London Borough of Hillingdon Draft Family Hub Strategy and Early Years Nurseries Consultation

Report by Family Hubs Network
August 2023

Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Overview**
- **Context: children's centres usage and attitudes**
- **Draft Family Hub strategy**
- **Families with children with SEND**
- **Partners and voluntary sector representatives**
- **Early years childcare and LBH's Early Years nurseries**
- **Conclusions**

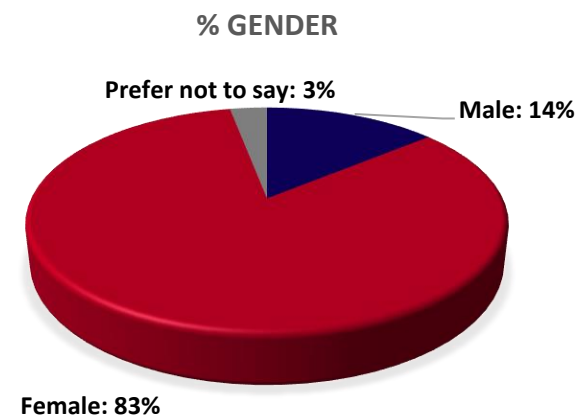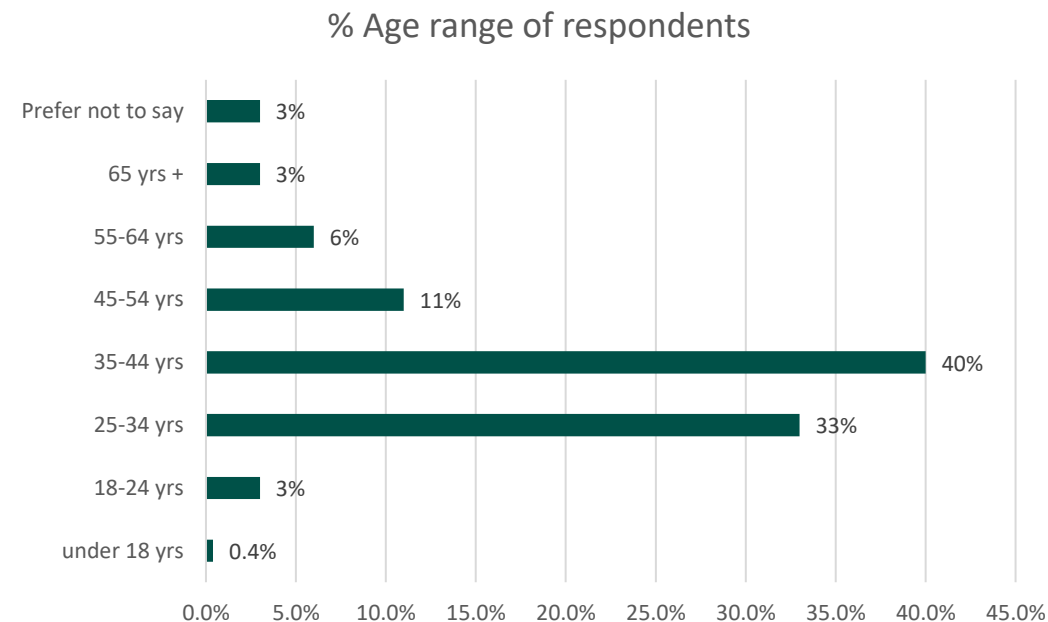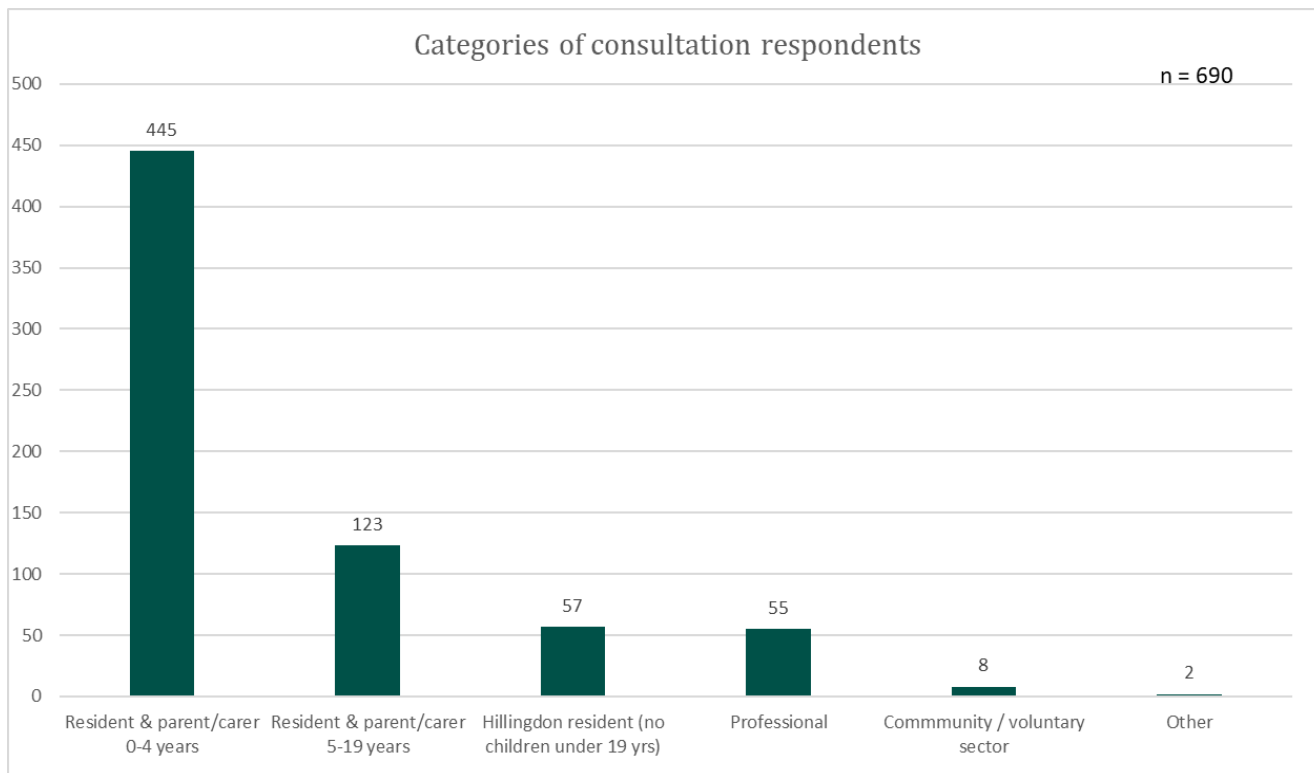# Introduction

Consultation method

12-week consultation:
10th May to 30th July 2023
Topic: Draft Family Hubs strategy and London Borough of Hillingdon's (LBH) Early Years Nurseries

- Online survey **– 690 respondents**

- Eight Family Hub Network (FHN)-led Drop-in sessions at children's centres, libraries and a parent peer support group for children with SEND (special educational needs and disability) - **95 participants**

- Additional drop-in sessions conducted by LBH staff to boost survey completions

- In-person and virtual discussions with parents of children at early years nurseries - **33 participants**

- Two workshops with council partners - **15 participants**

- **FHN team:** Catherine Barker, Denise Beevers and Sophie Earl

Sample (1)

- Good spread of age and gender
  - Achieved an expected steer towards women and parents of children aged 0-4
  - Sample included adequate representation of men and other age groups

- Number of responses from Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and - to lesser extent - professionals was disappointing
  - However, the input from those who contributed was sufficiently consistent to enable the consultation to draw conclusions

% Age range of respondents

Age range	%
Prefer not to say	3%
65 yrs +	3%
55-64 yrs	6%
45-54 yrs	11%
35-44 yrs	40%
25-34 yrs	33%
18-24 yrs	3%
under 18 yrs	0.4%

Categories of consultation respondents

n = 690

Category	Count
Resident & parent/carer 0-4 years	445
Resident & parent/carer 5-19 years	123
Hillingdon resident (no children under 19 yrs)	57
Professional	55
Commmunity / voluntary sector	8
Other	2

% GENDER

Prefer not to say: 3%
Male: 14%
Female: 83%

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Sample (2)

Respondent ethnicity

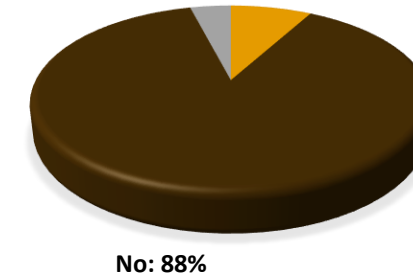| Ethnicity	%
White	48%
Asian or Asian British	29%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	6%
Other	5%
Mixed or multiple	4%
Prefer not to say	8%

% DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY?

Prefer not to say: 4%   Yes: 8%

No: 88%

- The sample was quite representative of LBH's ethnic diversity

- The number of respondents in the sample who said they had a disability (8%) was lower than LBH's population profile (14.7%)
  - ➤ However, this is unsurprising considering the consultation was more relevant to a younger cohort who have children under age 19
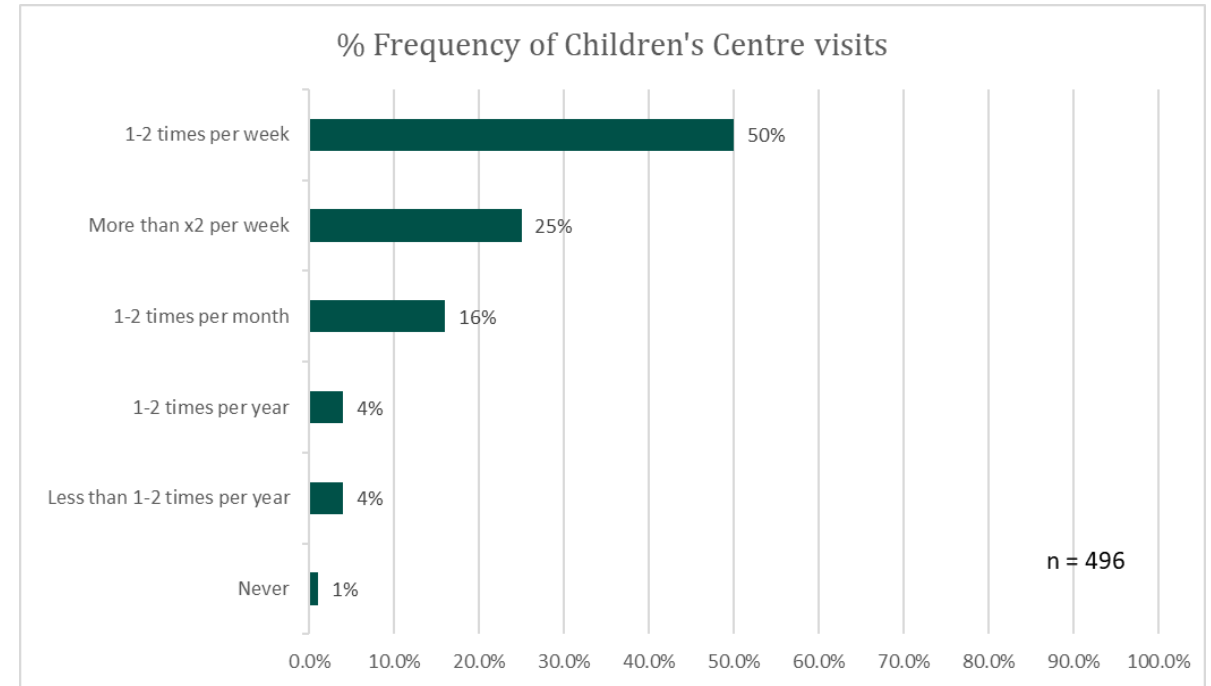
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Overview

Overview

- **Residents** responded positively to the draft strategy in principle
  - In particular, parents of children with SEND were keen for change
  - A number of parents were very concerned about ending service delivery from some children's centres
  - Losses of children's centres in Southeast (Barra Hall, McMillan) and North (Harefield) were felt most keenly
  - Residents need reassurance that new network of settings will be effective and accessible

- A number of residents were very concerned that expansion to 0-19 service would lead to cuts in Early Years (EY) services and staff
  - They need to see the new strategy building on the strengths of the current, universal EY offer and extending to include older children and children with SEND

- **Partners** were open to the strategy and inspired by its scale and ambition however, they were concerned about getting implementation right
  - They wanted to be reassured that there would be a sufficient number of settings in each locality, serving as hubs and delivery points
  - They were interested in the potential of libraries, leisure centres, young people's centres, health settings and voluntary sector-led settings as well as children's centres in each local network but wanted to ensure that the services available in each setting were appropriate, safe and, if the setting served other purposes (e.g. libraries), that these were not compromised.

- They welcomed the opportunity to integrate work practices and build closer cross-sector partnerships

- Closure of the three **EY nurseries** – Nestles, South Ruislip and Uxbridge - generated widespread concern
  - Parents' views highlighted the challenges they face regarding securing childcare which is affordable, meets their children's needs, offers the hours parents need and is sufficiently conveniently located to suit their journey between home and work
  - They perceived that local authorities have a responsibility for maintaining childcare quality in settings in their area and supporting and enabling parents' return to work for the benefit of the economy
  - Findings indicate that the solution needs to prioritise building childcare capacity and quality

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Context: children's centres - usage and attitudes
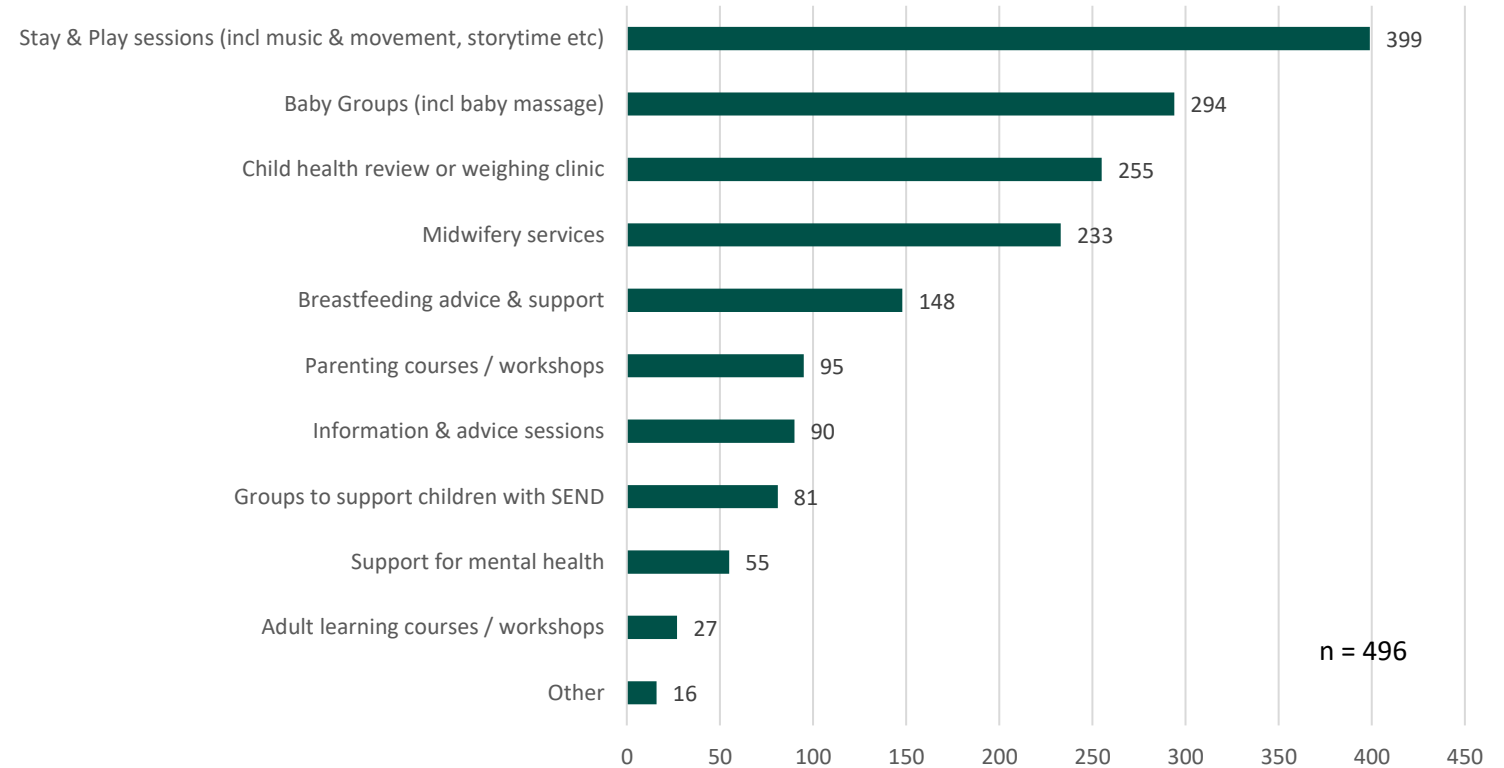
Usage of children's centres (1)

- 72% of respondents were children's centre users
  - 9% were not users of children's centres (19% did not give an answer)

- 75% of children's centre users visited children's centres once a week or more often

- Children's centre users expressed overwhelmingly positive opinions
  - In particular, they valued ante and post natal support, praised the enjoyable, educational group activities and welcomed access to health services and early years development advice

- Users were full of praise for the staff
  - They were seen as relational, available, knowledgeable
  - Parents valued the staff's readiness to help and their expertise to know when to reassure or escalate, as needed
  - They felt that the support offered in children's early years was vital.

