (this was mentioned 46 times) 	<p>"In the age of budget cuts, sharing facilities is definitely the way forward.</p> <p>"I think that this would be a good idea if it means saving our libraries."</p> <p>"A good idea if appropriate buildings are available."</p> <p>"This sounds like a good idea if space permits and doesn't limit activities such as messy play. We already enjoy our libraries bounce and rhyme time."</p> <p>"In my opinion only libraries that have a large and suitable separate space and outdoor space for a children's centre would be appropriate."</p> <p>"If a building is big enough I don't see a problem but you shouldn't cut either service just to squeeze them in."</p> <p>"Happy with this if the affect on the service is fully considered and not drastically reduced. Better to utilise all of 1 building than pay for two half used ones."</p> <p>"Sharing with a library works at Acle because the children's centre has its own designated space. Without separate space this could be less effective. Children's Centre services require different spaces to libraries."</p> <p>"I feel this is a good idea. We regularly visit Acle library which is already doing so, and our local Chidlrens centre of Martham work closely with the Library."</p>
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			<p>"Where we had capital to build an extension for the Children's Centre at Acle this worked very well but where we fitted into space within the Gorleston library it was less successful. There are practical considerations. Ofsted were not happy with safeguarding concerns over access to toilets and their use by the general public."</p>
<p>It would be difficult for our existing buildings to accommodate children's centre and library services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many respondents were concerned that our existing estate would not be suitable and said that we should not try to put both services into our existing children's centre or library buildings • Some respondents were concerned that the buildings would not have the right facilities, for example a couple of people questioned if you put a children's centre into one of our libraries would it have room for baby change facilities • A few respondents were concerned that there would not be enough parking for everyone • A couple of people raised concerns about the cost of adapting buildings so that they work for both services and questioned how much money this proposal would save 	151	<p>"Watton Library is far too small for the Children's Centre is be based there. There wouldn't be the space to be able to run the sessions that the Children's Centre currently offer."</p> <p>"I cannot visualise how groups and activities could successfully run from libraries. I feel storage and space to run groups would be an issue and this would limit the number of activities available to families on a daily basis. I also don't feel that library buildings (if used) would have the right facilities for crèche provision."</p> <p>"Placing them in the same building wouldn't work here in the city where our Children's Centre is already so busy that they sometimes have to turn people away from groups that are at capacity."</p> <p>"Libraries are not particularly welcoming and the buildings are not child friendly. The buildings are older and don't feel as welcoming."</p> <p>"It would impact us if the library space was reduced to make space available for the children's centre to move in. Reducing space available for the library is not a positive move forwards."</p>