% Frequency of Children's Centre visits

Frequency	%
1-2 times per week	50%
More than x2 per week	25%
1-2 times per month	16%
1-2 times per year	4%
Less than 1-2 times per year	4%
Never	1%

n = 496

Usage of children's centres (2)

- It was evident that many parents were emotionally attached to children's centres
  - The centres played a significant role in their early days of parenting
  - Parents had developed friendships with staff
  - Families valued the centres for being welcoming, safe and free places to visit and enjoy, on a regular basis

- Some respondents felt that the pandemic has had a long-term negative impact on children's centres
  - They were disappointed that capacity continued to be reduced despite the pandemic ending
  - Some reported that it was more difficult to book sessions post pandemic, although others felt that the system had improved recently
  - These respondents were concerned that capacity reductions will not be reversed

Q7. Which of the following services have you used at children's centres?

Service	Count
Stay & Play sessions (incl music & movement, storytime etc)	399
Baby Groups (incl baby massage)	294
Child health review or weighing clinic	255
Midwifery services	233
Breastfeeding advice & support	148
Parenting courses / workshops	95
Information & advice sessions	90
Groups to support children with SEND	81
Support for mental health	55
Adult learning courses / workshops	27
Other	16

n = 496

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Usage of children's centres (3)

- The survey sample included users of all LBH's children's centres
  - ➤ Plus, conversations were had with parents and carers at the drop-in sessions

- At the drop-in sessions, the FHN team encountered LBH children's centre enthusiasts
  - ➤ Enthusiasts attended two or more children's centres regularly, coordinating booking systems and frequency rules to maximise their opportunity

- Most users tended to use one children's centre most of the time
  - ➤ And made occasional use of other centres

- This indicated that some parents were 'in the know' and used many services whereas others (such as respondents met at library drop-in sessions or Early Years nursery users) were unaware of what they are missing
  - ➤ This seemed to be the case especially if children had been born during pandemic

Which children's centres do you use?

Centre	Value
Coteford	60
Harefield	54
South Ruislip	104
Cherry Lane	59
Colham Manor	69
Cowley	30
Oak Farm	55
Uxbridge Family Hub	86
Yiewsley	88
Barra Hall	117
Belmore	6
Charville	47
McMillan	48
Nestles Avenue	30
Pinkwell	26
Yeading	33

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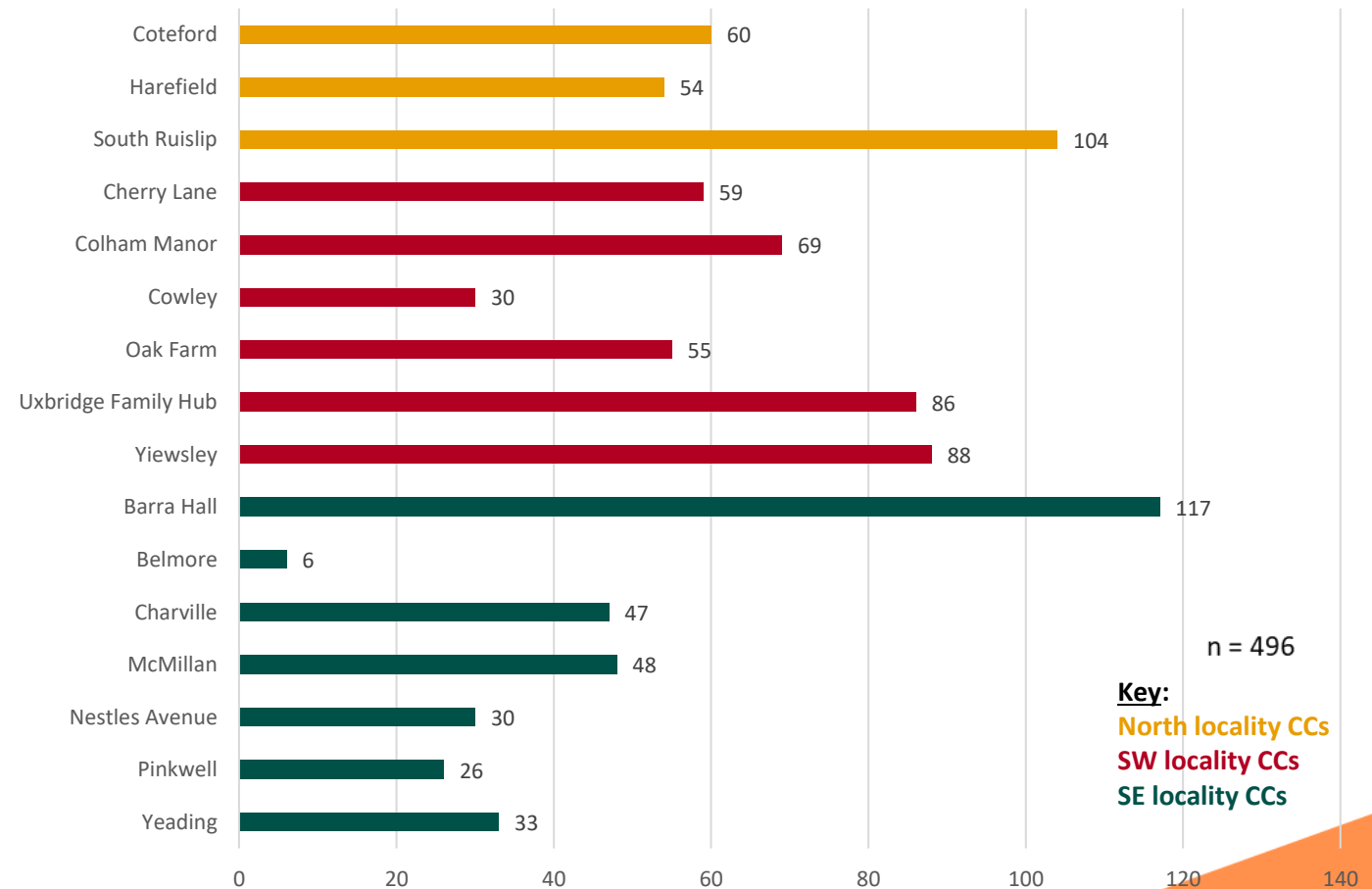
Key:
North locality CCs
SW locality CCs
SE locality CCs

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Non-users of children's centres

- The most common reason given for not using children's centres was lack of awareness of the services available
  - ➤ Parents at drop-in sessions at libraries added that this was especially the case if they did not live close to a children's centre

- Some respondents reported preferring local VCS-led services
  - ➤ These parents/carers were often not aware of the additional child development advice available at children's centres

- Respondents' low awareness is an indication of the challenge to raise awareness and inform parents of current and future offer
  - ➤ Vital routes to raising awareness amongst new parents include health professionals, early years resources and effective social media strategies

Q8. % Reasons for not using children's centres   n = 62

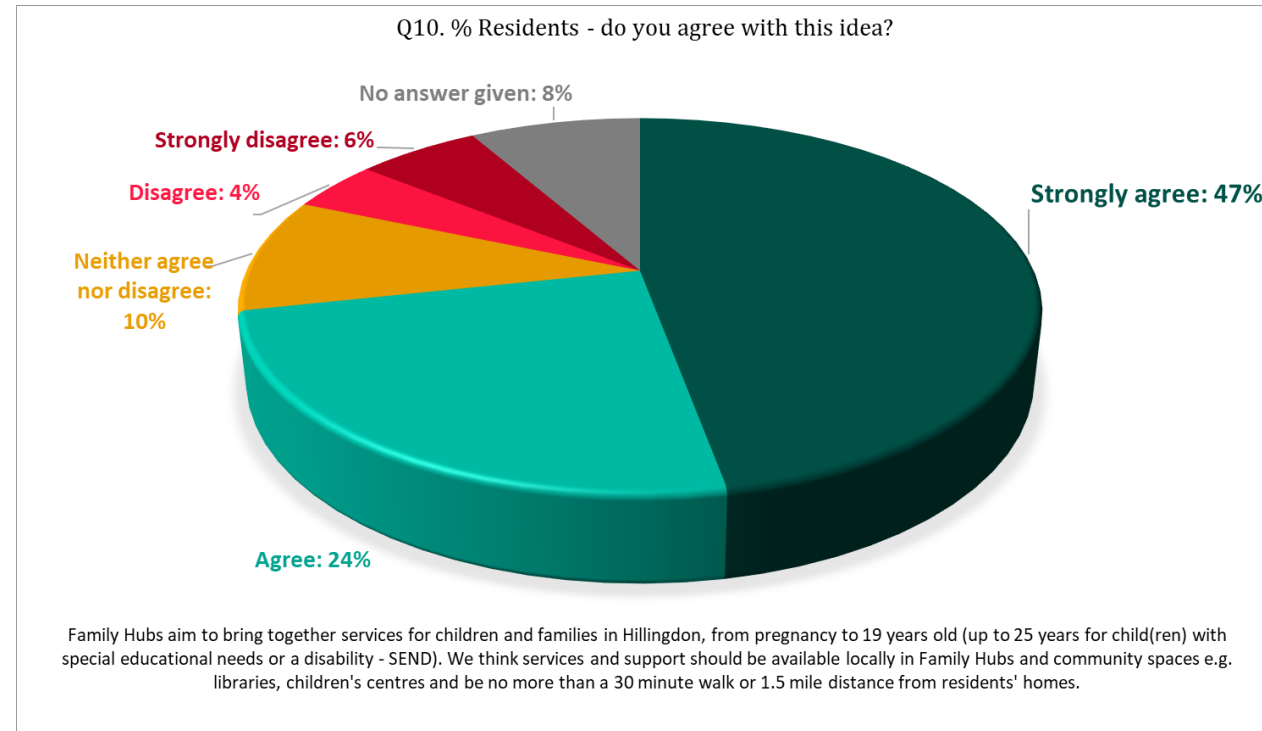| Reason	%
I didn't know about the services available	55%
Other	14%
I didn't feel I needed to attend	14%
The services were at the wrong time of day for me	9%
There weren't any services available near to where I live	5%
The centres didn't offer the services I needed	3%

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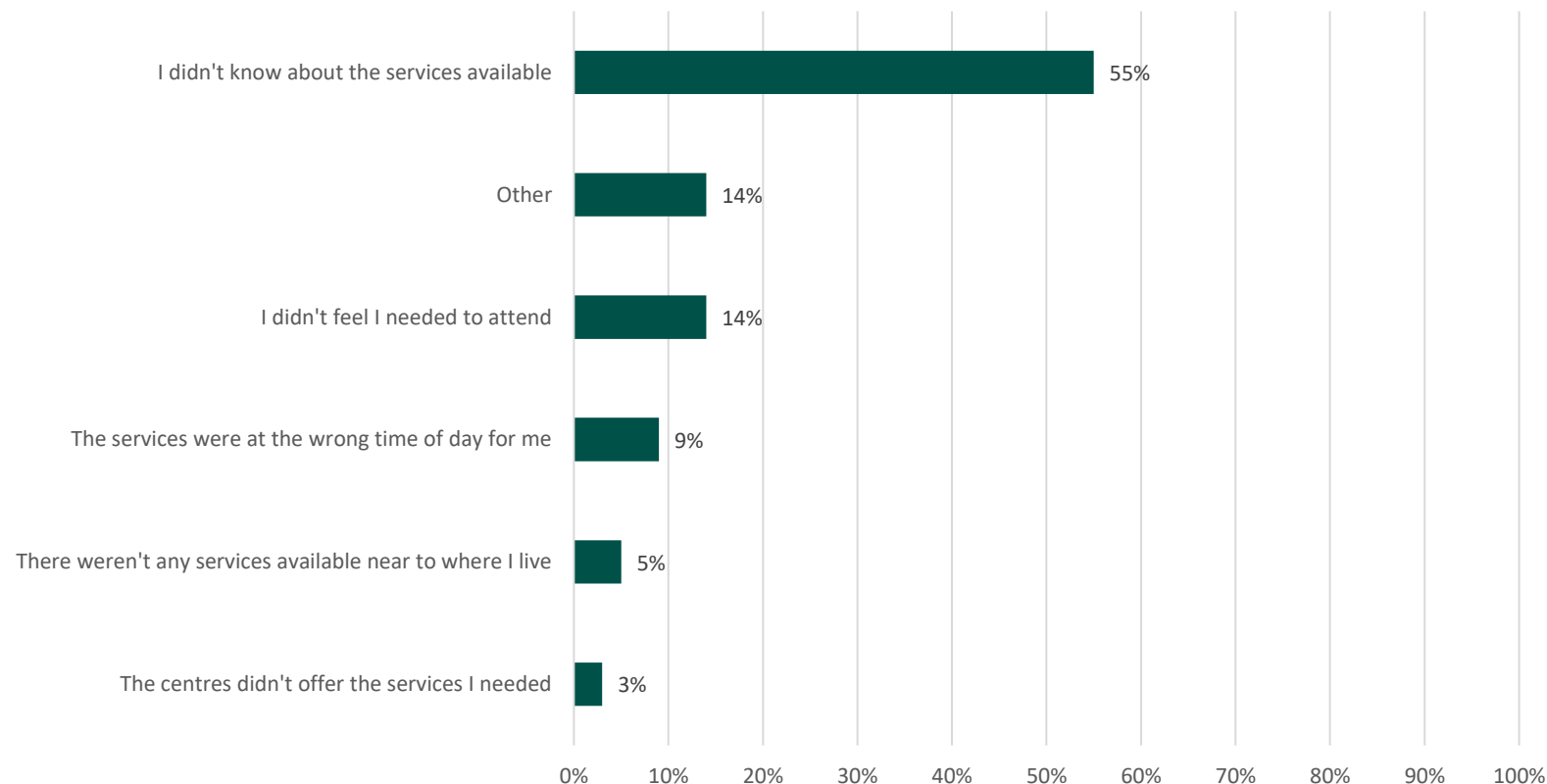
Draft Family Hub strategy
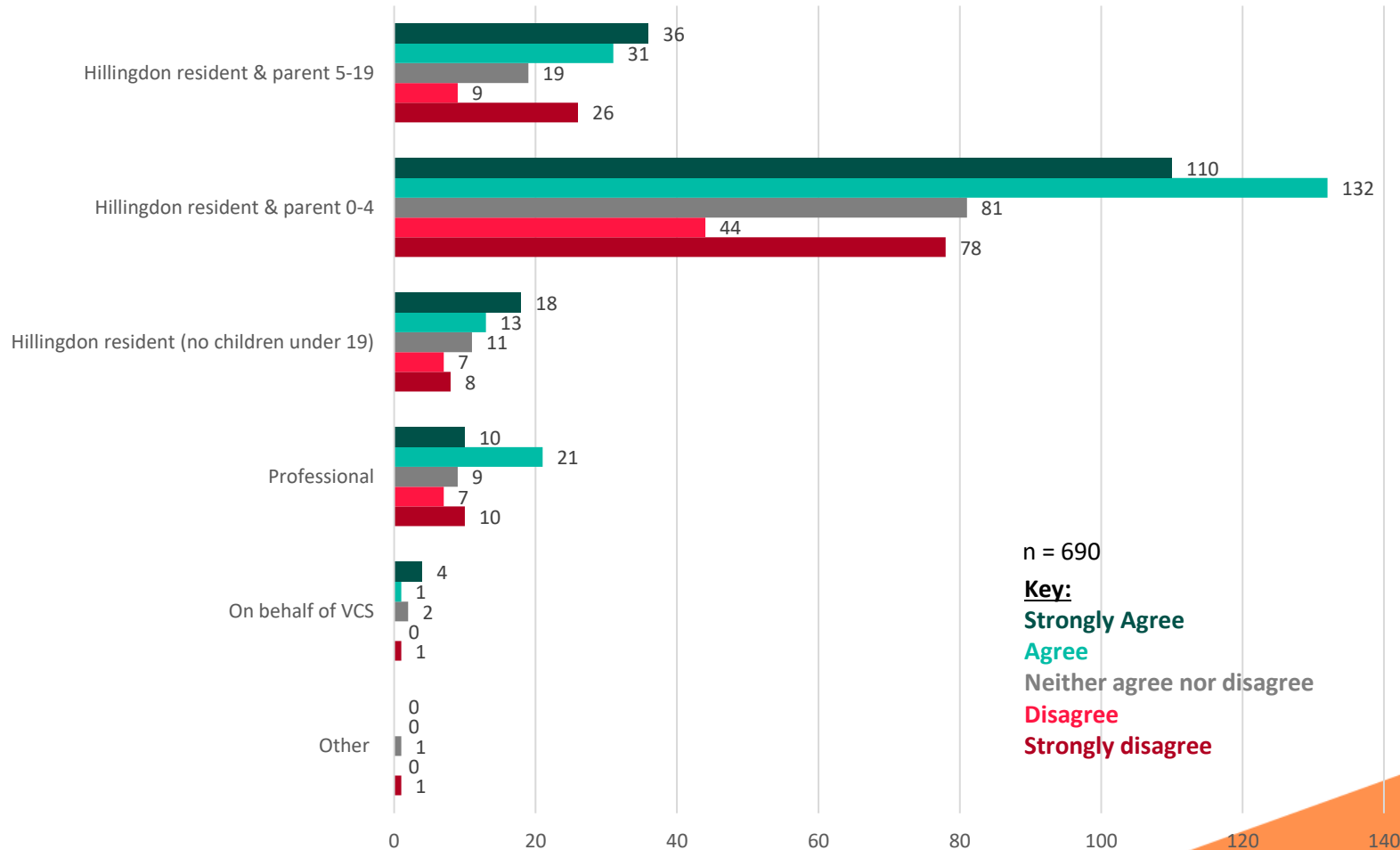
Reactions to Family Hubs: overall idea (1)

- 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed strategy
  - ➢ By bringing services together, they expected the system would become easier to understand and more convenient to access
  - ➢ Accessing services locally, within the community, felt appropriate for family life and had high appeal
  - ➢ The promise of 30-minute walk or distance of 1.5 miles, at first glance, sounded ideal

- The strategy raised expectations of:
  - ➢ More venues being used to deliver the promise of 'local'
  - ➢ Without compromising their core services e.g. libraries
  - ➢ Buildings being adapted to meet the diverse needs of a wide range of services

- Some respondents expressed concerns
  - ➢ Some questioned suitability and safety of combining diverse ages and families with very different levels of need in one location
  - ➢ Others suspected the strategy would be a camouflage for making savings
  - ➢ Others feared change would inevitably result in the loss of valued services and staff

Q10. % Residents - do you agree with this idea?

No answer given: 8%

Strongly disagree: 6%

Disagree: 4%

Neither agree nor disagree: 10%

Strongly agree: 47%

Agree: 24%

Family Hubs aim to bring together services for children and families in Hillingdon, from pregnancy to 19 years old (up to 25 years for child(ren) with special educational needs or a disability - SEND). We think services and support should be available locally in Family Hubs and community spaces e.g. libraries, children's centres and be no more than a 30 minute walk or 1.5 mile distance from residents' homes.

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Reactions to Family Hubs: overall idea (2)

- Interestingly, reactions between parents with older vs younger children did not differ significantly

- 0-4 yr olds' parents: over half (54%) agreed with the idea and just over a quarter (27%) disagreed

- Of 5-19 yr olds: over half (55%) agreed with the idea and just over a quarter (29%) disagreed

Respondent type vs Attitude to Family Hub proposal

Hillingdon resident & parent 5-19
- 36
- 31
- 19
- 9
- 26

Hillingdon resident & parent 0-4
- 110
- 132
- 81
- 44
- 78

Hillingdon resident (no children under 19)
- 18
- 13
- 11
- 7
- 8

Professional
- 10
- 21
- 9
- 7
- 10

On behalf of VCS
- 4
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 1

Other
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 1

0   20   40   60   80   100   120   140

n = 690

Key:
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
**Disagree**
Strongly disagree

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Reactions to Family Hubs: overall idea (3)

- Within each level of usage frequency, the majority of respondents were in favour of the idea
  - 54% of users 1-2 times per week
  - 66% of users 2+ times per week
  - 76% of users 1-2 times per year

- The exception were the most frequent users, who visited children's centres more than twice a week
  - 39% of users 2+ times per week agreed
  - But 46% disagreed, with 15% undecided

- The strategy was perceived to promise benefits to most families
  - But children's centres' most frequent users were most reluctant to experience change

Frequency of usage vs Attitude to Family Hub proposal
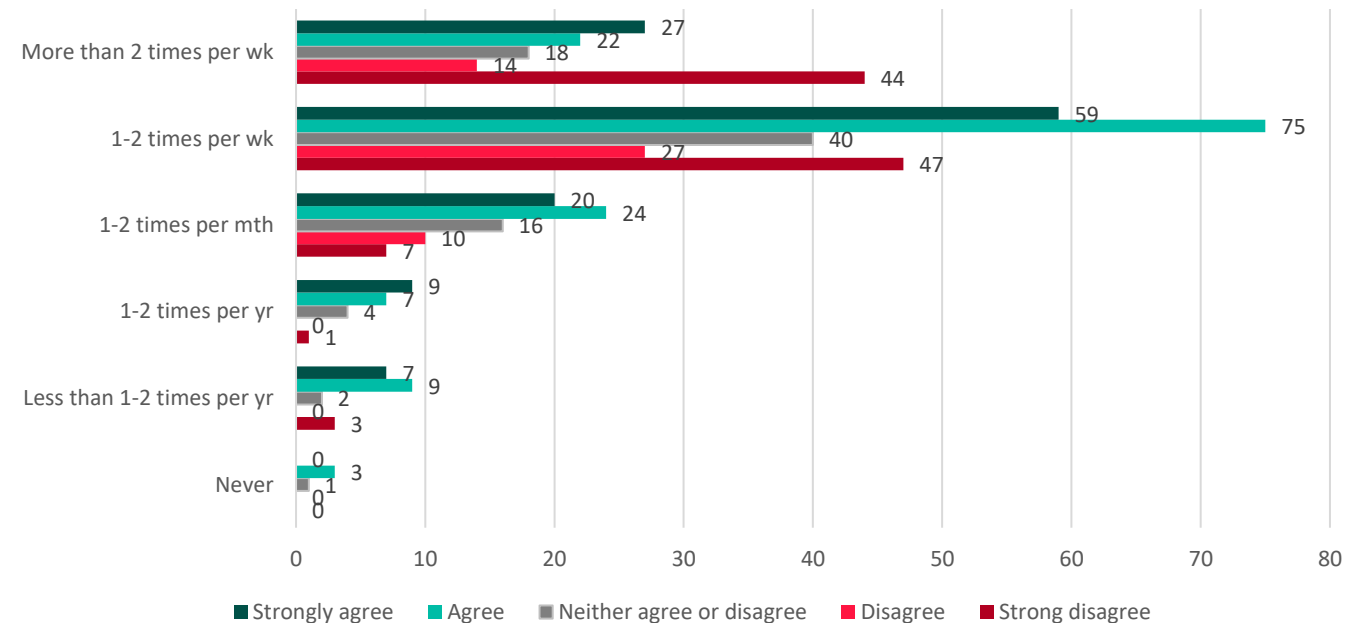
Reactions to the principles (1)

- In the drop-in sessions, FHN interviewers explored reactions to 10 of the key principles
  - ➢ While all the principles were considered good ideas, some particularly resonated with respondents
  - ➢ Those which held most appeal are indicated in green on this page and at the top of the next
  - ➢ Reactions to the remaining four principles then follow

Safe, outdoor play space at every hub where children can play, learn and exercise:
The prospect of safe, outdoor play spaces was very popular with respondents, especially those who were apartment dwellers. They recognised that playing outside was very good for their children. Some respondents suggested that activities in parks could be incorporated into the plans.

Support and access for children and young people with SEND and their families, through early identification of need and provision of services:
Many parents, not just those who had children with SEND, welcomed the principle of supporting children with SEND. They were aware that these issues are affecting a growing minority of families who are struggling to get the right help at the right time.

Hubs have a combined staffing model with the right range of skills and knowledge:
Respondents agreed that having staff with the right expertise in hubs was essential. They anticipated some staff in children's centres would have training and expertise regarding development of children aged 5-18 years and relevant issues. Some children's centres users facing teenage challenges were excited about this idea. They hoped that it would be a realistic expectation that these staff would be available on a daily basis.

Locally available services; no more than 30 minutes' walk, or 1.5 miles from a resident's home:
Initially this principle grabbed attention and was very motivating because it seemed a tangible promise of accessibility. However, many became less enthusiastic as they considered covering this distance/journey time in bad weather, pushing a buggy and/or with tired children. Several respondents observed the public transport routes are an important factor and hoped that hubs would be located on bus routes.

Reactions to the principles (2)

Integration with health will include more local access to some services at clinical places in the community:
This principle was well liked but respondents found it difficult to envisage which settings were being considered. However, because they found hospitals difficult to access, they welcomed a community-based solution

Hubs will respond to community needs, regarding programmes delivered and how accessed (i.e. venue used, online options):
Focusing on meeting needs regarding how families access programmes made sense to respondents. However, they questioned who would identify the best solution and were reluctant to have a digital or in-person experience imposed – flexibility was the key. Many welcomes the developments in digital service delivery but stressed that in-person access to support should always be available when needed.

A Best Start for Life offer providing seamless, multi-agency support for families with babies and young children:
Respondents recognised the importance of the early years in a child's life and approved of a plan which improved on the existing offer. They commented, in particular, on better connections to wider support because they felt it was important that problems are solved quickly, especially with babies and infants.

A digital kiosk in every hub where residents can access online Council services and information:
This principle did not resonate with most respondents who had digital devices and access to data/broadband. They tended not to be aware of 'digital exclusion' but recognised others might value the concept.

Residents will have equal access to information, advice and support through a range of formats (including digitally):
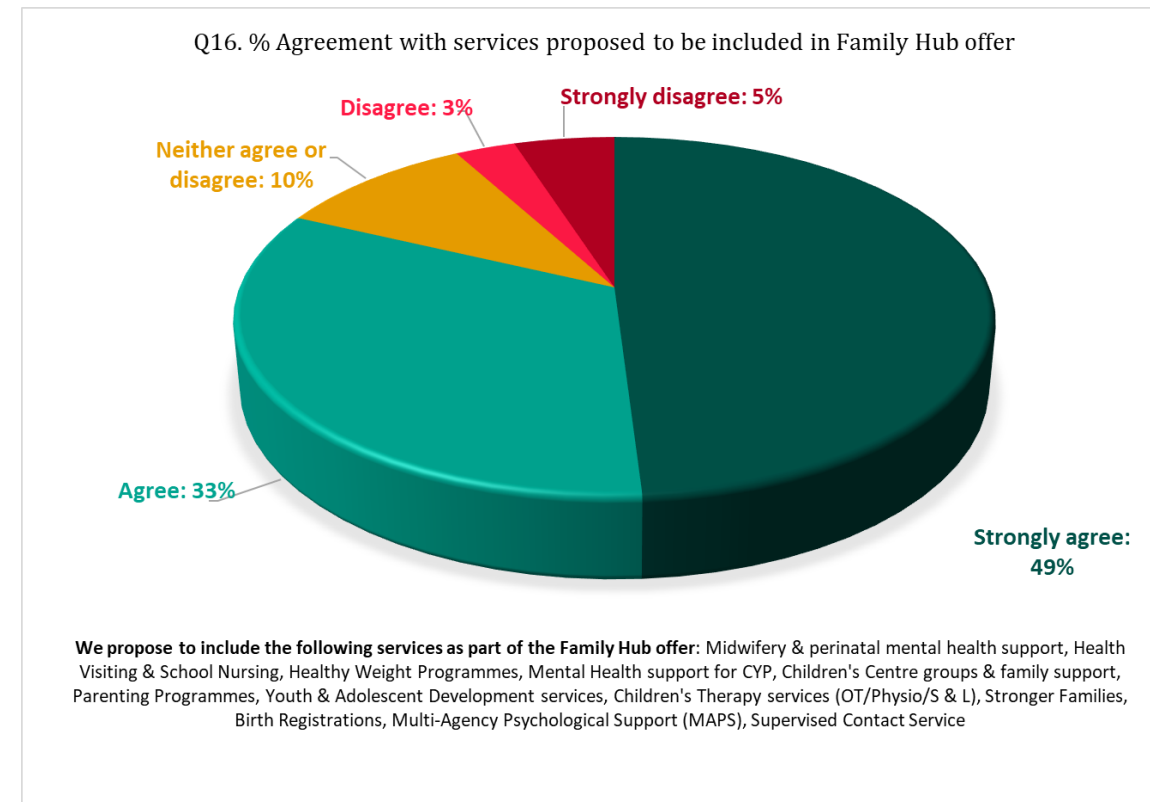Respondents felt this was a standard expectation and not seen as an innovative principle.

Hubs are educational, inspiring and enjoyable spaces; communities will become resilient:
This principle prompted little comment. Respondents prioritised practicality and staff skill in hubs, whilst assuming children would continue to enjoy settings.
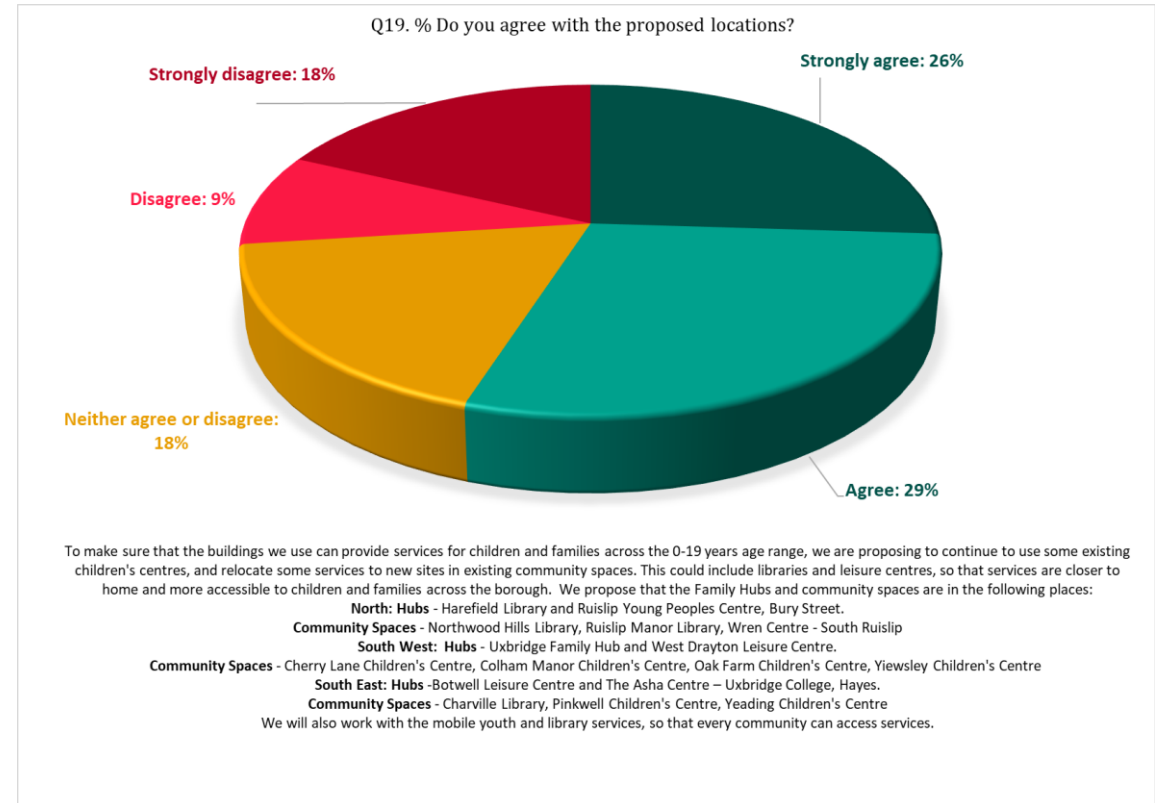
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Reactions to proposed services

- 82% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the range of proposed services

- They welcomed the simplicity of one system providing all services that families might need, from pregnancy to adulthood

- However, many struggled to envisage how service delivery would be arranged through the various settings
  - Some assumed that all services would be available in each setting
  - Which led to concerns such as challenging teenagers being in proximity with young children (and some reported having this experience at Uxbridge Hub)
  - This response demonstrated the need to help respondents understand the concept of a Family Hub network of places and services

- Respondents made many suggestions of additional service suggestions.
  - These included specific services for children with SEND and their families; support groups for struggling 8-12s and teens; activities for families to participate in together; childcare; sport; drama; after school clubs (full list available)

Q16. % Agreement with services proposed to be included in Family Hub offer

Disagree: 3%
Strongly disagree: 5%
Neither agree or disagree: 10%
Agree: 33%
Strongly agree: 49%

We propose to include the following services as part of the Family Hub offer: Midwifery & perinatal mental health support, Health Visiting & School Nursing, Healthy Weight Programmes, Mental Health support for CYP, Children's Centre groups & family support, Parenting Programmes, Youth & Adolescent Development services, Children's Therapy services (OT/Physio/S & L), Stronger Families, Birth Registrations, Multi-Agency Psychological Support (MAPS), Supervised Contact Service
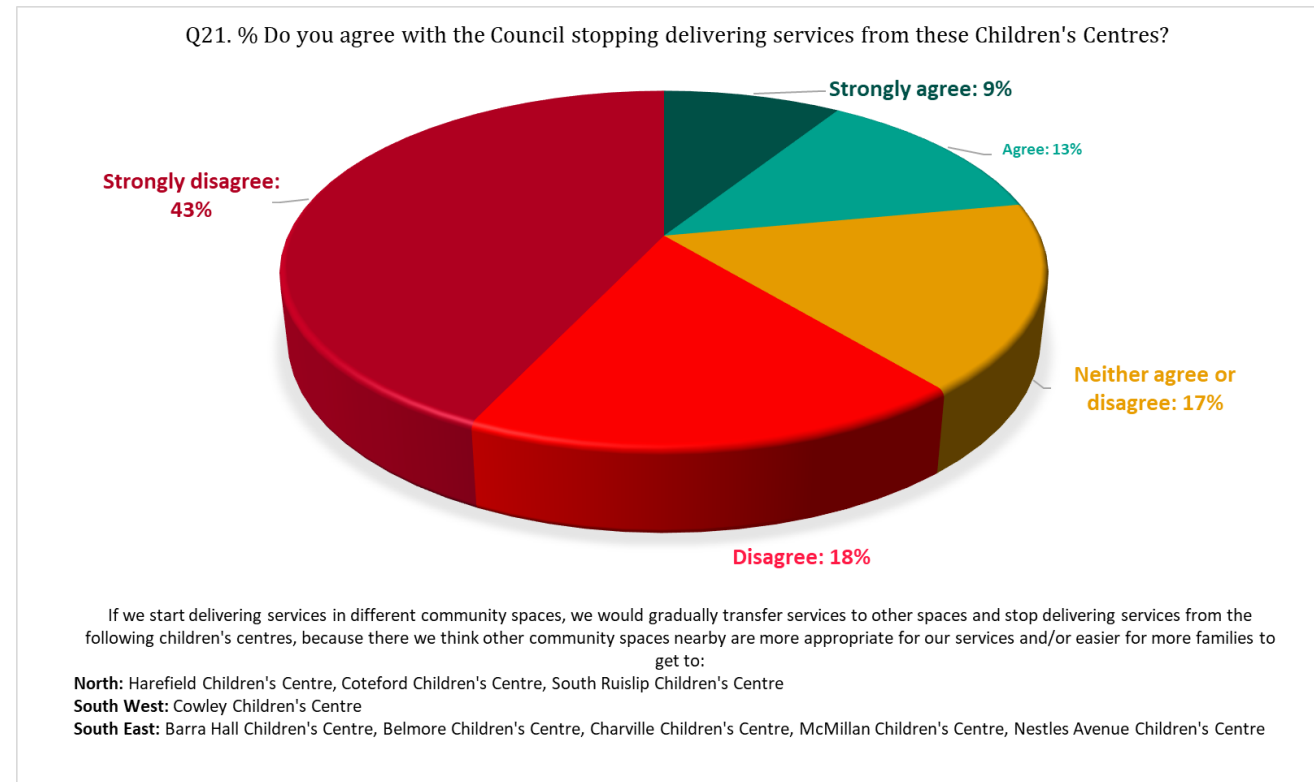
Reactions to proposed locations

- Respondents' reactions to the locations were more mixed but the majority agreed with the proposals
  - 55% agreed/strongly agreed
  - 18% neither agreed or disagreed
  - 27% disagreed/strongly disagreed

- Further analysis by postcode might yield useful insights

- In discussion, respondents observed that the proposed network of hubs and delivery points did not meet their expectations of a local, community-based network
  - However, once the prospect of including health and VCS settings was factored in, respondents were more positive

- Because many children centres are adjacent to schools, some respondents questioned how schools would link into the new network
  - They felt it was important that parents and teachers continued to get support with school readiness, transitions and other needs
  - Some observed that this could be an opportunity for children at schools without on-site children's centres to get better support

Q19. % Do you agree with the proposed locations?