			<p>“If the library were just used to host groups, then this already occurs at many libraries, Bounce and Rhyme groups in particular. Would there be space in libraries for a sensory room? Or a breastfeeding cafe? Also a crèche/play room? All services that my family very much value at the children's centre.”</p> <p>“There are many libraries which are currently in very small spaces and I don't think any library should lose space that is currently used for library provision. If there happened to be rooms unused in a library that would be large enough for a children's centre to operate from it then why not but I suspect that there are very few libraries where this is the case. Are you going to build brand new purpose built centres to house both library and children's Centre? If yes then great go for it!”</p> <p>“Parking is already an issue at the Children's Centre and at the Libraries - will more parking space be made available if the services co-locate in one building in all areas?”</p> <p>“I feel that in order for this to work, the money that would need to be ploughed into the spaces would be ridiculous and the whole point of this is to try and save money.”</p> <p>“People often come into the Children's Centre to seek help and and can be in a state of great distress. Staff are able to take them to a confidential space to offer support. I suspect people would not feel comfortable entering the library to access support in the same way.”</p> <p>“Libraries would not be able to offer the outside garden space that some Children Centres can offer such as Emneth – and also the big equipment that is used in the garden such as play kitchens, herb gardens, logs and other natural explorative play items, in the actual surroundings rather than being brought inside and looked at out of context.”</p>
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			<p>"I can just see well equipped, fit for purpose Children's Centres being sold off and everyone having to 'make-do' and double up in buildings that serve a multi-purpose."</p>
<p>It would not be appropriate for children's centres and libraries to share buildings because they offer very different services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people raised concerns about offering sensitive and confidential support to families from a shared children's centre and library building – libraries are public buildings that anyone can enter, whereas some children's centre services need privacy and respondents questioned how this balance could be achieved • Several parents and carers said they would not feel comfortable going to a shared building for noisy or messy group activities – and a few library users said they do not think it would be appropriate either and that they prefer a calmer environment to study or look for jobs • A few people said that parents and carers might not want to go to a building shared with a library if they struggle with reading 	140	<p>"While amalgamating the services appears a sensible option there a number of issues such as confidentiality, safeguarding and physical space. By definition Library's are public spaces and any member of the public can access them. Children's Centres on the other hand are targeted at children and families and there is a level of safeguarding built into the Centres. There is a danger that children could inadvertently be put at risk if services such as baby/child health clinics/child access visits/targetted goups are offered at such a public venue."</p> <p>"If I want to breastfeed my baby I would feel uncomfortable doing so in a library. I would also feel that in a crisis it would be too public."</p> <p>"There would need to be a designated area for the Children's Centre where confidentiality can be respected for families that may seek support from the CC for sensitive issues."</p> <p>"It should also be taken into account that adults in vulnerable families are often uncomfortable in more public arenas and may feel pressured into accessing library facilities, which can pose an issue of there is a background involving illiteracy."</p> <p>"Sessions such as Stay and Play require an outside area and many of the activities are too busy/noisy to be held in a library."</p> <p>"We use the children's' centre for support and groups specifically for children with additional needs. The idea of trying to run groups for these children (who are not necessarily easily accepted in 'normal' society) in a space designed for peaceful study and reflection, doesn't really work."</p>

			<p>"It often takes a lot of work with the more vulnerable families to build confidence to come into services in the safety of a children's centre, and this happens precisely because it is somewhere that is focusing on their needs, and not a totally public space. ... Children's centre staff are experts in recognising where parents are struggling, and engaging sensitively to encourage such families into services. This, and most importantly the primacy of the child's needs, could get lost in the attempt to provide everything under one roof."</p>
Ideas suggested by respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few people suggested other services which they thought could be co-located, these included libraries and adult education, children's centres and services for older people, and more children's centres and schools • A couple of people suggested that children's centre staff could provide training to other professionals about working with young children • A couple of people suggested that we could reduce the amount of resource we use to monitor the performance of children's centres or we that we should put less focus on increasing the number of families who register with their children's centre 	42	<p>"Sharing spaces with primary schools might be a better fit where available as most have better safeguarding set ups."</p> <p>"Have you also considered using older people's care homes to provide services for families particularly in rural areas. Research shows that exposing young children to older people and vice versa is good for both."</p> <p>"Have sessions in other unusual places (e.g. retirement homes) also been considered?"</p> <p>"In most areas where NCC has a significant presence (libraries, children centres, fire stations) there are already a range of community buildings and consideration should be given to how all community assets can be utilised effectively. Equally, public sector premises tend to be located in more populous areas which again creates issues of rural access."</p> <p>"I think what would be better would be to use existing children's centre staff to instead help other local groups improve their groups by advising on good activities and resources. This is because they are run by enthusiastic committed people but they often don't have the relevant early years knowledge to deliver good quality sessions."</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A couple of respondents said more should be done to support parents / carers to provide each other with peer support • One organisation said that we should look for more opportunities for joint working and collaboration with health services • One person suggested that if children's centres and libraries shared buildings then we could extend the opening hours of libraries • One person suggested that children's centres charge the other organisations who use rooms in their buildings • One person suggested that universal children's centre services could be delivered from libraries and targeted services from children's centres 		<p>"Children's centre staff training the library staff."</p> <p>"More should also be done to support pairing up families with other families who could offer support."</p> <p>"NHS Norwich CCG would like to ensure that community health services and health stakeholders are involved and engaged in the remodelling of this service, to seek opportunities for the co-location of staff and that services collaborate for the overall benefit of services provided to children and families."</p> <p>"Is it worth considering universal services being offered from libraries and targeted services being offered from fewer Children's Centre buildings."</p> <p>"I can see the benefits of maintaining lead CCs in areas of high deprivation with other CCs becoming linked satellites and sharing buildings and working more closely with libraries, health and/or leisure centres."</p> <p>"The library in Swaffham is too small. A small extension to the Community Centre (a community hub already) to accommodate them both would be really innovative!!"</p>
Challenge to the thinking behind the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents challenged the thinking behind our proposals, in particular people were concerned that we have included a figure for how much we could save before we have carried out any review of our services 	60	<p>"To undertake a review in the light of a predetermined level of cuts is effectively limiting the range of possible outcomes."</p> <p>"This "proposal to review" sounds more like a cost cutting exercise which you have already costed as saving the county council £5.5 million. If the review demonstrates that more resources would benefit the development of children would the finance be found?"</p>