Strongly agree: 26%
Agree: 29%
Neither agree or disagree: 18%
Disagree: 9%
Strongly disagree: 18%

To make sure that the buildings we use can provide services for children and families across the 0-19 years age range, we are proposing to continue to use some existing children's centres, and relocate some services to new sites in existing community spaces. This could include libraries and leisure centres, so that services are closer to home and more accessible to children and families across the borough. We propose that the Family Hubs and community spaces are in the following places:
North: Hubs - Harefield Library and Ruislip Young Peoples Centre, Bury Street.
Community Spaces - Northwood Hills Library, Ruislip Manor Library, Wren Centre - South Ruislip
South West: Hubs - Uxbridge Family Hub and West Drayton Leisure Centre.
Community Spaces - Cherry Lane Children's Centre, Colham Manor Children's Centre, Oak Farm Children's Centre, Yiewsley Children's Centre
South East: Hubs -Botwell Leisure Centre and The Asha Centre – Uxbridge College, Hayes.
Community Spaces - Charville Library, Pinkwell Children's Centre, Yeading Children's Centre
We will also work with the mobile youth and library services, so that every community can access services.

Reactions to stopping delivering services from some children's centres (1)

- The majority (61%) disagreed with stopping delivering services from some children's centres
  - ➤ Just under a fifth were undecided (17%)
  - ➤ Just over a fifth agreed with the proposal (22%)

- This response was in part indicative of the excellent services and support that respondents appreciated at children's centres

- Respondents feared children's centres would close and the new strategy would prove to be an 'empty promise'
  - ➤ They need to see a seamless transition of staff and services from children's centres to the new delivery points, so that families' experience is not disrupted
  - ➤ And effective promotion and explanation of the new approach

Q21. % Do you agree with the Council stopping delivering services from these Children's Centres?

Strongly agree: 9%
Agree: 13%
Neither agree or disagree: 17%
Disagree: 18%
Strongly disagree: 43%

If we start delivering services in different community spaces, we would gradually transfer services to other spaces and stop delivering services from the following children's centres, because there we think other community spaces nearby are more appropriate for our services and/or easier for more families to get to:

North: Harefield Children's Centre, Coteford Children's Centre, South Ruislip Children's Centre
South West: Cowley Children's Centre
South East: Barra Hall Children's Centre, Belmore Children's Centre, Charville Children's Centre, McMillan Children's Centre, Nestles Avenue Children's Centre

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Reactions to stopping delivering services from some children's centres (2)

- These attitudes were shared across the sample
  - ➢ When analysed by respondent type, all groups disagreed with the proposal
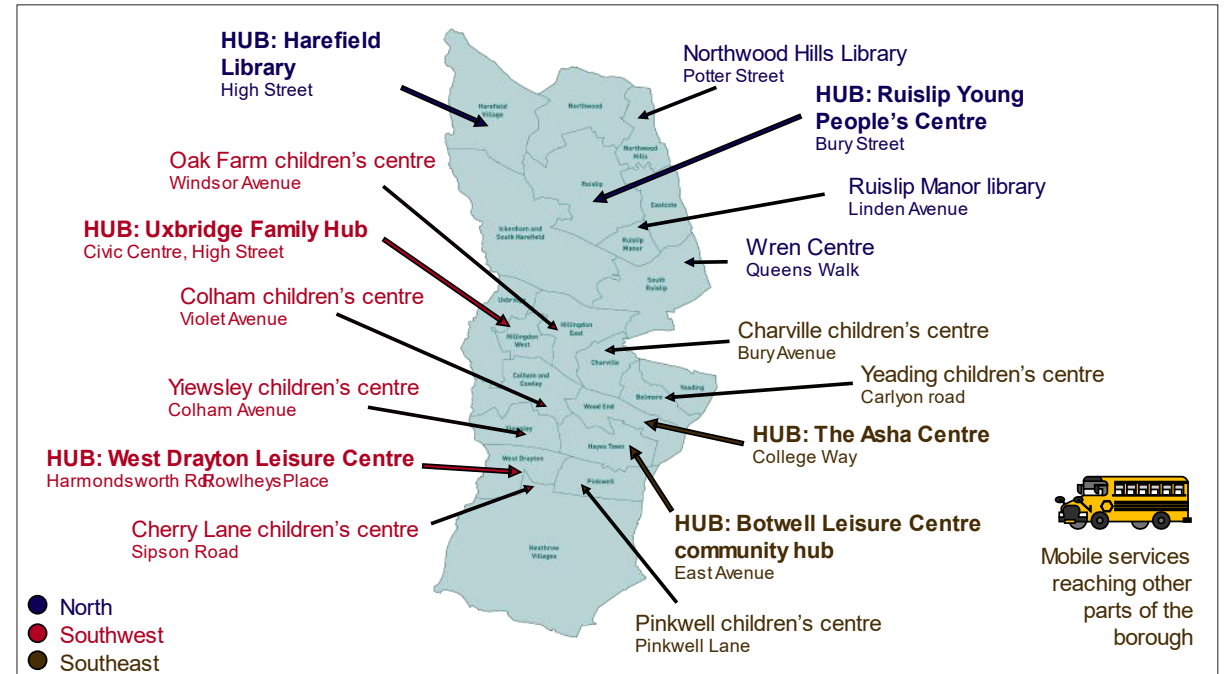 - ➢ 60-67% of each group disagreed/strongly disagreed
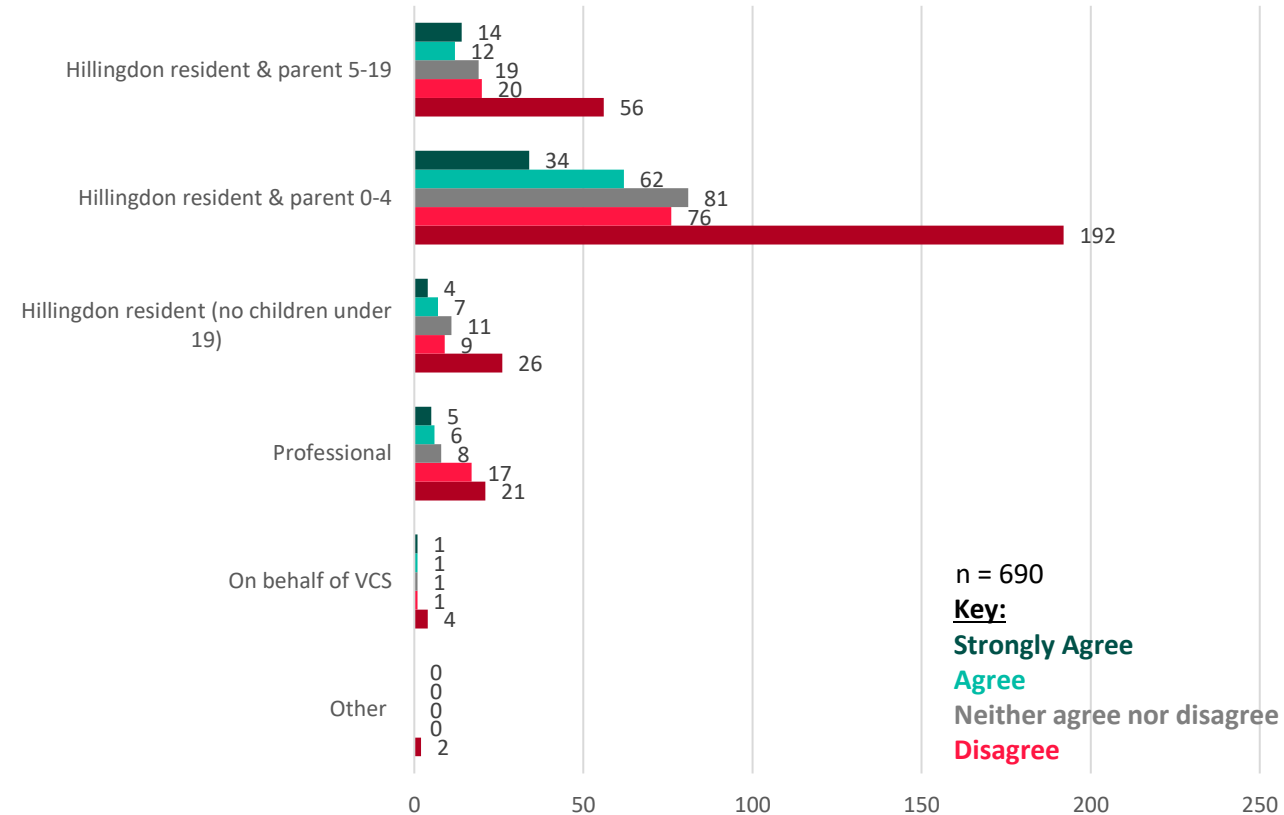
'I would like to see the early years centres stay open and run alongside the Family Hubs as I believe they can benefit each other. Very often services in Hillingdon are taken away with the promise of something better however this is not usually the case'
Partner

Respondent type vs Attitude to Children's Centre closures

Respondent type	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree (dark)
Hillingdon resident & parent 5-19	14	12	19	20	56
Hillingdon resident & parent 0-4	34	62	81	76	192
Hillingdon resident (no children under 19)	4	7	11	9	26
Professional	5	6	8	17	21
On behalf of VCS	1	1	1	1	4
Other	0	0	0	0	2

n = 690
Key:
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree

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LBH's Family Hubs & delivery points

- In the drop-in sessions, the FHN team explored reactions to the lettings proposed in each locality

- Respondents were reassured by children's centres' prominent role in the plan

- The focus solely on LBH assets was disappointing to respondents who were hoping to see the whole network of hubs and delivery points
  - And some perceived that the new network was a reduction in services

- However, once it was explained that this was the beginning of the network and they were asked to recommend other local settings to be part of the network, respondents were more positive

- Regarding the settings included, many responded well to the plan
  - They welcomed inclusion of libraries and leisure centres, which were seen as upbeat family-friendly environments
  - They felt that library activities have synergy with children's centres; some observed that library staff's relational skillset would be well placed to respond to enquiries
  - Respondents felt that leisure centres focus on health and wellbeing would align well with the strategy goals and were interested to understand their proposed role

- Some respondents were particularly interested to know more about the plans for mobile services and their potential
  - This was particularly important to those in the North and Heathrow villages

HUB: Harefield Library
High Street

Northwood Hills Library
Potter Street

HUB: Ruislip Young People's Centre
Bury Street

Oak Farm children's centre
Windsor Avenue

Ruislip Manor library
Linden Avenue

HUB: Uxbridge Family Hub
Civic Centre, High Street

Wren Centre
Queens Walk

Colham children's centre
Violet Avenue

Charville children's centre
Bury Avenue

Yeading children's centre
Carlyon road

Yiewsley children's centre
Colham Avenue

HUB: The Asha Centre
College Way

HUB: West Drayton Leisure Centre
Harmondsworth Rd Rowlheys Place

HUB: Botwell Leisure Centre community hub
East Avenue

Cherry Lane children's centre
Sipson Road

Mobile services reaching other parts of the borough

● North
● Southwest
● Southeast

Pinkwell children's centre
Pinkwell Lane

- Others were more cautious about the plan as a whole
  - They needed reassurance that each locality would be well thought though and will deliver what the strategy promises

{ North

HUB: Harefield Library
High Street

Northwood Hills Library
Potter Street

HUB: Ruislip Young People's Centre
Bury Street

Ruislip Manor library
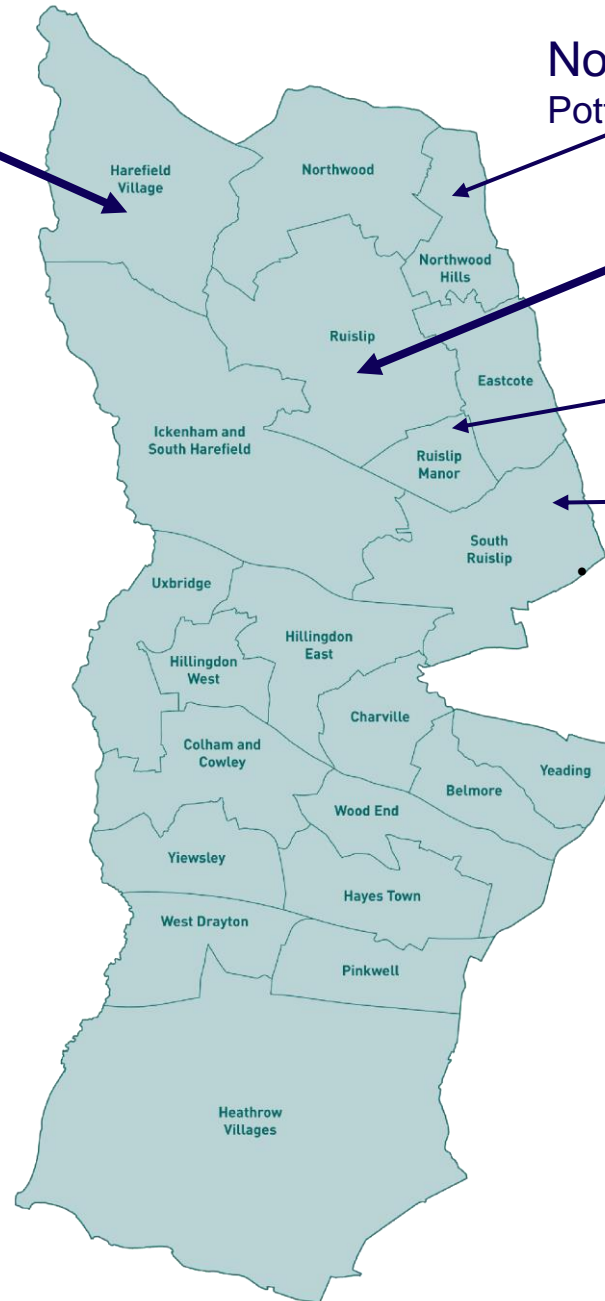Linden Avenue

Wren Centre
Queens Walk

- Hubs:
  - **Harefield library:** this was seen as an appropriate, central location but respondents queried its adaptability and whether there would be sufficient space for early years activities and wider hub purposes
  - **Ruislip Young People's Centre:** this setting was unknown to most respondents who perceived it to be off the beaten track and not easy to access

- Delivery points:
  - **Ruislip Manor library:** this library was popular. Respondents were interested in the scope to transform the basement for the purposes of the strategy, hoping that it would be accessible to all
  - **Northwood Hills library:** this library was not familiar to many respondents (note: no drop-in sessions were conducted there) and those who were mainly envisaged it as an information point
  - **Wren Centre:** this setting was unfamiliar to most respondents but once its proximity to South Ruislip CC was explained, they could see the potential and uses of this children's centre were pleased the new setting would be close by and not require a change in habits

- Closures:
  - **Harefield CC:** Harefield was seen as a highly valued CC and one of the few places of support available in the north of the borough. Users' descriptions of their experiences indicated that the centre was already delivering hub-like support to families 0-19, helping formally and informally with older children's challenges. The centre's adjacency to the school was valued by the school leaders. However, the challenge to reach children at other schools in the area was recognised. Families were keen that the current staff were retained if services moved to the library.
  - **Coteford CC:** this centre was valued by families and especially by the adjacent school. Parents and staff wanted services to be maintained in a new local delivery point, having concerns that they could not envisage where that might be.
  - **South Ruislip CC:** this was a highly valued setting but respondents were relieved that the proposed replacement setting was close by

Harefield Village | Northwood | Northwood Hills | Ruislip | Eastcote | Ickenham and South Harefield | Ruislip Manor | South Ruislip | Uxbridge | Hillingdon West | Hillingdon East | Charville | Colham and Cowley | Belmore | Yeading | Wood End | Yiewsley | Hayes Town | West Drayton | Pinkwell | Heathrow Villages

{family
HUBS NETWORK

Southwest

Oak Farm children's centre
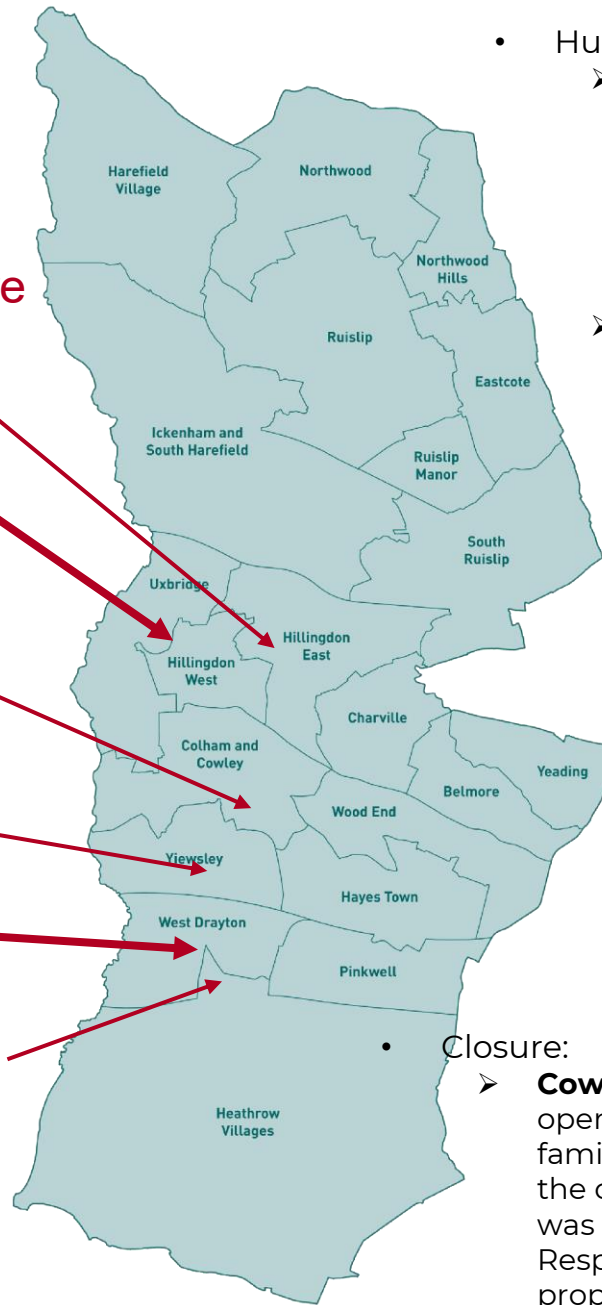Windsor Avenue

HUB: Uxbridge Family Hub
Civic Centre, High Street

Colham children's centre
Violet Avenue

Yiewsley children's centre
Colham Avenue

HUB: West Drayton Leisure Centre
Harmondsworth Rd/Rowlheys Place

Cherry Lane children's centre
Sipson Road

- Hubs:
  - **Uxbridge Family Hub:** this setting was appreciated by many who liked its size and diverse facilities. However, colocation with Youth Offending services prompted spontaneous comments about safety concerns. Comments were also made about security measures at the entrance which respondents felt created stigma and tension. The hidden location in civic centre was also considered a disadvantage.
  - **West Drayton Leisure Centre: This is setting is** currently a building site, so respondents felt it was an unknown entity. However, as a new building, they felt it had potential

- Delivery points:
  - **Oak Farm CC:** this centre was highly valued by school and families alike, providing multi-agency support. As a delivery point in the new network, respondents felt it needs to engage with families at other schools
  - **Colham CC:** respondents appreciated the building design and outdoor space, valued social peer-support opportunities and visits by professionals. They felt it was an effective centre which would be a valuable delivery point in the new strategy.
  - **Yiewsley CC:** embedded in the community in a residential road and connected to a church, this centre and staff were well liked. In particular; respondents like the large hall's capacity for stay and play sessions
  - **Cherry Lane CC:** Respondents were positive about the centre and were interested in the new 0-19 offer, which would benefit the offer

- Closure:
  - **Cowley CC:** because this centre's operational hours have reduced, families' have become less reliant on the centre and the prospect of closing was not considered controversial. Respondents were familiar with other proposed settings and anticipated using those.

{family HUBS NETWORK

Southeast

- Hubs:
  - **The Asha Centre:** There was low awareness of current building works or the building's previous role as a day centre. This was perhaps exacerbated by setting on the college campus. Overall, respondents felt this hub was an unknown entity
  - **Botwell Leisure Centre community hub:** the setting was well known to respondents but found it difficult to envisage as hub. However, they described it as an appropriately family-friendly environment. Some expressed concerned that 'community hub' in the name was potentially confusing – this was a further indication that clarity in branding and communication would be welcome and effective

- Delivery points:
  - **Charville Library:** parents valued the centre but were open to location moving to nearby library. They stressed that early years activities needed to be continued in the new space
  - **Yeading CC:** this centre was an important resource for local families who were struggling with language barriers. Respondents felt its was important this centre can continue to help this cohort access and navigate services and support
  - **Pinkwell CC:** similar to the Yeading CC, respondents reported that this centre was an essential resource for non-English speaking families. They also valued the spacious building and attractive outdoor space, which they felt had potential for extensive future usage
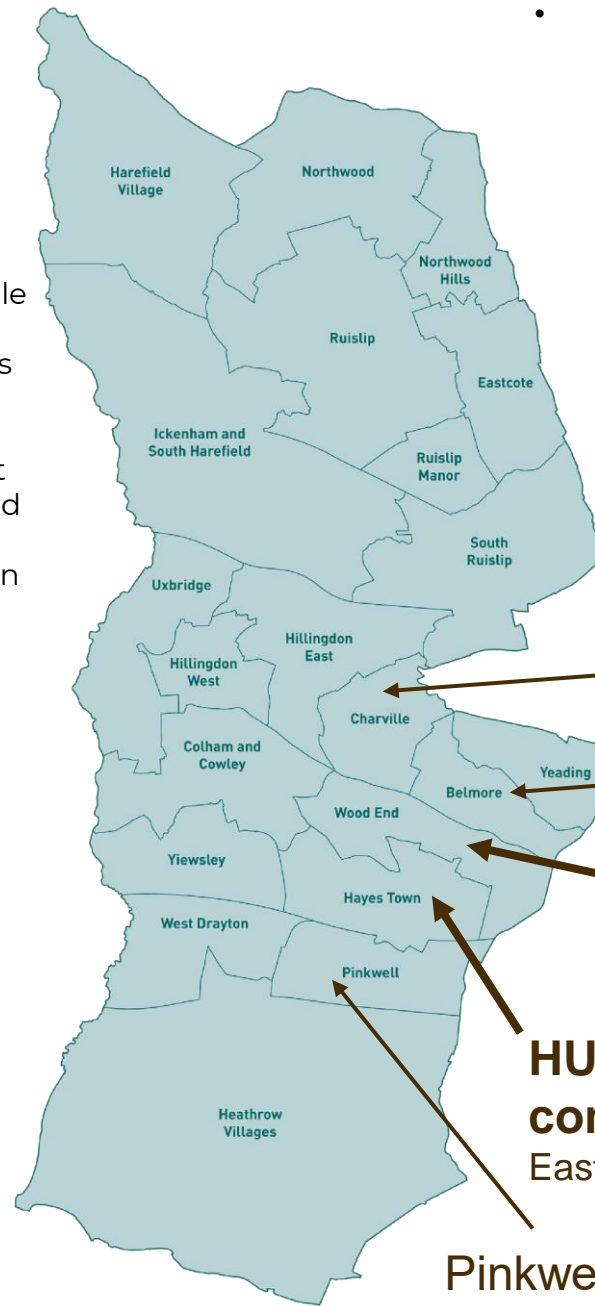
- Closure:
  - **Barra Hall CC:** there was an outcry at the proposed loss of this centre from families and professionals who reported that the setting was already delivering 0-19 support and integrated working. Barra Hall played an important role in supporting marginalised groups. Families also valued its park location. Asa distinctive, historical building, respondents were reluctant for residents to lose access to it.
  - **McMillan CC:** many loyal families were unhappy at the prospect of losing a highly valued setting. They could see no suitable alternative delivery pots nearby.
  - **Belmore CC:** Few comments were made about Belmore because it is not currently operational
  - **Nestles CC** Few comments were made about Nestles because it is not currently operational. Parents whose children attend the adjacent nursery however suggested the space be used to increase nursery capacity

Charville Library
Bury Avenue

Yeading children's centre
Carlyon road

HUB: The Asha Centre
College Way

HUB: Botwell Leisure Centre community hub
East Avenue
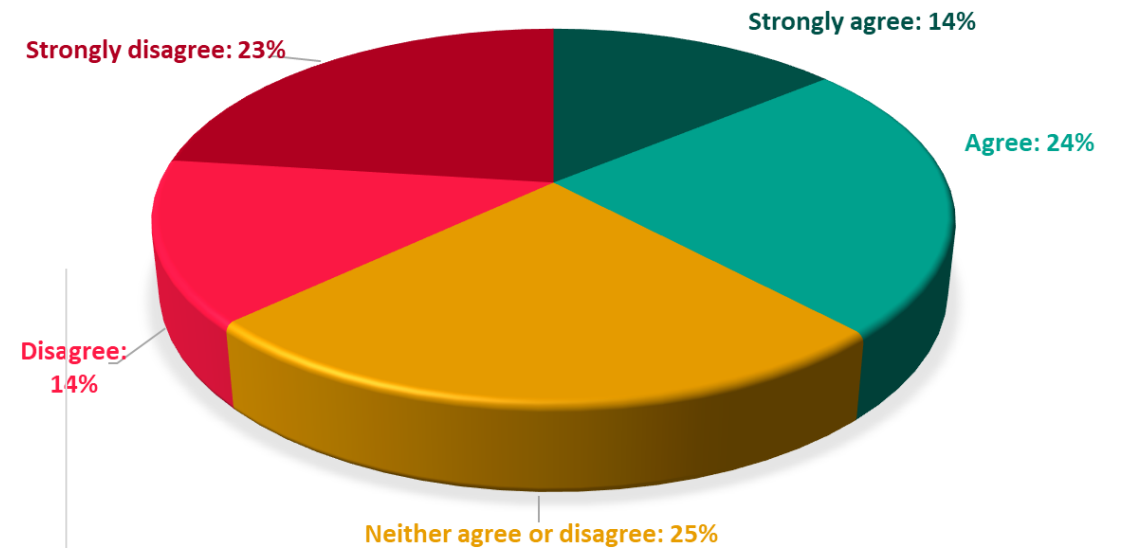
Pinkwell children's centre
Pinkwell Lane

Perceived impact on access to services (1)

- Reactions to whether access to services would be easier were mixed (pie chart)
  - ➢ 38% agreed/strongly agreed
  - ➢ 37% disagreed/strongly disagreed
  - ➢ 25% neither agreed nor disagreed

Respondent type vs Attitude to access
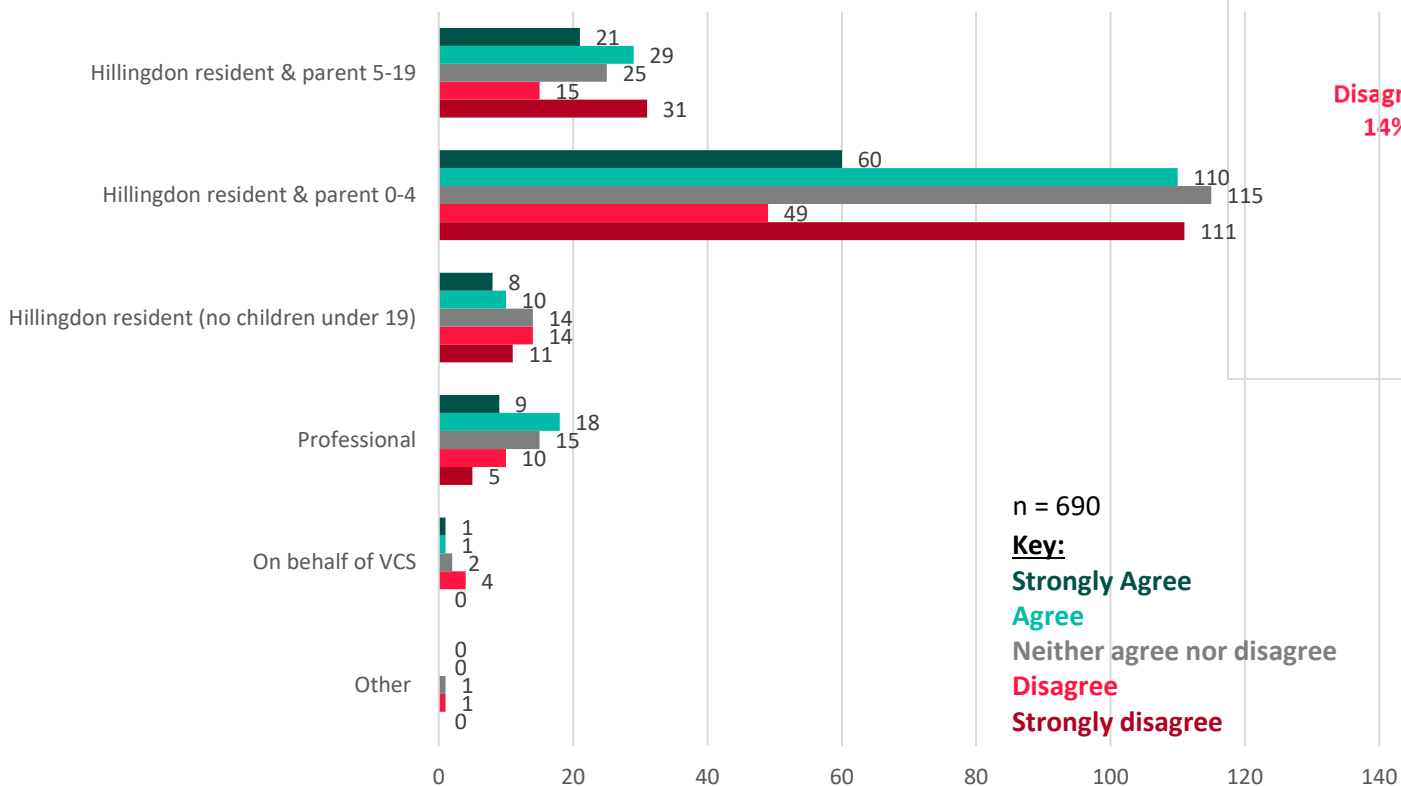
Q24. % Do you think the changes proposed in the draft Family Hub strategy will make it easier for children and families to access services?
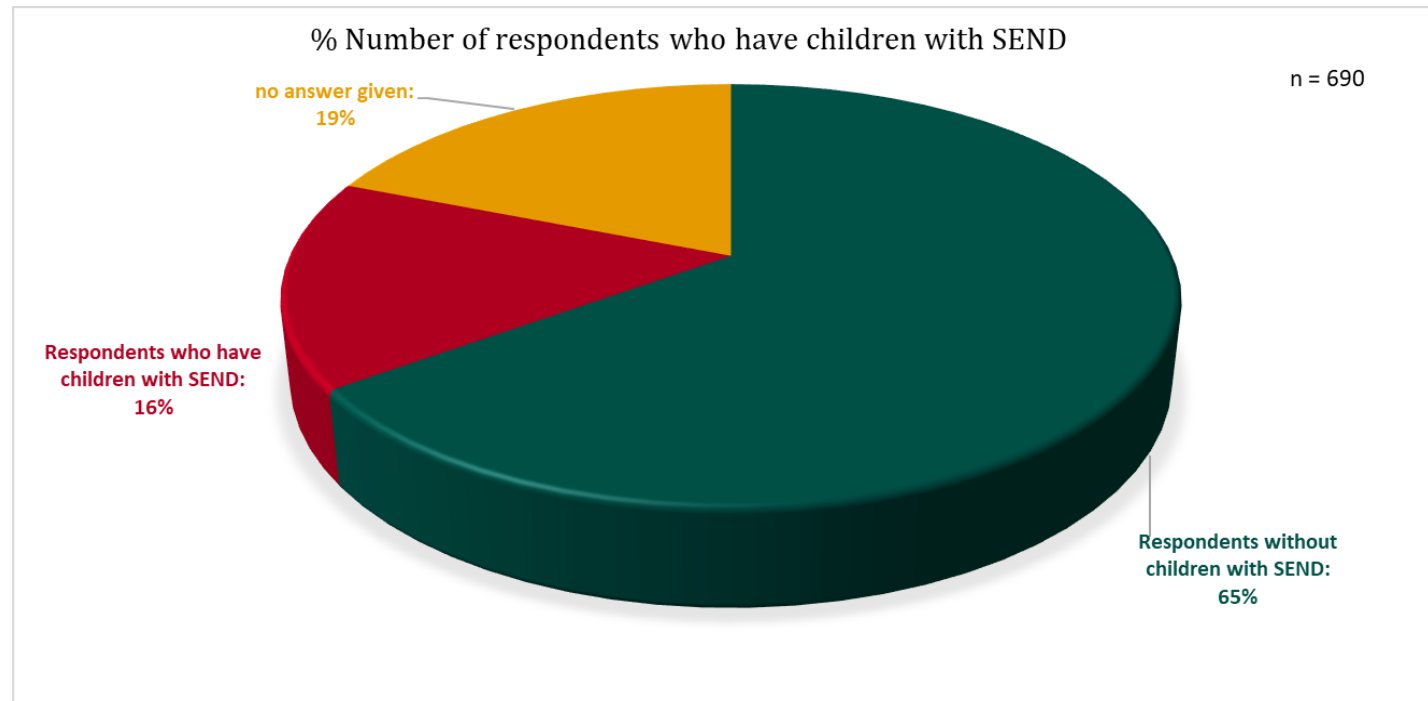
Strongly agree: 14%