			<p>"I am concerned that a review without clear objectives in relation to quality, outcomes and output will just become a cuts exercise."</p>
Comments about the consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people were concerned that we would not listen to or act upon the responses to the consultation, or were critical of the consultation because they felt there was not enough information 	21	<p>"How can I assess the impact on my area if we have not had the review and I don't know which are affected?"</p> <p>"Council should have the integrity and decency to set out detailed proposals rather than vaguely-worded 'common-sense' general statements dressed up as public consultation."</p> <p>"Consultation is a means to enable parents to feel involved in a decision but it's likely that any option will be detrimental as services will be reduced."</p>

Additional responses

List responses received in addition to the standard format (eg. petitions, postcard campaigns, letters) and summarise main points

We received a petition from Norfolk County Labour Party signed by 5,792 people. The wording of the petition is:

Protect Norfolk 'Sure Start' Children's Centres

My local children's centre was a life-saver when my daughter was a baby and toddler. It was motivation to leave the house, to keep some structure to the day and to be able to seek advice in a non-threatening environment. I felt out of my depth as a new parent and the advice and support I received was invaluable. My daughter really benefited from activities with other children, and I was able to maintain some kind of social support network. I'm passionate about the excellent work our children's centres do and the difference they make to the lives of families in Norfolk. It's in everyone's interest that children in Norfolk are happy, safe and reaching their potential. Our children's centres play a crucial role in this. That's why I'm asking you to support this petition.....

We the undersigned value our 'sure start' centres and believe that the proposal to remove 50% (£5 million) from the budget for Norfolk's Children's Centres is a false economy that will harm the life chances of children and families in Norfolk. In particular we are concerned about the risks of increased isolation and poor parental mental health, as children's centres have also had a proven positive impact on these issues.

We think it is nonsense that the service will be "improved" by having half of its budget slashed.

Research into the early years has found that for every £1 spent on quality early care and education saves taxpayers £13 in future costs [1]

We believe that our Children's Centres should:

- Remain a universal, non-stigmatising, service accessible equally to all Norfolk families
- Continue to provide enhanced, targeted support to families most in need
- Continue to provide services through both outreach and in local child-centred community buildings
- Provide activities and support that ALL remain free to access

We call on the County Council to:

Abandon the proposal to remove 50% of funding from our children's centres and commit to protect this budget. To not do so is a false economy that will just 'shunt' cost on to other services and undermine the excellent progress made locally in 'school readiness' and early years outcomes.

[1] ref: Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013) The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socioeconomic disadvantage).

<https://www.change.org/p/norfolk-county-council-protect-norfolk-sure-start-children-s-centres>

Norfolk County Council Labour Group organised and promoted their own separate consultation. They described this consultation proposal as: "Slash the budget for Children's Centres by 50% but not saying which ones will close or who will lose services. Vague language about remodelling and targeting those in need. This also hides plans to cut Library services without saying where or how. Mobile libraries threatened."

Eighty one of the responses contained comments relating to this proposal. Respondents told us they really value children's centres and libraries (including mobile libraries) and regard them as key services or essential (28 mentions), some said that they disagree with our proposals (20 mentions) and that these services should not be cut (21 mentions). Some respondents said they felt concerned about the impact on rural communities (20 mentions). Some respondents were critical of the Norfolk County Council consultation for not providing enough information (24 mentions).

Produced by Stakeholder and Consultation Team
ConsultationTeam@norfolk.gov.uk