Strongly disagree: 23%

Agree: 24%

Disagree: 14%

Neither agree or disagree: 25%

Hillingdon resident & parent 5-19
- 21
- 29
- 25
- 15
- 31

Hillingdon resident & parent 0-4
- 60
- 110
- 115
- 49
- 111

Hillingdon resident (no children under 19)
- 8
- 10
- 14
- 14
- 11

Professional
- 9
- 18
- 15
- 10
- 5

On behalf of VCS
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 4
- 0

Other
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0

n = 690

Key:
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

- When analysed by respondent type, reactions were quite similar across the sample (bar chart)
  - ➢ professionals were most positive: 48% agreed/agreed strongly that access would be easier

family HUBS NETWORK

Families with children with SEND

Families with children with SEND

- Families with children with SEND
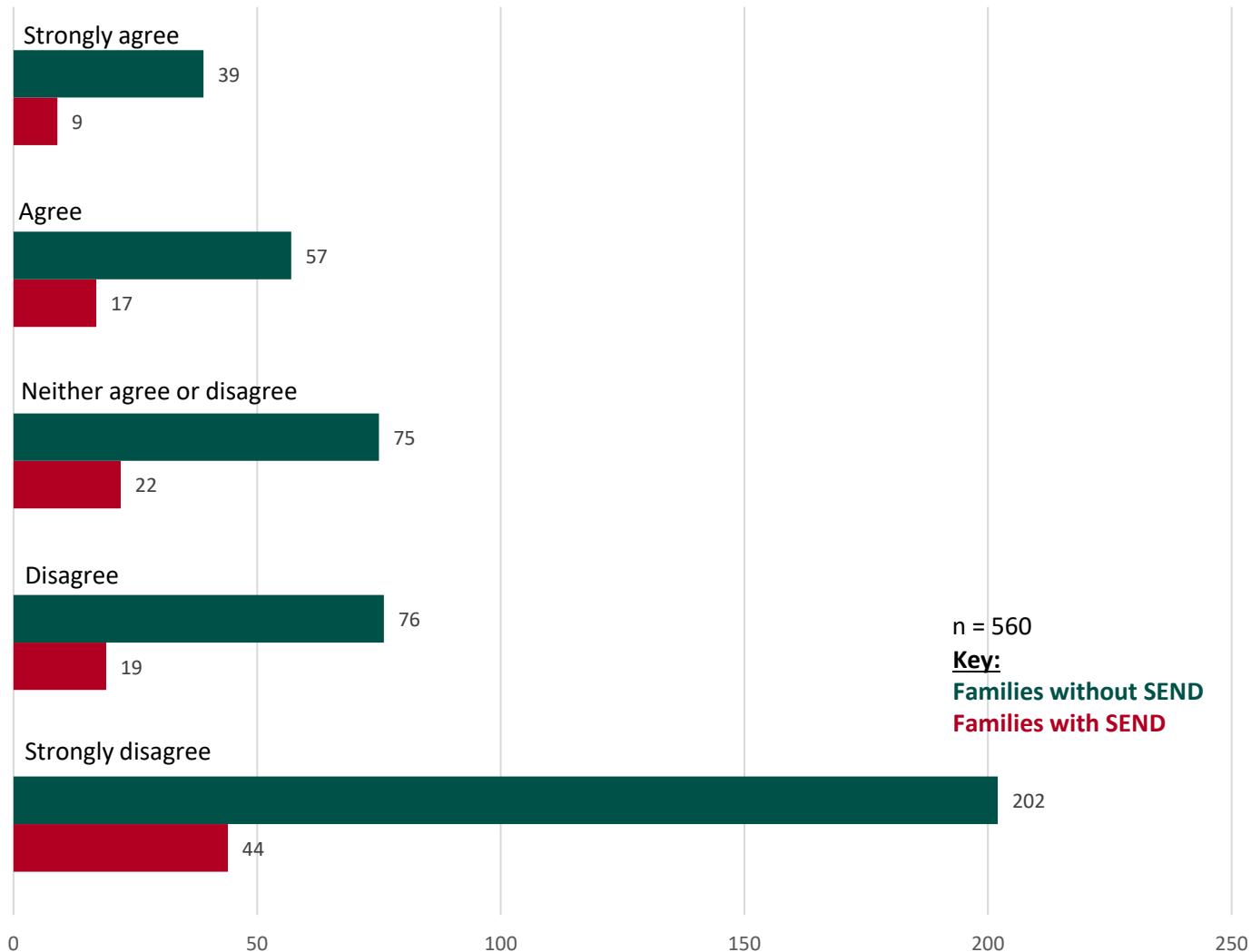 were well represented in the sample:
  16%

% Number of respondents who have children with SEND

no answer given:
19%

Respondents who have
children with SEND:
16%

Respondents without
children with SEND:
65%

n = 690

Attitudes to draft Family Hub strategy

- Families with children with SEND were more positive about the Family Hubs proposal overall
  - 62% agreed/strongly agreed compared with 53% of other families
  - Their response aligned with this cohorts' call for change

- Some felt the strategy promised a solution to their concerns and challenges
  - They struggled to access help, to understand and navigate the system
  - They described enduring long waiting lists and having to travel across the borough to access services
  - They reported experiencing an unrelational culture, rarely being treated with empathy or kindness
  - They were frustrated by a lack of integration and collaboration between professionals who seemed to simply refer them on without thinking about the whole picture

- However, others disagreed with the proposal and feared the consequences
  - They were concerned about losing their current local 'lifeline' children's centres
  - They anticipated that the mixed offer in hubs would too 'overwhelming' for children with SEND
  - They worried that children's SEND needs would be further hidden in a strategy bringing together a wide range of priorities and services

SEND family vs Attitude to Family Hub proposal

Strongly agree: 108 (Families without SEND), 36 (Families with SEND)
Agree: 129 (Families without SEND), 33 (Families with SEND)
Neither agree or disagree: 80 (Families without SEND), 17 (Families with SEND)
Disagree: 49 (Families without SEND), 4 (Families with SEND)
Strongly disagree: 83 (Families without SEND), 21 (Families with SEND)

Key:
Families without SEND
Families with SEND

n = 560
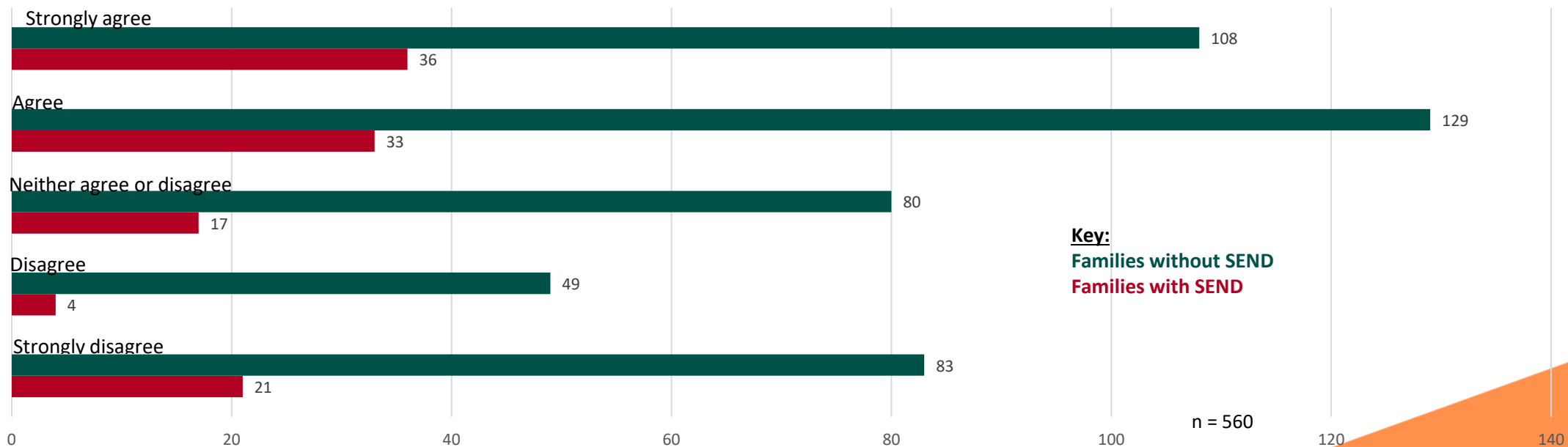
Attitudes to stopping service delivery from some children's centres

SEND family vs Attitude to Children's Centre closures

Strongly agree
- 39
- 9

Agree
- 57
- 17

Neither agree or disagree
- 75
- 22

Disagree
- 76
- 19

Strongly disagree
- 202
- 44

n = 560
**Key:**
Families without SEND
Families with SEND

- Families with children with SEND were less negative about stopping services from some children's centres
  - 23% agreed/strongly agreed with the proposal vs 21% of other families
  - 57% disagreed/ strongly disagreed with the proposal vs 62% of other families

- Again, this was an indication amongst some parents with children with SEND of their readiness for change and call for improvement
  - They saw the decision to stop delivering services from some children's centres as a pragmatic step, if the new service delivers the promise of being more local and joined up

- However, many disagreed and feared loss of the services they rely on

'The children centres give lots of support and are more local than the hubs.'
Parent of child with SEND.

Attitudes to access

- Families with children with SEND felt that access to services would be easier
  - ➢ 44% agreed/strongly agreed compared with 37% other families
  - ➢ 32% disagreed compared with 38% of other families
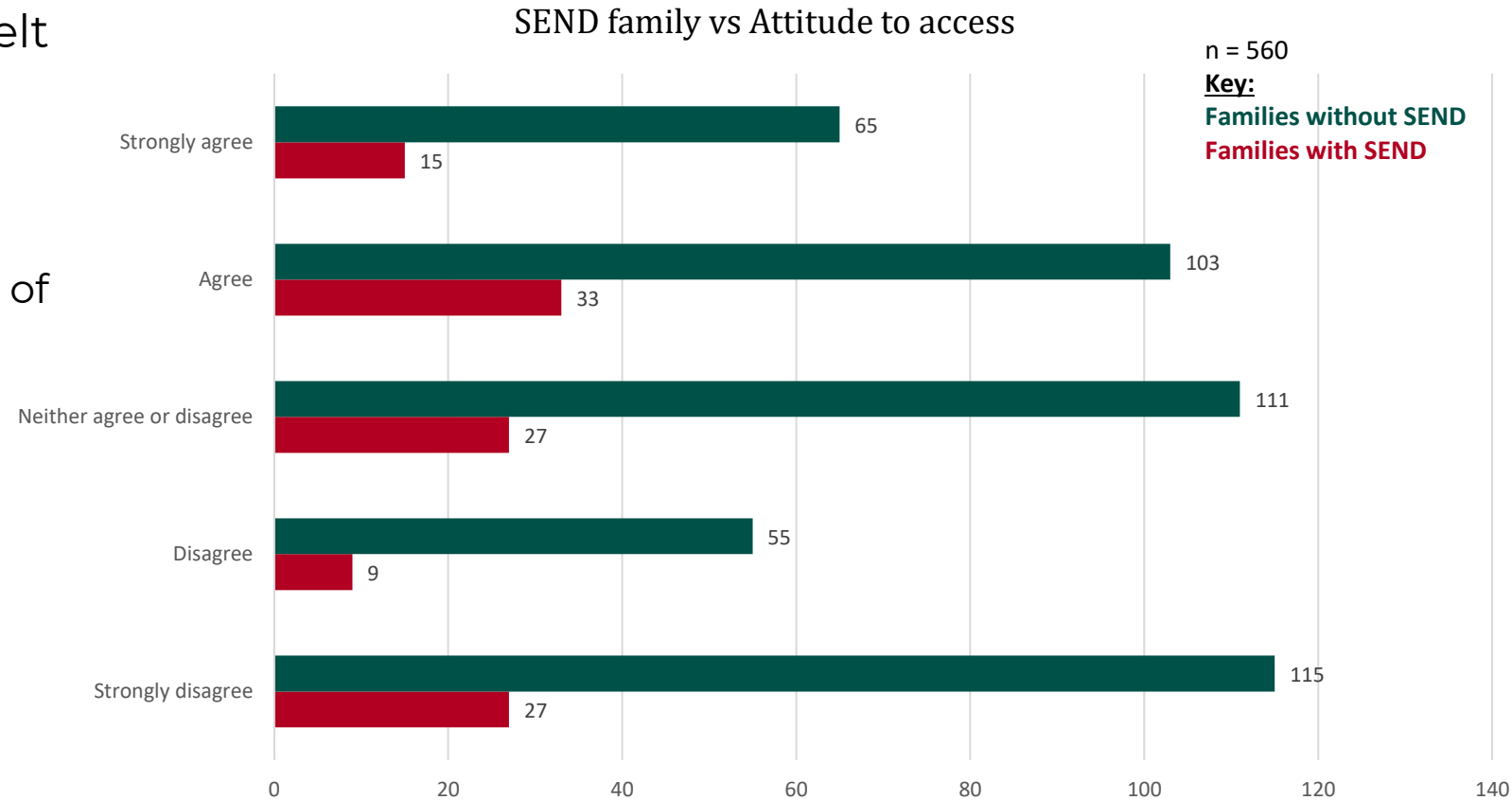
'I agree with family hubs. The help and support Harefield children's centre have given me over the years has been invaluable and a real lifeline. But I don't agree with closing the children's centre and offering a limited service in a library or community space under the heading of a family hub.'
Parent of child with SEND.

SEND family vs Attitude to access

n = 560
Key:
Families without SEND
Families with SEND

Category	Families without SEND	Families with SEND
Strongly agree	65	15
Agree	103	33
Neither agree or disagree	111	27
Disagree	55	9
Strongly disagree	115	27

{ family
HUBS NETWORK

Partners - professionals and voluntary sector representatives

Partners - reactions to the overall idea

- 79% of partner organisation representatives agreed/strongly agreed with the idea
  - Compared with 71% parents
  - 17% disagreed/strongly disagreed compared with 10% parents

'Absolutely agree! Working and living in the borough for many years has given me the experience to see firsthand how the need for family hub/support has never been greater than now. I feel foundations were laid when we reflect back on the work that was done on the set up about children centres, however, now we are post Covid, much greater collaboration, cohesion and partnership work is necessary to ensure that our children and young people are able to access the services which we can all contribute to within the most effective strategic and operational way.'
Partner

'In principle these ideas have some validity however unless the services are going to be specifically designed to cover this wide range of need, it is just a cost cutting exercise with no thought for the real needs of the community. What are you planning to do about combining all these services - are hubs going to be a rebuild? Are you maintaining staff expertise in those that run these centres? What are your plans to monitor success for all groups.'
Partner

Q11. Professionals - do you agree with this idea?

Strongly disagree: 5%
Disagree: 12%
Neither agree or disagree: 4%
Strongly agree: 54%
Agree: 25%

Family Hubs aim to bring together services for children and families in Hillingdon, from pregnancy to 19 years old (up to 25 years for child(ren) with special educational needs or a disability - SEND). We think services and support should be available locally in Family Hubs and community spaces e.g. libraries, children's centres and be no more than a 30 minute walk or 1.5

{family
HUBS NETWORK

Partners - reactions to the overall idea

- Overall, partners welcomed a new strategy to address current challenges
  - ➤ They were aware of high levels of need
  - ➤ They perceived that it was difficult for families to access services, especially post Covid
  - ➤ They felt that promotion/communication to families of services/messages was too limited
  - ➤ They were concerned about the challenges to engage with diverse communities, exacerbated by language barriers
  - ➤ They reported that some communities were especially isolated and under served
  - ➤ They were frustrated with the tendency amongst partners to work in silos and their own limited awareness of other services and professionals, in the community, who could help them achieve better outcomes for the families they worked with
  - ➤ They wanted to see better data sharing agreements so they could work in better partnership with others

- When presented with the strategy, they felt it had potential
  - ➤ They liked the concept of creating one effective system, which would be easier for all to navigate – both families and service providers
  - ➤ They agreed that better collaboration with the community might increase engagement and increase capacity
  - ➤ They welcomed focusing on relationships and agreed that better relationships between professionals and with families would improve outcomes, as well as helping families nurture their own relationships
  - ➤ They talked about the challenges and impact of family-based problems and were enthusiastic about an approach which focused on finding solutions which would benefit children
  - ➤ They were keen to work together to ensure families received early help to prevent families struggling further and needing more statutory interventions
  - ➤ They wanted to be part of a welcoming, relational culture which would help engage families with children aged 0-19 years
  - ➤ They were impatient to address the longstanding needs of families with SEND (0-25 years)

- However, their enthusiasm was tempered with doubts that such an ambitious plan could be realised
  - ➤ They felt that the scope and scale of the change required might risk chaos
  - ➤ They believed that additional funding would be needed
  - ➤ They were concerned that implementation might become preoccupied with the network of buildings whereas they felt that creating a network of cross-sector assets, understood and navigated by professionals and families, was where the greatest potential lay
  - ➤ They asserted that partners need to be involved in both shaping the strategy and its implementation, and many were keen to get involved
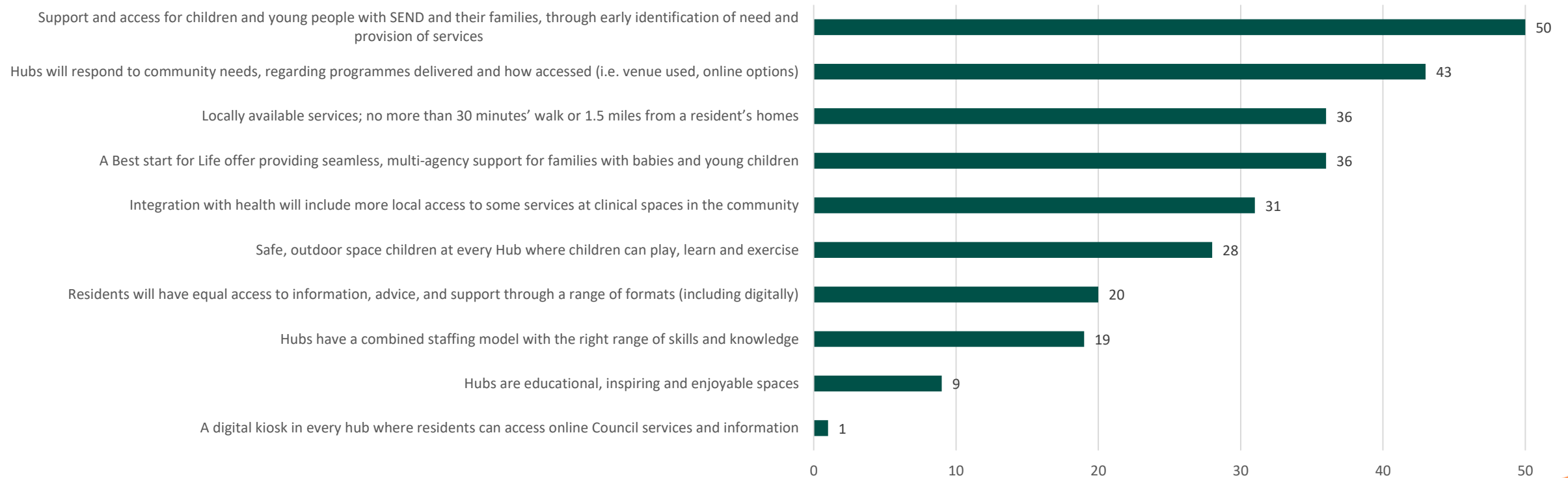
'People can start to panic a bit… if we open all the doors to everyone, how do we make sure we don't miss the people who really need our help? Or how do we cope with all these people who we don't need to help because they can help themselves or somebody else can help them?' Partner

'It doesn't mean hubs do all the work. It's a case of how to upskill your community. If you've got people promoting oral health, it doesn't need to be a health professional, it can be a religious leader. It's about building that community capacity.' Partner

{family
HUBS NETWORK

Preferred principles

- In the survey, respondents were asked to select the three principles which they felt were most important and the chart below indicates which principles received the most 'votes':

Partners' response to the principles of the draft Family Hub strategy

Principle	Votes
Support and access for children and young people with SEND and their families, through early identification of need and provision of services	50
Hubs will respond to community needs, regarding programmes delivered and how accessed (i.e. venue used, online options)	43
Locally available services; no more than 30 minutes' walk or 1.5 miles from a resident's homes	36
A Best start for Life offer providing seamless, multi-agency support for families with babies and young children	36
Integration with health will include more local access to some services at clinical spaces in the community	31
Safe, outdoor space children at every Hub where children can play, learn and exercise	28
Residents will have equal access to information, advice, and support through a range of formats (including digitally)	20
Hubs have a combined staffing model with the right range of skills and knowledge	19
Hubs are educational, inspiring and enjoyable spaces	9
A digital kiosk in every hub where residents can access online Council services and information	1

Discussion of the principles

In the partner workshops, respondents discussed the principles and they are arranged on this chart to reflect the overall level of interest in each

Most interest

Support and access for children and young people with SEND and their families, through early identification of need and provision of services: Partners were aware that numbers and therefore need, are increasing. They believed action needs to be taken urgently to address this need.

Hubs will respond to community needs, regarding programmes delivered and how accessed (i.e. venue used, online options): Partners agreed with focusing on local need and delivering services in a way that optimises family engagement. They stressed the importance of having a universal offer and taking a 'whole family approach' so that problems can be solved sooner.

Locally available services; no more than 30 minutes' walk, or 1.5 miles from a resident's home: Partners felt that access is currently limited and therefore addressing this need was important. The phrase 'locally available' raised high expectations and partners envisaged that achieving this across the borough would be challenging.

A Best Start for Life offer providing seamless, multi-agency support for families with babies and young children: Partners felt that the existing early years services were a relatively strong aspect of the current offer and hoped that this initiative would build on strengths. They welcomed the opportunity to strengthen multi-agency working.

Integration with health will include more local access to some services at clinical places in the community: Partners welcomed the concept of integration with health but questioned how this would be achieved. They hoped it would involve health delivering services within the community and working more closely with cross-sector partners. Improving data sharing was considered a priority.

Safe, outdoor play space at every hub where children can play, learn and exercise: Partners were aware that many families, who needed support, live in flats and recognised that helping their children access outdoor activities safely is a priority. However, in creating a network approach, involving cross-sector venues, they observed that this might be difficult to achieve and queried the challenge of creating an open hub for all, yet promising safety for children.

Residents will have equal access to information, advice and support through a range of formats (including digitally): Partners' interest in this principle focused on meeting the needs of families where English is not well understood or spoken. They wanted to see better collaboration between partners to help residents understand and engage in support, for example, involving trusted voluntary sector bilingual partners in meetings/appointments.

Hubs have a combined staffing model with the right range of skills and knowledge: Partners stressed that empathy and knowledge were the most important skills for hub staff and agreed that a combined staffing model would enable the breadth and depth of knowledge to ensure families' needs could be quickly understood and met. They anticipated this could be a challenge to achieve.

Hubs are educational, inspiring and enjoyable spaces; communities will become resilient: Partners felt that being welcoming spaces which were well used, lively and inclusive, would be the most important criteria so that families would cross the threshold, get involved and find out more about other activities in their communities.

A digital kiosk in every hub where residents can access online Council services and information: Interestingly, the partners who participated in the workshops saw limited for digital kiosks.

{ family HUBS NETWORK

Partners and services

Partners discussed the involvement of cross-sector venues and the strategy's service offer.

- **Schools:** Partners observed that schools/academies are key players in identifying families with needs and being the trusted partner who can help families engage with support. They recognised that schools which currently have an adjacent children's centre would have to adjust to the new strategy but welcomed the opportunity and necessity for support to be available for all families and all schools, and not just those with a children's centre on site

- **Leisure centres:** Partners were interested in the potential for leisure centres as a point of access and host to services and look forward to clarification of their role. They observed the positive associations with health and wellbeing and could see that leisure centres could be a useful, non-stigmatising access point.

- **Libraries:** Partners discussed the potential for libraries within the network and commented that their universal role and educational purpose were very relevant. As access point for information about support and services available, they felt libraries were a suitable option but as a place to deliver services they needed reassurance that venues would be safe and accessible as well as conducive with libraries' other services.

- **Voluntary & community sector:** Partners felt that the VCS and faith settings have an important role in making connections between hubs and communities, providing activities, building relationships, and being a safe and unthreatening point of access for more hesitant families. Significantly the VCS was seen as an important component of delivering a more local service.

- **Young People's Centres:** For the vast majority of the sample including partners, LBH young people's centres were unknown. The Bury St YPC was considered off the beaten track. Some suggested the South Ruislip YPC had potential.

- **Health settings:** Partners were interested in local health settings which would be included in the strategy because they would be essential in delivering the principle of integrating with health. They anticipated that health settings would be important access point.

- **Mobile:** Using buses and trucks to take services to areas where communities had fewer meeting points and/or were more reluctant to engage, was seen as an innovation which could effectively engage with and serve these communities. Partners looked forward to the hearing the developing plans.

- Partner's expressed positive reactions to breadth of the service offer

> *"When you look at the list of services involved, that is really fantastic.'*
> Partner

- **Co-location**
  - ➢ Because the draft strategy did not specify which services would be delivered in each setting, partners expressed some concerns about safety and comfort

- **Regarding additional services that partners thought should be included, suggestions included:**
  - ➢ Mental health
  - ➢ Translation
  - ➢ English teaching for parents
  - ➢ Adult education
  - ➢ Health eating
  - ➢ Registrars for deaths
  - ➢ School nursing asthma clinic
  - ➢ Maternity trauma and loss
  - ➢ Weaning

Building partnership & integrated working

- Partners quickly seized on the challenge to build partnership and integrated working, because they were motivated by the opportunities this would bring and anticipated the wider appeal amongst partners
  - ➢ They asserted that senior leadership needed to be fully involved to achieve this aspiration and the work would need to align with other LBH strategies to sustain profile and relevance

- They said that effective communication between partners would be essential to raising awareness of the strategy and sharing understanding of services

- ➢ Identifying current and potential interconnections between staff was seen as a challenge but an important element of creating a collaborative process
  - ➢ Partners wanted to build connections between people cross-sector, drawing on existing workforce and volunteers in 'connector' roles to make further connections

- ➢ They acknowledged that collaboration requires effort, sacrifice and flexibility
  - ➢ They hoped to optimise the possibilities brought about by new digital tools and more flexible working styles piloted during the pandemic

- Partners suggest starting local and working outwards
  - ➢ Bring together people working and living in communities

'Different organisational structures can cause a challenge and everybody's got a different organisational culture.' Partner

'You are more than the sum of the parts if you're working together and people (families) are accessing more, if you're connecting [them] yourself.' Partner

'I think we have to let go sometimes. It can be hard to say you're doing that better than we are so we won't do that anymore [especially] if that's something you feel passionately about.' Partner

'We have done a lot of great collaboration but it takes a lot of time and energy. Not everybody gets it or has the capacity.' Partner

'We haven't always been good at saying 'Who's out there? Who can work with who? Can we get support?' And if this is a change in the way we do that then I think that will produce more positive outcomes.' Partner
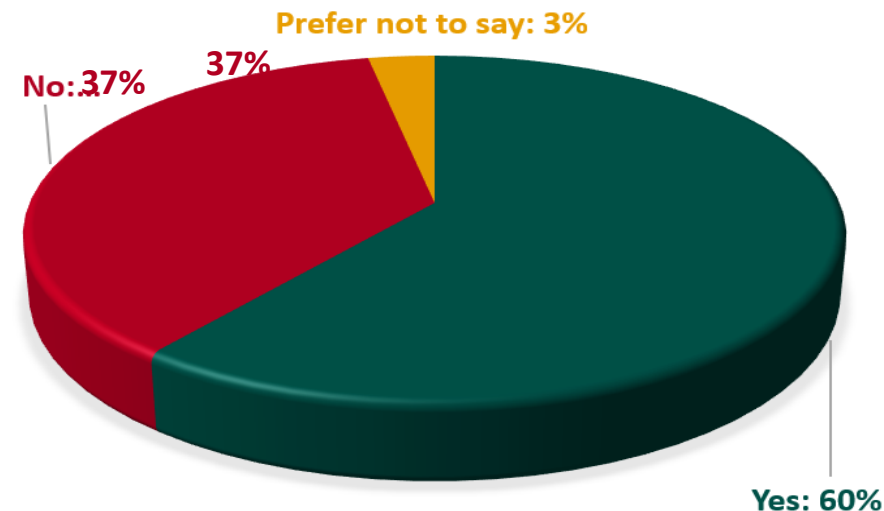
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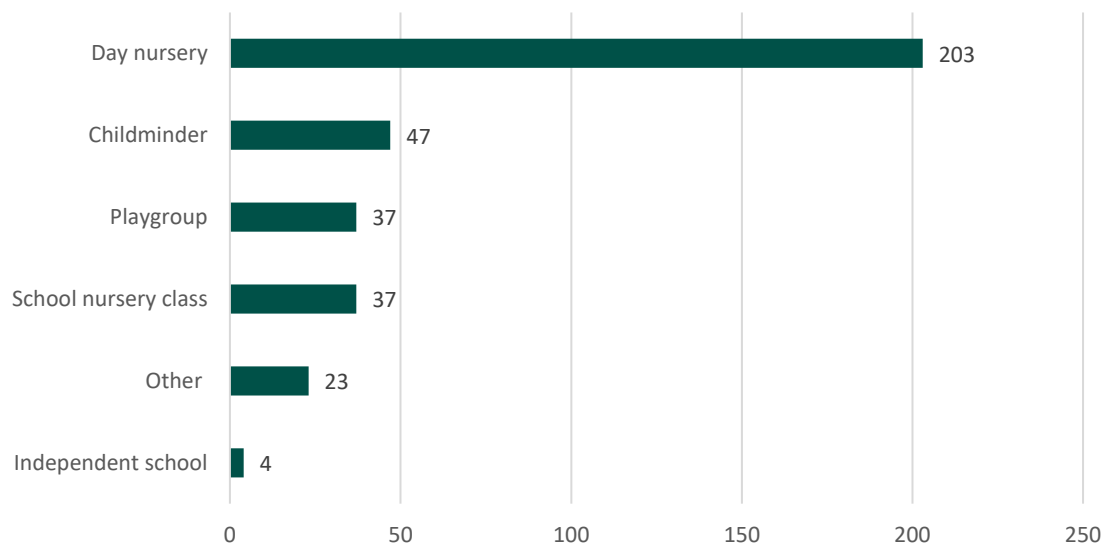HUBS NETWORK

Early years childcare and LBH EY nurseries

Usage and type of childcare

- 68% (471) of survey respondents said they had child(ren) aged 0-5 and completed this section

- 60% of this sample used childcare

Q27. % Respondents who use childcare

Prefer not to say: 3%

No: 37%   37%

Yes: 60%

Types of childcare used
(351 selections made - some multiple)

Day nursery	203
Childminder	47
Playgroup	37
School nursery class	37
Other	23
Independent school	4

- Over two thirds used day nursery

- Childminders, playgroups and school nursery class were used by much smaller numbers

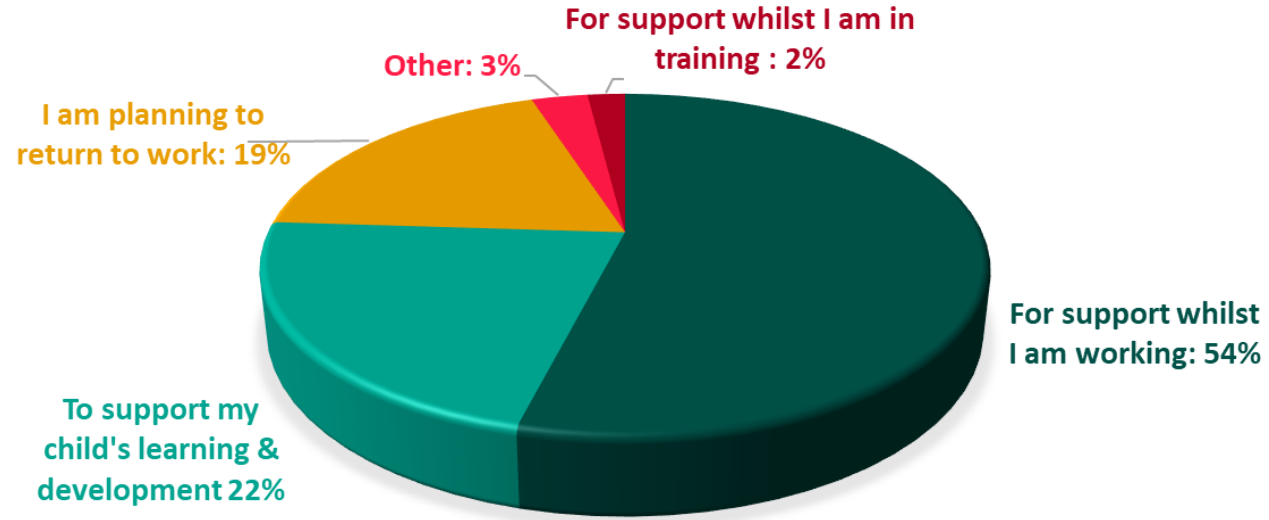- Findings influenced by survey's promotion to LBH EY nursery parents

{ family
HUBS NETWORK

Reasons for using childcare

- Over half (54%) used childcare so they could work
- Over a fifth (22%) cited supporting their child's learning and development as a reason
- Just under a fifth (19%) said they were planning to return to work
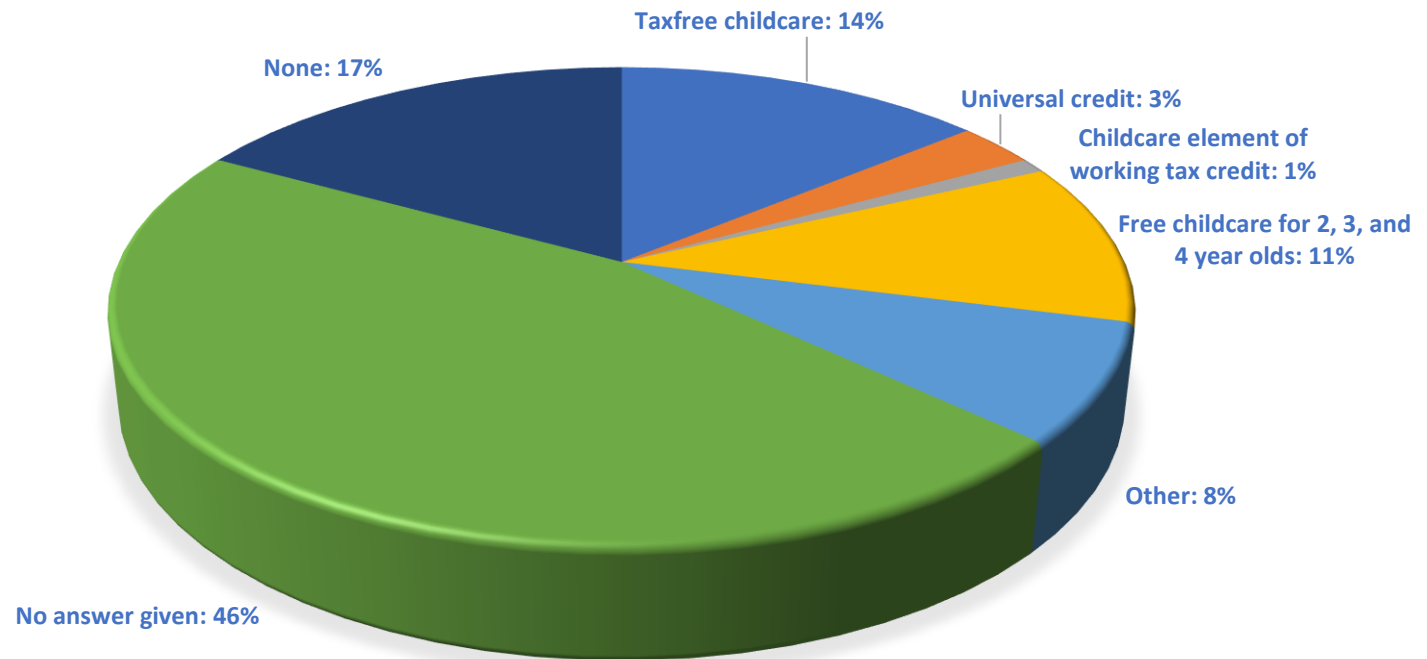
Q28. % Reasons for using childcare

Other: 3%

For support whilst I am in training : 2%

I am planning to return to work: 19%

For support whilst I am working: 54%

To support my child's learning & development 22%

% Reasons for not using childcare

Other	6%
It's too expensive	36%
I can't find a childcare place near to where I live or work	2%
My child(ren) is in school	4%
I have family members who support with looking after my child(ren)	12%
I am looking after my child(ren) myself	40%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%
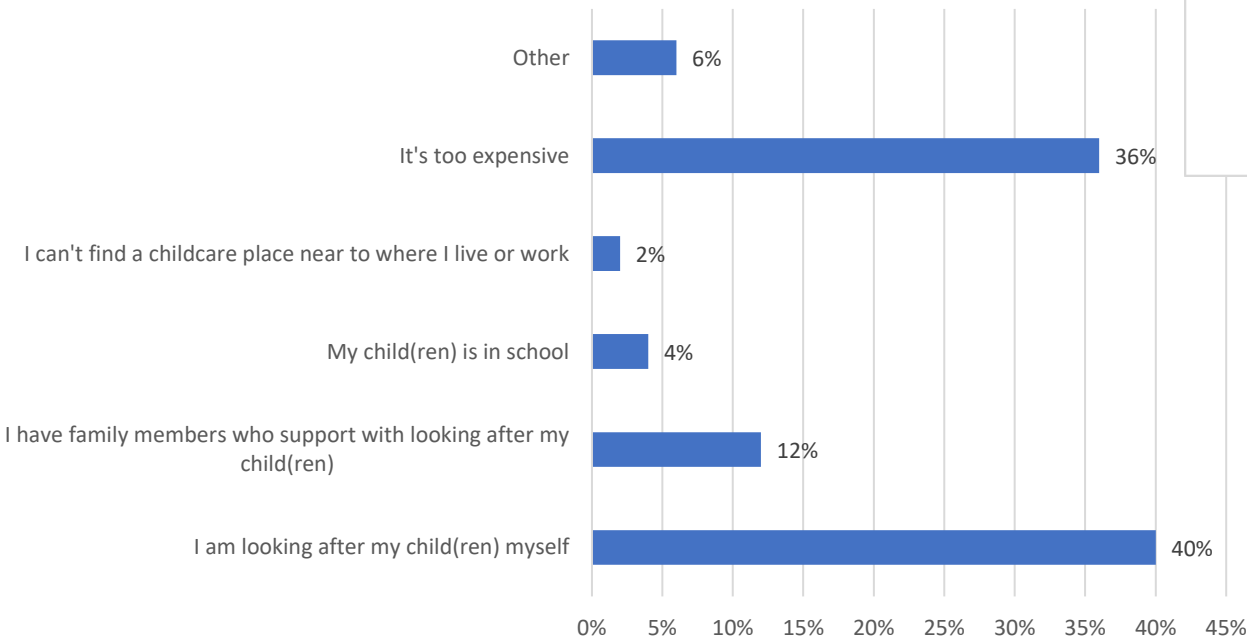
- Looking after children themselves was the most common reason parents did not use childcare
  - Over a third (36%) reported that childcare was too expensive
  - 12% had support from family members
  - Only 2% reported being unable to find a suitable place

{family
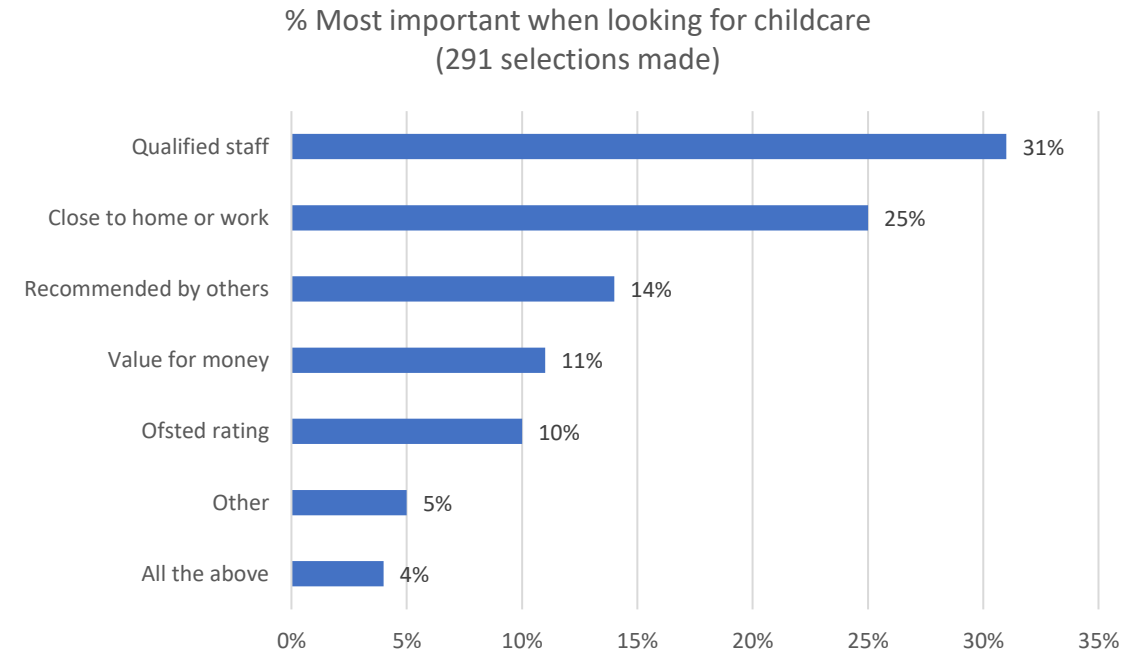HUBS NETWORK

Support with childcare costs

- 63% either did not receive support or did not answer

- 14% benefitted from tax free childcare

- 11% received free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 yr olds

- 3% received universal credit

- 1% received the childcare element of working tax credit

% SUPPORT WITH CHILDCARE COSTS (TOTAL SELECTIONS: 885)

Taxfree childcare: 14%

None: 17%

Universal credit: 3%

Childcare element of working tax credit: 1%

Free childcare for 2, 3, and 4 year olds: 11%

Other: 8%

No answer given: 46%

{family HUBS NETWORK

Priorities when selecting childcare

- Staff and proximity to work/home are the most common priorities
  - ➢ 31% qualified staff
  - ➢ 25% close to home/work

- In interviews, parents cited the challenge of finding the right *care* in the right *place*
 - ➢ A considerable challenge for many

% Most important when looking for childcare
(291 selections made)

Category	%
Qualified staff	31%
Close to home or work	25%
Recommended by others	14%
Value for money	11%
Ofsted rating	10%
Other	5%
All the above	4%

{ family
HUBS NETWORK

Early Years (EY) nursery parents

- Respondents formed a diverse group
  - Wide range of socio-economic groups and income levels
  - Some were new to LBH/ the UK whereas others were born and raised in Hillingdon

- They were united in praise for EY nurseries
  - They praised the experienced and dedicated staff who go 'over and above' the call of duty
  - Settings: they liked the separate rooms by age group; cosy atmosphere; clean and well looked after buildings (parents at Nestles liked the setting but recognised the building was 'tired')
  - Great value for money

- Many experienced distress when first announcement about closure made
  - They had no warning of the nurseries' financial difficulties
  - They felt the 3-4 months' notice they recalled being given was not sufficient form finding alternative childcare
  - They perceived that staff were equally unaware of the changes
  - And for many the stress has continued as the threat of closure has not ended

- Parents' reaction was compounded by external factors
  - Cost of living crisis
  - Poor experiences in other settings before they joined an LBH EY nursery or when they explored alternative arrangements
  - Challenge to find alternative provision to meet needs - the right childcare in the right location en route between home and work
  - For many, their children were born during Covid which impacted their children's early development, their own confidence as parents and their reliance on staff whom the formed bonds with

- A minority claimed that if more notice given, they would have accepted the decision
  - They anticipated that they would have found acceptable, alternative childcare in time
  - And responses indicate that it is likely that other parents would have made the same decision but had become more impassioned as the uncertainty continued and their justification gained traction

- Majority seized on and challenged LBH clam re business deficit
  - They argued that childcare is in high (and increasing) demand so the nurseries have no shortage of customers
  - They observed that the nurseries are not running at capacity
  - Parents were frustrated that they had not been invited to fundraise
  - They were sceptical of LBH's business acumen, as a public sector organisation
  - They commented that agency staff were used too often which would not be cost effective
  - They recognised that previously the nurseries fees had been too low

- Concerned that consultation might be pre-empting impact of recent 30% fee increase
  - They hoped that this increase would improve the financial situation

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Attitudes to nursery options

Preferred option consistent across nurseries

1. Keep nurseries open and increase the fees so that costs are covered by the families that use them

2. Invite private, voluntary and independent providers to deliver the nursery provision instead of the council

3. Close nurseries and keep a small staff team to help nurseries and other childcare providers to better support children with SEND

Current parents' order of preference

Current parents' order of preference (%)
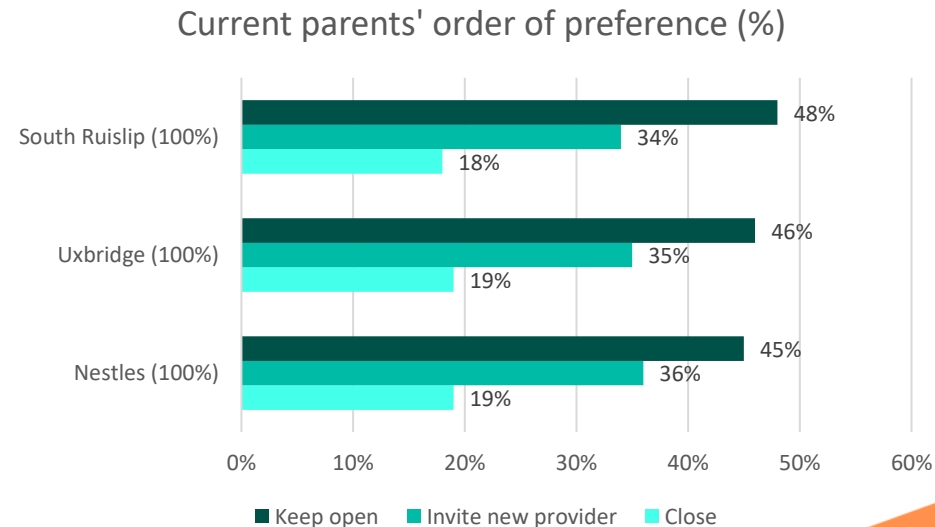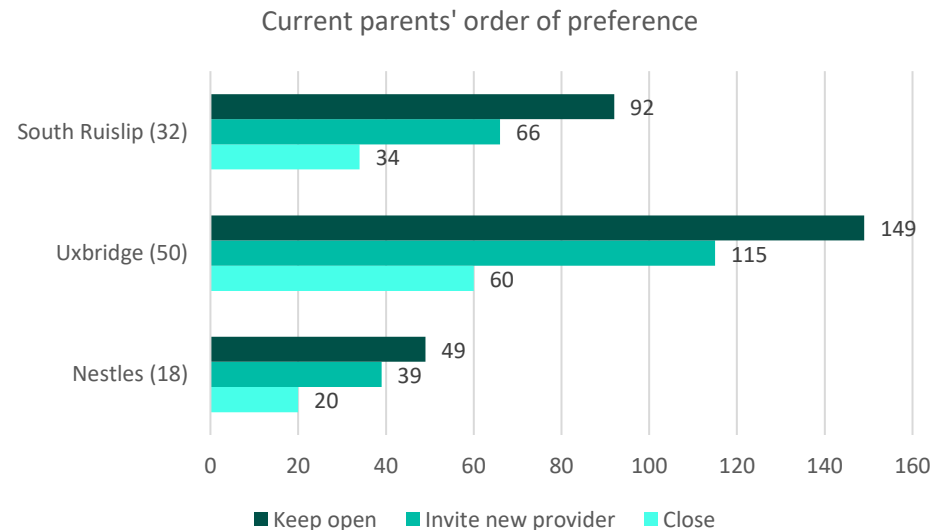
Attitudes to nursery options

***Keep nurseries open and increase the fees so that costs are covered by the families that use them

- Parents were confident that the recent 30% increase in fees will help the financial situation and were ready to accept a further raise to avoid closure

- However, they assumed fees would not exceed the fee structure of the most expensive PVIs

- In future, they expected LBH to be more transparent about potential efficiencies and open to parent suggestions/offers

- When asked if LBH should subsidise EY nurseries, some agreed that subsidies were appropriate, considering that childcare supports govt priorities – pre-school education, employment and the economy – and contrasts with other less worthy LBH subsidies such as golf courses and family fun days. However, others argued that the nurseries should be self-sufficient

**Invite private, voluntary and independent providers to deliver the nursery provision instead of the council

- Although parents were reluctant to experience change in service delivery and therefore their children's experience, this option reassuringly ensured the nurseries would stay open and give consistency in terms of routine and familiarity of setting, if not staff

- Some parents however were concerned that other providers would offer a lower standard of care and not retain existing staff, to whom parents were very loyal

*Close nurseries and keep a small staff team to help nurseries and other childcare providers to better support children with SEND

- Most parents could not see any compensation in staff becoming SEND advisors as this would not solve their problem if losing childcare which they and their children valued

- Some were aware that the nurseries' expertise in supporting children with disabilities was a strength not found elsewhere and could see the opportunity to raise standards elsewhere

- However, this option did not resolve their difficulties and therefore was not an option that appealed to many

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Conclusions

- **Consultation** has generated a substantial response and delivered clear findings

- The **draft Family Hub strategy** meets with residents' approval

- Residents value services and staff over buildings; pragmatic **closure of some children's centres** is likely to be acceptable if trusted staff begin to deliver familiar services in new settings as children's centres wind down

- **Raising awareness and spreading understanding** of the new Family Hub approach across communities will facilitate implementation and engagement

- Because **proposed hubs and delivery points** at this stage include LBH assets alone, the local network does not yet offer the local, community-based settings and services the strategy promises and residents would benefit from understanding the likely shape of this wider network

- **Cross-sector partners** want to collaborate with LBH, to influence and share responsibility, as the strategy is refined and the transformation process begins

- Childcare is an emotive issue and challenging marketplace; the **EY nursery parents need support** in understanding and adapting to the council's plans

- Due to increasing childcare demand, parents hope that the Council prioritises **supporting the childcare sector to increase capacity and improve quality** of provision